Summary

Lena Luthor doesn't plan to have any kids. Or to get married, even, really. After the revelation that she is actually of Luthor blood after all, she's quite set on ending the family line with her and not taking the risk of any more drama.

Then Lorelai L. Danvers crashes into her life, claiming to be her seventeen year old daughter from the future.

(picking up after 2x12)

Notes

All Kryptonian used in this fic is from kryptonian.info

See the end of the work for more notes.
Lena Luthor was having a perfectly normal night. Perfectly normal dinner at a perfectly normal restaurant before a perfectly normal drive home in her perfectly normal car.

And Lena Luthor very much cherishes normality—she may not want it all the time, per se, but it’s a nice lull inbetween getting kidnapped by her own mother and being dragged around in a media circus. Or almost getting abandoned to die. Or any of the other crazy shit that comes with being a Luthor, really.

So when she pulls over to answer a call only to have a young girl smack against the passenger side door, yelling at her through the glass, she’s not happy.

“Miss Luthor? Are you there?”

Lena stares and blinks at the girl who’s now pressing both palms and a nose against the door, glasses digging into her face, pouting. She’s seen that pout before—she just can’t place it right now.

“Jess, I’m gong to have to call you back.”

She hangs up and rolls down the window just a crack—the girl wiggles her fingers overtop it, smiling.

She is wholly unprepared for what the girl has to say.

“Mom!” she says, so excitedly, freckles pushing up on her cheeks. “Come on, let me in, quick!”

What. The. Fuck.

“I’m sorry, who are you?”

The girl groans and shakes like she’s stamping her feet impatiently.

“It’s me, Lori—from the future! I don’t have a lot of time to explain, just please let me in?”

“From the what?”

Car horns blast somewhere down the street, and Lori glances quickly before tapping her fingers against the glass more impatiently.

“Please let me in? I know you’re confused but Lillian’s after me and I’ll explain on the way—“

“Lillian?” The honking gets louder and Lena tries to locate the source because there is no way she is letting this—this stranger into her car! This clearly deluded girl who thinks she’s her daughter! She just wants to go about her normal night, future daughter or crazy adoptive mother be damned—

A black van comes squealing down the street behind them.

“Fuck.” She unlocks the doors. “Get in!”

Lori doesn’t need to be told twice. She yanks the door open and slots herself in with frankly quite amazing agility, closing the door just in time for Lena to gun the ignition and take off.

“Mom!” Lori grabs onto one of the safety handles and pushes her glasses up on her face. “Please
don’t kill anyone!”

And Lena knows she should care more but she really can’t make any promises when that black van, the same one that she was carted away in, the one where she was told that she was alone, that no one would believe her, is chasing her down again. She can’t think about anything but getting away, getting to safety—until a police siren goes off and she lets out the breath she’s been choking on.

She pulls over quickly, rolling down her window as the cop gets out of the cruiser and walks over, looking positively unhappy.

“Officer, thank god,” she rattles off as the cop rounds to her open window. “There was a black van following me, I think it was my mother—“

“There was no van, Miss Luthor,” the cop says irritably, taking out a ticket pad. “Just you gunning it at twice the speed limit in a busy district.”

“What?” Lena frowns, poking her head out a little bit to look behind her at what is now a perfectly normal street, apparently. “It was right there—“

“It was following us for a few blocks, and we thought we were being chased,” Lori cuts in, leaning over the cupholders. “I’m sorry officer, we kind of panicked.”

The cop levels Lori with a critical eye. “And who are you?”

“I’m Karen, her new intern,” Lori says with a dazzling smile. “Miss Luthor saw me miss the bus and decided to give me a ride.”

The cop stares between the two of them for a moment, before loosening up in almost a sympathetic way, much to Lena’s surprise.

“I suppose you’d be a little jumpy after everything that happened last week, huh?” The cop sighs. “I’m sorry, Miss Luthor, I’d let you off with a warning, but with how fast you were going—“

“No, no,” Lena gulps. “It’s fine, officer, please—I shouldn’t have been going that fast. Thank—Thank you for your concern.”

She tries for a grateful smile, and it’s a little stiff, but the cop returns it while scribbling off a ticket.

“Please try to be more careful next time,” she says with a smile, handing the ticket to Lena.

“I will. Thank you.” Lena tucks the ticket into her purse and gives one last polite smile before rolling up her windows.

“Phew,” Lori says, sinking into her seat. “Glad you see you always drove like that…”

Lena gives her this sort of crazed look because—how can she be so calm about this?? As if Lillian fucking Luthor hadn’t just been chasing them? As if this whole time travel thing is somehow normal?

Her brain overloads a little and she rests her forehead against the steering wheel. Okay, it’s not really the time travel thing that’s freaking her out. With a dash of extra help and a few years time she’s sure she can whip up a prototype of some sort—it’s most that, apparently, in some future, she has a fucking daughter.

“I guess you’ll be wanting that explanation now?”

Lena looks up and nearly flinches because for a moment it’s almost like looking in a mirror, because
Lori is doing the same tight-lipped pout that she does—she even has the same shape of eyebrows—and it’s just the slightest touch too much.

“That would be,” she starts, taking a deep breath. “Vastly understating things.”

Lori cringes, and that’s familiar too but not in a looking in the mirror sort of way, just a sort of… intimately familiar way that she can’t place.

And oh god she’s noticing all the ways that this girl looks like her.

“Okay, so, before I say anything, what year is it?”

“2017,” Lena says evenly, and something twists in her stomach as Lori’s eyes widen and her mouth drops a little open.

“Wow,” Lori breathes. “Oh my god you’re—you’re twenty-four. You haven’t even had me yet. Oh no. Oh no,” Lori says again, turning her body towards Lena and gesturing awkwardly where has Lena seen that awkward fumbling before? “I’m so sorry for just jumping in on you like this, I was running from—from her and when I saw you I just—“

“It’s—it’s fine,” Lena sighs, screwing her eyes shut and holding the bridge of her nose. “I think I want to have this conversation after I’ve had a drink.”

Or three.

Lori’s resemblance to her own mirror image gets even more profound when she’s looking at her in the bright lights of her penthouse, not the darkness of her car. The girl has the same shade of hair as she does, perhaps with even more stubborn ringlets—she has the same strong bone structure, down to the slight underbite.

It’s uncanny, really.

It’s when Lori takes off her glasses to wipe them absently on her shirt, marvelling at the apartment, that Lena zooms in on the differences. The girl’s eyes are a rather striking shade of blue, and slightly rounder—her shoulders are handsomely broad, filling her asymmetrical jacket out nicely, and when Lena takes off her heels she notices that she’s quite a bit taller as well.

“Wow,” Lori laughs, kicking off her—futuristic sneakers?—and drinking in every corner of the flat with a huge grin on her face (she dimples in the same places as Lena). “Is this what it looked like before I was born?”

Lena glances at her as she opens her wine cabinet.

“You know this place?”

“Yeah. We lived here until I turned ten.” Lori scrunches her nose and tilts her head. “Well. I guess it’s will live here.”

She pirouettes again to beam at Lena, hair twirling over her shoulders. Lena pauses to swallow nervously again before she starts pouring herself a glass of wine, because this kid is just so goddamn happy and that unnerves her for some reason.

“Ooh!” Lori hops over. “Can I have a glass too?”
Lena narrows her eyes at her.

“How old are you?”

“Twenty-one,” she replies, without missing a beat. Lena breaks into a smirk because this girl is a natural liar—but so is she.

“Very funny,” she says, ignoring Lori’s pout as she puts the wine bottle away. “How old are you, really?”

“Seventeen,” Lori groans, hopping onto one of the stools for the island bench and planting her chin into her palm. “I was hoping you wouldn’t be as good at that yet.”

Lena shakes her head and takes a sip. “You have the same tell as me. Your left eyebrow twitches just the slightest bit.”

And it hits her that she’s smiling as she talks about this girl like—like she’s really her daughter, so she takes a bigger swig of her wine.

“Okay, so, start from the top,” she says, taking a deep breath and bracing herself against the bench. “You are—” she gestures at Lori for a moment, words stuck in her throat. “My seventeen year old daughter from the future. And my mother is after you. For some reason. And you’re not fazed by this.”

Lori nods, gnawing on her lip. “Yeah, I’m a little bit familiar with time travel?” She shrugs. “You kind of invent it.”

Lena presses her fingertips to her mouth for a few moments to process, one arm crossed under the other.

“Well.” She laughs a little. “It’s good to know I don’t get rusty over the years.”

Lori breaks into another grin. “God, no, are you kidding? The modern society of my time practically wouldn’t exist without you.”

And there she is again, beaming at Lena like she’s—like she’s proud and Lena tries to withstand that jolt of anxiety in her chest.

“Anyway,” Lori continues, sitting up a little. “Lillian Luthor pulled me here from the future—my best understanding is that she’s found some old prototype of Uncle Lex’s somehow and is trying to get to me so she can open those stupid vaults without you.”

*Uncle Lex.* Lena almost wants to ask what kind of relationship she has with Lex but she also really, really isn’t ready to hear any kind of answer.

“So why doesn’t she go after a younger version of you?” She cradles her wineglass to her cheek, other hand holding her elbow. “I mean, an infant would be easier to control than a full-grown teenager.”

Lori shrugs, pursing her lips and raising her brows in that *exact same way* that Lena does. “I mean, I’m sure she tried. Like I said, it’s an old prototype—time travel doesn’t exist properly in this universe until you invent it.”

“Alright. Okay. So, you were pulled her by my maniac mother, who wants Luthor DNA to open the vaults, but you got away, and now you’re going to…” Lena waves her wineglass. “What, exactly?”
“Destroy Lillian’s time device and hide out until you—future you—come to pick me up?” Lori says, more of a nervous question than an answer.

“How will she—I—know when you are?”

Lori grins. “She’ll know. Time travel leaves a residue—she’ll be able to track me to now, give or take a couple of weeks.”

Lena blinks. “A couple of weeks?”

Lori nods, gnawing on her lip again. “If that’s okay? I promise, I won’t affect your life in any way, I know all the time traveler rules by heart.”

Lena puts her wineglass down and rubs her forehead. A couple of weeks. Lori would be here for—as long as a couple of weeks.

“Oh, so, if you know the protocols, then,” Lena starts, gesturing again. “Why are you telling me all this? Wouldn’t you change the timeline, or accidentally erase yourself from existence?”

Lori shakes her head. “Nah. You invented a memory wipe for that—if any of us ever get stuck, we can call on family for help without messing anything up.”

“You’re going to wipe my memory?” Lena hisses in disbelief.

The girl looks alarmed. “Yeah, I mean—I kind of have to.” She wrings her hands. “Please don’t be upset?”

Lena is very upset. Words roil in her head, trying to string themselves together, before she finally just gives up and takes a deep breath.

“I will—” she looks up with a tight-lipped smile. “I’ll cross that bridge when I get to it.”

That’s good enough for now, as far she can tell from Lori’s shoulders relaxing. She wordlessly downs the rest of her wine, a small part of her hoping that this is all a dream and things will be back to perfectly normal when she wakes up with a mild hangover.

“You can take the guest room,” she says finally, sighing. “I’ll try to find you some pajamas that fit.”

Lori brightens up at that. “You’re taking this really well for someone who didn’t even know I’m going to exist.”

Lena shrugs. “You have to learn to roll with the punches—“

“Or you’ll get left behind,” Lori finishes for her, as if it’s a well-worn motto that she’s heard a million times. Lena smirks.

“And, there’s the fact that the probability of you not being my daughter is lower than the probability of time travel.” She gestures to Lori’s face. “I mean, you look exactly like me, with a few minor differences.”

And the girl just lights up like the sun at that—all of her dimples coming out, eyes crinkling with delight, shoulders spreading with glee. As if that’s the best compliment that she could possibly ever hear—and to think that someone can be so happy at the prospect of resembling Lena has the woman reeling in anxiety.

She clears her throat and makes for the stairs.
“Your room is upstairs, second door to the left. The guest bathroom should have everything you need.”

And with that, she turns away.
“Mom! Mom I’m gonna use your credit card to buy us breakfast, okay?”

Lena groans and covers her head with a pillow.

“Mom!”

“Yeah, that’s fine,” she grumbles, digging deeper into her pillows.

“Thanks!”

The front door opens and closes. It takes Lena a second to bolt up in bed, blinking as she frantically brushes back her hair.

“What the hell…”

Kara swallows her nervousness as she waits for her order, drumming her fingers against the bartop. She feels kind of sick—which is really, really worrying because she should be really happy. She finally kissed Mon-el last week. She finally talked about her feelings and took the chance instead of just being upset—she should be happy, right? She didn’t like seeing Mon-El with someone else. She likes it when he pays attention to her. She didn’t want to confuse him anymore so she just went for it, and now—

Now she’s kind of tired of trying to pass off the twisting in her gut as butterflies. It’s nothing like the fluttery feeling she used to get around James, but then again, that didn’t work out so what would she know?

She readjusts her glasses for the billionth time that morning when a girl hops up to the bar next to her and flags down one of the servers.

“Hi! Can I get Lena Luthor’s usual order, times two, minus the coffee and to go, please?”
Kara’s head whips up at the mention of Lena’s name, something in her chest lighting up.

“You know Lena?” she asks, giving a friendly smile. The girl looks at her, a smile faltering into a shocked gape and Kara jolts at how much like Lena she looks—from the jawline to prominent cheekbones to strong brow that nonetheless come together into the some of the softest expressions she’s seen sometimes. Even her hair is the same shade of black (a soft mahogany in the morning sun), the curls and ringlets pulled back into a high ponytail.

The girl pushes up her black-rimmed glasses before erupting into a bright grin. (And Kara wonders what Lena would look like with glasses)

“Yeah! I’m Lori, her new intern.”

Her handshake is firmer than Kara expected and she’s pleasantly surprised.

“Nice to meet you,” Kara laughs, glancing at the girl’s burgundy MIT hoodie—how old is this girl? “I’m—"

“Kara Danvers, CatCo’s best reporter,” Lori finishes for her, seeming to bounce with excitement.

“Oh, well,” Kara smiles bashfully at the comment. “I wouldn’t say best, really.”

Lori shakes her head adamantly. “For someone who didn’t go to journalism school to be able to keep up with the rest of the team? You’re amazingly talented.” She leans in with a conspiratorial smile—the same one that Lena gets when she’s in a more playful mood— “Give it a few years and I bet you’ll be Editor in Chief.”

Kara just blinks for a moment, because there’s something about how sure this stranger is about her talent, something about the mischievous grin—but she just laughs and shakes her head.

“Thank you, but I can’t imagine replacing my boss anytime soon,” she chuckles. “I haven’t even written that many articles yet.”

The girl shrugs. “Well, Mo—Miss Luthor speaks highly of you, and she’s a got a great eye for potential.”

And there it is again, that lightbulb going off in her chest at the thought of Lena speaking well of her—except, it feels a lot more like a yellow sun grenade than anything else.

“Well, I—I’ll have to remember to thank her the next time I see her,” Kara says, fiddling with her glasses, glancing over at the girl’s bright smile. “You know, you look a lot like her.”

Lori absolutely preens at that. “I get that a lot,” she says proudly. “I’m her niece.”

Kara nearly chokes.

“Oh!” Lori shakes her head. “No, not from U—Lex, I’m from her birth family,” she says, “she offered an internship and for me to stay with her for a while.”

Kara laughs, a little bit relieved that Lex Luthor doesn’t have a child that no one knows about.

“That’s—that’s really nice of her,” she says. “I didn’t know she was still in touch with her birth family.”

Lori shakes her head. “She wasn’t until recently. Hence my sudden appearance!” She makes a facetious show of flicking her hair dramatically, even though it’s all tied up, and Kara giggles, the
edge of it trailing off a little. She watches wistfully as Lori gets her order and pays with a cheerful smile. What Kara wouldn’t give to find her birth family still alive and well out there, to find new members of the family she hasn’t met yet—to know that it didn’t all end with her.

“Hey, babe.”

Kara tries to ignore the way her skin crawls when Mon-El walks over and plants a kiss on the side of her head.

“Hey,” she says, trying for cheerful and ending up with a little awkward instead. He chuckles at her, wrapping an arm around her shoulders. “What are you doing here?”

He shrugs. “Just getting some breakfast. Who’s this?”

“Oh!” Kara glances at Lori—who’s giving Mon-El a razor sharp glare—and makes a more genuine attempt to smile. “This is Lori, Lena’s niece. You remember Lena, right?”

He nods. “The Luthor woman with the nice party!” He beams, offering Lori a handshake. “It’s nice to meet you. I’m Mike of the Bartenders.”

The girl clutches her breakfast cargo to her chest, looking almost offended, glowering at Mon-El’s hand. She lifts her chin in that same imperious but graceful sneer that Lena does, and Kara can almost hear the air humming with pure dislike.

“Likewise,” she says, although the clear disdain in her voice says she is anything but pleased to see him. She cradles her food in one arm while offering Kara a bright smile. “It was nice to meet you, Miss Danvers. I’ll see you around.”

“Yeah, see you!” Kara says in a flustered rush. Lori gets in one last glare at Mon-El before shoulder-checking him on her way past, leaving him clutching his arm and groaning.

“Wow, you’re really getting better at reacting,” Kara says, really impressed by his seamless grunt of pain. He frowns at her.

“What? No, that actually hurt…” He rubs his shoulder.

She stares at him. “That’s impossible, she’s—she’s human.” Kara looks at the entrance to try and find her again. “I think.”

“That tackle didn’t feel human,” Mon-El grumbles (and Kara tries not to recoil at his whining. It’s always annoyed her—not that she’d ever tell anyone).

She sucks in a breath and pulls out her phone, already dialing Alex.

“This is bad.”

Lena comes downstairs to the smell of coffee, breakfast, and the low grumbles of an unhappy teenager.

She stops at the base of the stairs for a moment to wrap her head around the whole daughter from the future thing again.

“Oh, hey Mom,” Lori says, turning around, decidedly less cheerful. Lena’s not sure if she’s worried
or relieved. “Did you sleep well?”

Lena runs a hand through her hair as she narrows her eyes and goes to sit down at the island bench.

“Are you wearing my MIT sweater?”

Lori pauses in plating the omelettes from Noonan’s to glance down at herself.

“Oh. Yeah. Is that okay? I could pass off my pants as being from this decade but not much else, and I know you never wear this, so…”

“Yeah, that’s’—that’s fine, I guess.” Lena blinks as Lori places her omelette and a mug of coffee down in front of her. “Thanks.”

Lori grins at her. “No problem. Bon appétit!”

Lena glances up at the way that Lori’s ponytail bounces as she turns around to gather her own breakfast assortment, feeling a bit put-off by the way the girl moves around in her kitchen like she’s completely at home. She would be, Lena guesses, but it’s still a little… invasive to see a stranger just rifle through your cabinets for cutlery.

She takes a sip of her coffee and her brain stops functioning for a second.

“Oh my god,” she says quietly. “What the hell did you do?”

Lori pales. “You don’t like it?”

Lena gapes. “This is the best coffee I’ve ever had.”

“Oh my god,” Lori laughs, putting a hand on her chest. “Don’t scare me like that.”

Lena takes another sip, drinking as much as she can in one mouthful without scalding herself. It’s just the right amount of creamy, with just enough sweetness to offset the bitterness without taking away any of the earthy kick.

“I feel like you’ve just ruined me for all other coffee.”

Lori grins, almost smugly, taking a sip from her own mug. “I know for a fact I have. You even tried to get me to go to Stanford instead of MIT so you wouldn’t have to live without my coffee.”

Lena blinks. “Wait. You said that you’re seventeen.”

Lori nods, cheeks puffing around a mouthful of avocado.

“And you’re in university?”

She swallows. “Yup. I’m graduating next year. Which is one year later than you did, so I’m actually a little behind.”

Lena feels an odd twinge of warmth in her chest, finding the corner of her lips wanting to quirk up in a smile—so she just takes another sip of the heavenly coffee instead.

Lori startles a bit, suddenly, looking up at the stairs.

“Your phone’s ringing, Mom.”
Lena frowns. “I don’t hear anything?” she says, even as she gets off the stool and pads towards her room. Sure enough she walks in on an insistent buzz underneath her sheets.

It’s from Jess—she misses the call, but gets a string of texts just afterwards and lets out a deep sigh.

“Allright. Ok?” Lori calls from downstairs.

“Yeah.” Lena calls back, treading back down to finish her coffee. “I have to go into the office today.”

“Aw.” Lori pouts. “I thought it was your day off?”

Lena shrugs as she sadly chugs her coffee when all she wants to do is savour it slowly. “No rest for the wicked.”

Lori rolls her eyes. “You’re not wicked, Mom.” She finishes her coffee too and perks up. “Can I come with you?”

Lena grips her phone nervously, nail scratching on the surface.

“I’m not sure you’d want to.” She tries for a wry laugh. “It’ll be quite dull.”

“No kidding?” Lori hops to her feet. “I get to hang out with a young version of you! This is so cool.”

Another tidal wave of anxiety sweeps through Lena’s chest.

“Are you sure she hurt you?” Alex asks again, crossing her arms.

“Yeah!” Mon-El whines again. “She bruised me right here—look!”

He lifts up his shirt and Kara tries not to think about how she feels as uncomfortable as Alex looks.

Sure enough, there’s a bruise just a little smaller than a fist purpling on the right side of his chest. Alex sucks in a sharp breath, looking over her shoulder at the agents milling about outside the med bay before yanking his shirt down.

“And you said—you said she’s Lena’s niece?”

There’s a terseness in Alex’s voice and Kara immediately squares her shoulders, anger bubbling up in her throat. After everything that’s happened, why can’t people just give Lena the benefit of the doubt? She thinks about the woman’s face when she was being arrested last week—how she looked to be on the verge of tears, defeated, hopeless.

Kara crosses her arms. “I’m sure there’s an explanation. She might not even know.”

“Kara, I know you believe her, but this isn’t something we can afford to ignore,” Alex explains evenly. “You said that she looks exactly like Lena, and she’s clearly not human.”

“I didn’t say that—”

“Kara. You said that she got angry and you heard the kind of humming that you make when you’re about to fire your heat vision.”
“Okay, fine!” Kara throws up her hands. “She looked like she had Kryptonian powers, are you happy?” she huffs. “That doesn’t mean Lena’s up to anything bad.”

Alex lays a pacifying hand on her shoulder. “She might not be up to anything bad, but something is definitely going on. The last time another Supergirl popped out of nowhere was bad, Kara. We have to look into this.”

“Bizarro was different,” Kara hisses, feeling her heart droop at the thought of that poor girl, forced into experiments she never wanted, her want for love used against her. “This is—this is a real girl, with her own name and personality.”

“I, for one, agree with Alex,” Mon-El cuts in, and Kara barely bites back a no-one-asked-you. “We should get Winn to hack into her files and find out if she’s been experimenting—”

“No one is hacking Lena,” she growls. Alex’s brows shoot up in surprise but she pays it no mind, sighing and running a hand through her hair. “Look, I’m just going to go ask her if anything’s going on before we make any breaches of privacy, okay?”

Mon-El starts to speak but Alex holds up a finger to shut him up.

“Okay.” She nods solemnly. “But be careful. We don’t know what this girl wants.”

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“Can we get ice cream?”

Lena looks up from her work, quirking a brow.

“We just had breakfast.”

Lori pouts from her seat at the couch, giving Lena some serious puppy-dog eyes across the room.

“What does that have to do with ice cream?” she grumbles, pushing up her glasses. “Jess would let me get ice cream…”

Lena snorts, shaking her head as she gets back to work. She has no idea how Lori’s managed to charm Jess, notoriously wary and sardonic Jess; but within five minutes of leaving the two alone while she went to check on the R&D lab she’s got the straight-edge assistant wrapped around her finger.

Not that Lena can blame her. Lori is terrifyingly easy to get along with.

“Just let me finish up this report and I’ll take you to get gelato.”

She sees Lori fistpump in her peripheral vision.

“Yess.”

Lena smiles absently as both of them get back to their tasks, her typing and Lori scouring through google on Lena’s tablet. There’s a strangely amicable silence for a while, both of them in their own heads, until Lori shifts a little and Lena can feel her staring.

“Mom?” (Lena tries not to shiver. That word being directed at her never fails to unsettle her.) “Are you dating anyone right now?”
And Lena *hates* herself for how her mind zips immediately to Kara—Kara and her bright, sunny smiles, Kara and her tenacious, unyielding *goodness*, Kara and her unconditional faith in Lena—Kara, who she is almost certainly in love with. Kara, who has a boyfriend.

Lena remembers the sound of glass shattering in her ears when Kara broke the news that she was seeing someone. She was bashful, excited, sitting there on Lena’s couch with her beautiful smile that crinkled her eyebrow scar, and the reality of unrequited love finally sank in.

Lena always cognitively *knew*, of course. But feelings rarely leave room for rationality—she told herself that Kara wasn’t interested, all the while still courting her like some lovesick teenager. Allowing her unrestricted access to her office, inviting her to every event, sending her a roomful of flowers—she opened herself up more and more and Kara seemed to welcome it, *encourage* it, even.

Well. That’s what friends do. She wouldn’t know, she supposes, having never had anyone like Kara before. She doesn’t have any business being heartbroken, really, they’re still close friends, after all—and to be honest, what was she expecting? She’s never been fortunate in the romance department.

Which brings her to the million dollar question.

“No—I’m not, at the moment,” she says, idly playing with her pen. “Lori—if you don’t mind me asking,” she starts, furrowing her brows. “Who is your father?”

Lori claps a hand over a particularly sharp and immediate chortle. Lena shifts in her seat, a little awkward.

“Sorry,” Lori says, reaching a hand out placatingly. “I didn’t mean to—I’m sorry, just, the thought of you with a guy is so funny—” she stifles another laugh, running a hand over her mouth to calm herself. “I don’t have a father.”

Lena raises her brows. Okay, so single mom, then. That’s not terrifying at all. “So, a sperm donor?”

Lori shakes her head. “Nope. I was conceived through science!” She looks so delighted at the fact. “Though it means I’m half clone, and that’s kind of weird, but it’s whatever.” She shrugs. “I am 100% biologically related to you and your wife.”

“My—“ Lena gapes. “My wife?”

“Yup.” Lori beams. “You’re happily married to the woman of your dreams.”

Lena chortles at that too, rubbing her temple.

“Well. That’s a relief.” A bit of an understatement. “Who is she?”

Then the room bursts with the catastrophic shattering of glass—Lena flinches, ducks, but somehow she’s curled up on the couch, across the room from where she was. Lori stands where the upturned coffee table used to bee, fists clenched as she faces off against—

*That cyborg thing that’s been working with her mother.*

He crunches through the glass, lumbering closer, sneering at the two of them.

“Hand her over,” he rasps out, and Lena panics as Lori raises her fists.

“Lori, no—“
“Over my dead body, you tincan knockoff.”

He snarls at the insult, rearing to rush her—Lena shrinks, heart beating out of her chest—

She blinks and misses the moment of impact.

Kara’s just about ready to have a heart attack when she hears the windows of Lena’s office shatter, and the telltale growl of Hank Henshaw—she zooms over as fast as she can, pulse thundering in her neck. *Oh no oh no. Please be safe please be safe—*

She’s so wrapped up in worrying about Lena that she almost doesn’t swerve in time to dodge the cyborg getting shot out of the office.

Kara hovers mid-air to watch him careen by and crash into a billboard fifteen blocks away.

“What on earth…?” She turns back to the office to see Lena recoiled on the couch, otherwise unharmed, and Lori pulling her arm back as if winding down from a punch.

“Lori…?” she hears Lena whisper, as surprised as Kara. The girl turns back to her, taking off her glasses and pressing them into hesitant hands.

“Sorry, Mom, I should probably go deal with that…”

*Mom??!*?

A wholly unpleasant sort of fire starts in her chest, roaring in her ears. Lena has a *child*—with *who?? When?? How?? And why didn’t Kara know?*

Her questions multiply when Lori leaps off the balcony and flies up to her, with smiling blue eyes that she would recognize anywhere.

“Supergirl!” Lori grins at her. “Wanna help me kick his ugly faceplate in?”

A garbled scream resounds in the distance and they both flinch.

“Doesn’t sound like I have a choice,” Kara says, puffing out a sigh. Lori laughs before whooshing off, *unbelievably fast*—almost faster than Kara. She tries to keep up, chasing after her, making to land when Lori grabs Henshaw by the shoulders and *chucks him into the sky.*

They take off into the air after him.

“Why did you do that?” Kara asks, hair whipping around her face, unable to help the impressed grin tugging at her mouth.

Lori grins right back. “Rule number one,” she starts to say as they land in the desert near Henshaw’s new crater. “Take the fight away from civilian-heavy areas if you can.”

That’s a *very* good rule, strikingly similar to Kara’s mindset, and she’s puzzled by how Lori says it like an inside joke.

But of course, she doesn’t get the chance to ask anything because Henshaw rushes them with a roar and she finds herself in the most satisfying team up she’s had since she and Alex faced off against Metallo. Lori is always exactly where she needs to be to follow up on one of Kara’s hits, setting
Henshaw up for Kara to follow through in turn—they read each other’s movements perfectly and she’s exhilarated by the time Henshaw pounds into the sand one last time.

Lori whoops. “That was awesome!”

And Kara has so. many. Questions. When Lori does a flying cartwheel, because—who is this girl with Lena’s face and the El family eyes and powers just like her own? Where did she come from? She knows she should be wary, be suspicious, but the way that they just synced up when they fought dissipates all the unpleasant doubts from earlier. She just feels this wholesome happiness in her chest, not unlike the reprieve she got from her constant loneliness when Clark visited.

So she just lets it go for now, and laughs.

“Where did you learn to fight like that?” she asks, putting her fists on her hips and shifting her weight with a big smile. “That was amazing.”

Lori grins back, mimicking her pose.

“I have a really great teacher.”

Chapter End Notes

Lori Danvers, banging pots and pans: I!!!!! Love!!!!! My!!!!! Moms!!!!!!!
of mothers and peace talks

Chapter Summary

Lena snaps. Lillian pays them a visit, and Kara finally knows.

Chapter Notes

I almost named this chapter "fuck you grandma"

hover over Kryptonian for translations!

Sitting in her apartment, Lena watches how her hands tremble, threatening to shake loose the glasses so gingerly held with her fingertips. She tries to focus on her breathing and the world around her—the bright sunlight glinting through her full-length windows, the softness of the carpet underneath her feet, the thread of the armchair against her elbow—but her mind keeps looping through that moment when Lori took off her glasses and pushed them into her hands, smiling apologetically, haloed by the morning light, before turning around and taking off into the air from her balcony like she’s seen Supergirl do so many times.


She slowly opens the arms of the glasses with her thumbs, hesitantly bringing them up to her own eyes. There’s no change in focus. The lenses are prescriptionless.

Lena quickly collapses the frame into her hands and screws her eyes shut.

She startles at a loud thud, looking up to see Lori on the far side of the veranda. The girl smiles brightly at her before running for the sliding door, vaulting over a chaise on the way.

“Mom!” the girl says as soon as she’s through the door. “Are you okay? I’m sorry I had to run off like that—”

“Yeah, I’m—“ Lena runs a hand through her hair as Lori sits across the coffee table from her, taking a stuttering breath. “I’m fine.”

And now that she’s sitting in front of her, it hits Lena like a truck how much she resembles Kara. How all the familiar things she couldn’t place were Kara’s—the blue eyes, the broad shoulders, the nervous way she fiddles with her glasses, the pout, that smile—even the ringlets in her hair aren’t like Lena’s. They’re like Kara’s. Supergirl’s.

“Phew,” Lori laughs. “I was a little worried when I didn’t find you at your office, but I guess you wouldn’t have stayed.”

Not a lot of her words register for Lena. “Lori,” she starts, taking deep, measured breaths. “Did I marry Supergirl?”
And the girl grins at that, albeit a bit sheepishly. “I guess the cat’s out of the bag after that, huh? I wanted to wait a bit before I told you so I wasn’t dropping too many bombs on you—you should have seen us today, though!” Lori leans forward on her knees, excited and animated. “It was so amazing—she’s never let me get that involved in a real fight before, you know? She’s always telling me to hold back, be careful, but today we fought like—like real partners!”

Things start clicking for Lena. The way Lori looked at her with attentive eyes over breakfast while chewing a full mouthful, the way she ducks her head a little bit when she starts smiling, all of it—

“And she was impressed with me! I think I’m gonna tell her when I see her later, Mom—“

“Don’t!” Lena hisses, holding the bridge of her nose. “Call me that. Please.”

There’s a terse silence and she gets up, walking a few steps away for breathing room, back turned. She presses her hands flush against each other and brings it up to her face, taking a deep breath.

“Lori, I need you to understand,” she says, turning around and lowering her hands in a sort of stiff point at the girl. “You’re a good kid, okay? But all of this is incredibly overwhelming, and I need—I need you to stop.” She crosses her arm underneath her chest, holding her other elbow and nervously cradling her hand into the crook of her neck. “Stop all of this, okay? I don’t know what kind of relationship you have with your mom, but I am not her. Whoever she is—whoever I end up turning into, I don’t know her. All I know is that a—a stranger turned up and claimed that I marry Kara and that she’s my family and I need some space to wrap my head around it, okay?” She takes a deep breath, trying to even out her heartbeat. “I don’t exactly have the best experience with family. I don’t even know how you exist—” she gestures at the wide-eyed girl again—“I don’t want kids, I never have.”

She regrets the words the second they leave her mouth—Lori straightens up immediately, clenching her jaw and straining to keep her mouth from crumpling, eyes going glossy with nascent tears. The tendons in her neck tense and she stands, hands fisted to her sides and her chin raised defiantly.

“Lori—“ Lena takes a step forward and half reaches out to the girl, guilt thick in her throat. “I didn’t—I’m sorry, I didn’t mean it like that—“

“No, it’s alright,” Lori says, crossing her arms and trying for a shaky, but still sharp smile. “I understand,” she says, cutting her last word off quickly when her voice starts to tremble too.

“Look, I’m sorry—“

“I should go,” the girl says, stepping out around the couch and towards the veranda door, eyes downcast. “I told Y—Supergirl that I’d be back to talk after I made sure you were okay.”

There’s a short flurry as Lori opens the door and takes off before Lena can say anything else. Her MIT sweater drops to the spot where Lori was sitting a few moments ago. She stares at it as she stands there, outstretched hands slowly falling to her sides, feeling her own tears burning up her throat and around her eyes like a criminal’s brand. She should congratulate herself, really, what a wonderful job she’s done—not even a full twenty-four hours into meeting her daughter and she’s already managed to make the girl feel utterly unwanted, how typical.

Lillian would be proud.

“I still can’t believe you let her go.”
Kara rolls her eyes, fiddling with one of the devices they found on Henshaw’s person. A signal jammer using a powerful electromagnetic pulse, it looks like. She wonders how he was planning to use it without shutting down his entire system as well.

“She’ll be back, I promise.”

“I mean, how does she even know where the DEO building is? Don’t you find that a little bit suspicious?” Alex says, grimacing while struggling with a screwdriver.

Kara puts down the jammer and sighs, giving Alex a beleaguered pout. “We can trust her. I know it.”

“Supergirl, you said that she had the same powers as you, that she was even faster,” J’onn interjects gravely, leaning on worktable. “You took a big risk in letting her go.”

“Guys, just trust me, okay?”

Alex frowns. “Kara, I know that you care about Lena a lot, but just because she looks like her—“

“It’s not that. I don’t know how to explain it, it’s just like—“ Kara gestures with her hand before dropping it to the table with an exasperated puff. “Like I knew her.” She sighs again and shakes her head. “There’s this word in Kryptonian—ukiem. It means familial love, but it also means the innate instinct we have to….” She purses her lips. “To recognize family, sort of. To recognize others of our own blood.”

She looks up to see Alex has put down her tools in favor of giving her an intense, worried look.

“And you felt that with her?”

Kara nods. “I know it sounds crazy to you guys, but just… just trust me, okay?”

“We do, Kara,” J’onn says. “It would just be nice if you followed protocol once in a while.”

His lips curl into a smile as he delivers the quip and Kara laughs softly before returning it gratefully.

“Identify yourself!”

Kara starts at the commotion, darting out of the analysis room to see agents standing to attention, guns out—and Lori, on the staircase landing with the balcony that Kara usually uses to fly in and out, with her hands up and eyes wide. Gone is the MIT sweater, and in its stead a black jacket with a zipper that goes up diagonally across the chest and a big, loose turtleneck collar that rests like a big scarf.

“Stand down!” Kara shouts as she jogs down the steps to her. “It’s okay, she’s with me.”

The agents reluctantly lower their weapons as she reaches Lori’s side.

“Supergirl, she flew in here—“

“I know.” She waves them down. “I got this.”

Pausing a moment to make sure they scatter, she turns to Lori and feels her heart jump to her throat. The girl’s jaw is clenched tight, lower lip trembling slightly, eyes red and glossy with held back tears and it’s the same desperate look she’s seen on Lena when trying not to cry.

She places a soft hand on Lori’s shoulder. “Hey, is’kah, what’s wrong?”
The endearment just kind of slips out of her without any thought—Lori’s head snaps up to look at her, lip crumpling before her eyes brim with tears and she throws herself into Kara’s arms, shaking.

Kara pulls up her arms immediately to hold her, letting the girl tuck her chin on her shoulder. Her heart warms with affection as she notes that they’re the same height—she pulls one hand up to stroke her dark hair, murmuring softly.

“Hey, hey it’s okay.” She rubs the girl’s back with gentle firmness. “I got you. I got you—what’s wrong?”

Lori shakes her head. Kara makes more comforting noises before pulling away slowly, drops her hand down to hold Lori’s.

“Come on, let’s get you sat down.” She tugs her towards the stairs, squeezing her hand. “Do you like ice cream?”

And Lori looks up at her with such big, sad blue eyes that Kara finally understands what Alex means when she tells her that pouting is cheating.

Kara, of course, harnesses that power immediately. It takes Alex a total of about three seconds before she caves to two puppy pouts, relinquishing her secret stash of ice cream that she hides in an empty sample freezer.

The way Lori almost steps forward as if to wrap Alex in a hug before catching herself raises even more questions, but Kara lets the girl take her time to wallow. They sit side by side on a couch in one of the agent lounges, glass walls tinted for privacy. Lori shovels ice cream into her mouth with sad fervour that reminds her of the way Alex stress eats, and she feels her heart grow impossibly big.

She takes and washes both of their bowls in the sink on the far side of the room with superspeed when they finish, sitting back down with an encouraging smile afterwards. Lori fiddles with the strap of her watch, not looking up as Kara shifts to face her.

“I guess you’ll be wanting an explanation, huh.”

Kara chuckles. “Well. That would be nice.” She presses her lips together for a moment. “But that can wait if you don’t feel like it.”

Lori shakes her head. “No, I mean, Au—your sister probably wants to know what’s happening, like pronto.” She allows herself a tiny smile before letting it fall again. “I’m from twenty-two years in the future. Lillian Luthor pulled me here using a crude time machine.”

Kara frowns, untucking her cape from beneath herself. Time travel. A line of development that was very harshly banned on Krypton for fear of corruption of the time stream. She figures the humans would be starting to delve into around now.

“Lillian? Why?”

“Because she needs Luthor DNA to open those stupid vaults,” Lori snorts. “I’m guessing you figured out that Mo—” she swallows. “Lena is actually Lionel Luthor’s daughter.”

Kara nods. Lena told Supergirl a few days after the incident, reeling from the revelation and needing someone to confide in.
“And you’re Lena’s daughter,” she says.

Lori gnaws on her lip as if to stop it from shaking, tucking her chin for a moment before nodding.

“How was she?” Kara asks. “When you went to check on her?”

The girl seems to shrink in on herself a little, eyes flushing a bit with tears.

“She—she was fine. She just—” Lori sniffs, cradling her face.

“Hey,” Kara coos as she scoots closer to wrap her arm around Lori’s shoulders. “Did something happen?”

The girl shakes her head before letting out a weak laugh, pushing the hair out of her face and taking a deep breath.

“It’s not a big deal—I really, really shouldn’t be so upset,” she laughs, trying to laugh off her imminent sobs. “I dropped into her life out of nowhere and just acted like she would know me and—anyone would freak out at that, I have no idea what I was thinking—”

Lori stops as her voice cracks, sniffling and turning her head away to gather herself.

“It’s just that she’s never yelled at me like that before,” she confesses in a hoarse whisper. “She gets stern, and she can be scary, but she’s never just…”

Her shoulders start shaking and Kara pulls her in, stroking her hair again.

“Shh, it’s okay,” she rubs her back. “It’s okay to be upset.”

Lori shakes her head, tucking her face into Kara’s shoulder. “I just can’t believe how stupid I am—”

“You’re not stupid, Lori.” Kara hugs her tighter.

“Kara, there’s a situation—” Alex bursts in and blinks quickly at the two of them before she shakes her head and continues. “Lena’s security system’s been breached.”

They both snap to attention.

“What?” Kara strides over, glancing at Lori quickly—the girl’s following them with an equally intense frown—as she pushes through the door after Alex. “How do you know?”

“We’ve had an alert on her home security ever since she was kidnapped,” Alex says, hurrying down the steps. “Just to get a heads up if Lillian Luthor ever tried anything again—it just pinged a few minutes ago. Someone’s in her house.”

Kara starts towards the balcony landing. “I need to—”

“Kara, wait, we don’t know what’s happening and—”

A loud whoosh sets off behind them, and when Kara turns Lori is gone.

“Crap.”

Lori’s already tearing through the door when Kara lands on the veranda behind her.
“Lori, wait!” She zooms into the house, trying to wrangle the girl into taking a breath to think.

“Mom?!” Lori calls out into the apartment, only grunting a little when Kara grabs her elbow.

“Lori, calm down—“

A familiar sickness grasps at her chest, pain rattling through every bone in her body—she sinks to her knees, crying out.

*Kryptonite.*

“How predictable of you, Supergirl.” Lillian Luthor saunters down the stairs into view, that insufferable smug smile on her face. She pushes a muffled and gagged Lena forward—Kara’s heart aches when Lena falls down the steps and into the floor with a muffled yelp of pain, and she can’t will her leaden limbs to move at all.

“Mom—“ Lori gasps, on her knees as well, trying to crawl forwards to Lena. Lillian steps between them, and swiftly kicks the girl in the ribs with a laugh.

“Lori!” Kara tries to reach out to her. Lena screams, eyes widening, body lurching forward towards Lori, but Lillian pushes her back.

“I’ll never understand what you see in these abominations, Lena.”

In her hand is a glowing green device—just looking at it makes Kara nauseous.

“How did you get that?” She manages to say, struggling to get back to her feet.

Lillian glances at the device nonchalantly. “Oh this? Just a little gift my son left for me. A kryptonite simulator, you see—it gives off radiation at the same wavelength that breaks down your cells.” She smiles at them, thoroughly pleased with herself. “The drawback is that it burns out in five minutes, but I’ll be long gone with Lena by then.”

“You’re not—“ Lori gasps. “You’re not going anywhere with her!”

Lillian’s expression falls flat.

“You’re right—I’m not leaving until after I’ve put you down.” Kara feels horror filling her chest like bile as the woman pulls a gun from inside her coat, clicking off the safety and pointing it squarely at Lori’s head. She begs her body to move, to act—

“No, *please,* don’t hurt her!” she screams, struggling forwards.

Lena lets out a hoarse shout again, struggling to her knees with her hands tied behind her back, trying to get to Lori—but Lillian turns with a seamless backhand and drops her sharply to the floor.

“Don’t get in the way, Lena,” she says in the same tone a parent would admonish a petulant child. “I’m going to fix your mistake—I couldn’t believe my eyes when she tore through my containment field, honestly. My daughter, a Luthor, consorting with the likes of *them*—“ Lori winces as she waves the gun towards the Kryptonians. “Bringing this filthy half-breed into the world.”

“I am *not* a half-breed!” Lori shouts, crying out when Lillian kicks her again.

“Hurts to be called that, doesn’t it, you mutt?” She laughs. “Not alien enough to be anywhere near as strong as your kin, not human enough to fit in. You live your pathetic life, knowing that you’ll never belong anywhere, that you’ll always be a disgusting chimera—“ she levels her gun at Lori’s head
again. “Well, I’ll do you a favor and put you out of your misery.”

Lori growls once before bracing her hands against the floor and swinging her legs up, using the momentum to kick the gun out of Lillian’s hands. The woman cries out, clutching her wrist to her chest, before watching Lori get to her feet with horror—she stretches out the kryptonite device to ward her off, but Lori only winces before charging forward.

“I am not a chimera,” she declares, grabbing Lillian’s arm and twisting it sharply before kneeing her in the gut. She grabs the woman by the collar and lifts her up off her heels, leaving her clawing at her hands and gasping.

“My name is Lorelai L. Danvers!” She snarls, lifting Lillian higher. “A proud daughter of the House of El and the Luthor dynasty—I am more than a sum of my parts, and you will never lay a hand on my mother ever again!”

Lori pulls one hand away to punch Lillian in the face, hard—the woman falls to the floor from the impact, dropping the device. Lori cradles her bruised fist to her chest before limping over to where the device skidded, forcefully crushing it under her heel.

Kara feels the pain in her chest lift as soon as the green light goes out—still a little woozy, she jumps to her feet, ready to restrain Lillian—the eldest Luthor gives her one terrified look before pulling out yet another device from her pockets and Kara claps her hands over her ears at the painful screech. It only stops a few moments later—she opens her eyes to Lena clutching the device in her hands, having maneuvered to deactivate it behind her back. Lillian is nowhere to be seen, only the apartment’s front door hanging open. Kara curses under her breath before hurrying over to Lena’s side, quickly heat visioning the cuffs apart and tugging the knots of the gag loose.

“Lena.” Her heart clenches at the red lines running from the edge of Lena’s mouth—she brushes dark hair out of her face, feeling herself relax with relief—Lena is here, vulnerable green eyes and all, Lena is safe.

“Supergirl,” Lena whispers, bringing a hand up to Kara’s face and hovering just and inch from her skin. “Are you alright?”

She nods, unable to hold back a quick laugh. Lena’s the one who almost got kidnapped again, and she’s worried about Kara. Lena sighs, relieved, before furrowing her brows and turning away. Kara watches her get up and rush to Lori, kneeling down again and trying to coax the girl to uncurl from her tense position.

“Hey,” Lena murmurs, smoothing her hands over the girl’s back and leaning in to where Lori’s hiding her face. “Lori, are you okay?”

“Loud noises,” Lori whispers, hugging herself tighter. “Not good.”

And Kara suddenly remembers so viscerally, her first years on Earth when everything was too loud and her chest would feel full of water and panic and all she could do was curl up and try to protect herself from the world.

Lorelai L. Danvers.

She looks at Lena running a hand through Lori’s hair and feels in her chest what she’s known since the moment she met Lori—this is her child. Her daughter.

She pads over to them and tries for a reassuring smile when Lena gives her a worried glance.
“She’ll be okay in a few minutes. Just stay with her.” Her heart twinges when Lena wraps her arm around Lori and nods. “I need to get back to HQ and report in on what happened, but I’ll be back. Will you be okay?”

“Yes,” Lena says softly. “We’ll be alright.”

Her whole body hesitates before she heads towards the door, as if it’s waiting, as if it’s missing something—but she wills herself to turn and walk away.

Her daughter. She has a daughter. With Lena. A headstrong, talented daughter. With Lena.

A grin stretches across her face as she flies through the warm afternoon glow.

When Lori finally speaks up again, it’s a quiet mumble that Lena doesn’t quite catch.

She looks up from where she’s sitting cross-legged on the bed across from… from her daughter. She moved them into the bedroom after Kara left, figuring Lori would appreciate something softer to curl up on than the floor.

“Did you say something?” she asks, keeping her voice low as to not startle the girl. Lori finally peaks out from her curtain of dark hair, pushing it back with her newly-healed hand.

“I’m sorry,” she mumbles again, glancing up quickly and nervously. “For earlier.”

Lena closes her eyes and sighs. “No, Lori, I—I’m the one who needs to apologize. I shouldn’t have snapped at you like that.”

Lori shakes her head. “No, I understand, you were freaked out—"

“And there are better ways to express that.” Lena wrings her hands. “Look, Lori—I was being unfair to you and getting angry when I was actually scared about something else.”

The girl looks up at her, the sunset light glinting in those blue eyes that inspire so much affection in Lena that it’s terrifying. Lena pauses to gather her thoughts and pushes on through the fear.

“I didn’t have a particularly good relationship with my parents. I think Dad loved me, and he was kind, but he was never around, and Mom—” she laughs. “Well. You’ve seen what she’s like.”

The joke doesn’t quite land—if anything, Lori looks sad and angry, her fists clenching in her lap. Lena takes a deep breath and continues.

“My point is that I don’t really have an example for what good parenting is like.” She raises her brows and shakes her head lightly, looking down at her hands. “Everything was always a transaction—I would get a gift if I did this, I was only allowed to do something if I didn’t do another thing, and so on. And—” she hesitates. “And a lot of my relationships ended with me hurting someone because that was the mindset I brought with me.”

(And for the longest time, she just sort of accepted that that’s how she was—she wasn’t capable of love. She didn’t think she deserved it. And then Kara Danvers came crashing into her world with her unconditional affection and she felt like she was being allowed a glimpse of light after being kept in the dark her whole life.)

“But when you got here, you were just so happy to see me and… I freaked out.” She sighs, blinking
at the ceiling to try and collect back some of her pooling tears. “I got scared and lashed out because I
couldn’t see myself in a future where my family was happy. A future where, I had a daughter and I
wouldn’t make her hate me. Where I would actually get it right.”

She manages to get through that last part without her voice shaking, so small victories, at least—she
finally looks up at Lori with red eyes and a wry, forced smile. Lori’s just staring at her with such a
sad face—brows crinkling, mouth downturned, head tilted. After a moment she reaches forward and
takes both of Lena’s hands into hers.

“Mom, I can’t… I can’t think of a single time when I was upset with you and you didn’t make it
better.” She runs her thumbs over the backs of Lena’s hands. “And not because you always gave in,
or spoiled me—you would sit down with me and talk, try to understand how I felt. No matter how
busy you were with work, you always took the time to make sure we understood each other.” Lori
shakes her head and smiles sadly. “You’ve been my best friend since before I can remember.”

Lena holds onto Lori’s hands, squeezing her fingers harder and harder with every word, trying to
hold back the tears. The thought of it—her being the mother she always wanted, the one she has no
idea how to be—makes every heartbeat ache like a bruise, somehow makes all the old wounds in her
memories open like there’s no tomorrow. She pulls back one hand quickly to catch a tear that gets
through, turning her face away.

“Oh my god, please don’t cry,” Lori sniffles, wiping at her own eyes. “You’re making me cry.”

“I can’t help it,” Lena laughs, pulling away her other hand to and using the heels of her palms to stop
the tearstreaks. “I’ve always been a bit of a crybaby.”

“I know,” Lori laughs too, sniffling loudly. “I get it from you.”

She takes a deep breath, turning her face up to blink at the ceiling just like her mother did a few
minutes ago—before glancing through the windows at the veranda below.

“She’s back.”

Lena turns, and sure enough, Supergirl waves awkwardly from beside one of the lounge chairs. Lena
snorts before pushing herself to the edge of the bed and heading downstairs to greet her, Lori
following close behind.

“You can come in,” Lena says halfway down the stairs, knowing that Kara would be able to hear her
from outside the glass door. She touches down to the floor as the superhero steps in, with none of her
usual bluster—just soft hesitance.

She steps a bit closer before folding her hands behind her back and offering a gentle smile.

“Hello, Lena.” She glances at her daughter. “Lori.”

Lori smiles. “Ehrosh :bem, eh Yeyu.”

There’s a moment where Kara’s eyes widen and Lena realizes that Lori must have spoken in their
native language—her heart aches for the glimpses of the painful past that Kara has let her see.

Lori places a hand on Lena’s shoulder and presses a quick kiss to the side of her head. “I’ll give you
two some time to talk.”

She squeezes once before walking out to the veranda and taking off, leaving the two staring at one
another in the sunset light, quiet, hesitant, teetering on the verge of something soft and wonderful.
okay the response to this has been so unexpected and amazing!!! thank you so much for reading, and sorry to fans of gold-crested ravens bc i don't think I'll be able to update that one this weekend;;;

I'm not able to write until next friday but sit tight!! I've got the next chapter all planned! thanks for reading and have a good week!

come visit me at wtfoctagon.tumblr.com if you want intermittent screaming about this fic or want to ask questions about the au!

EDIT(from an ask i answered earlier): I put the translation in hoverboxes over the text but I realize that those don’t work on mobile I’m sorry lskfdjnvsldkfdn

is’kah means “Little One”: the literal translation is something like “our baby girl”, with the feminine form of “infant” and the familial possessive suffix for “our”- i realize this sounds a little bit weird in english but the “our” is kind of like a general term for saying that one belongs in the family? if any of you speak korean you’ll know that “our son/daughter” is a term of endearment as well!

erosh bem: I actually spelled this one wrong whoops lmao I’m gonna go change it later. It’s Ehrosh :Bem, the colon standing for a nasalization before the first syllable- it means “good journey”, used as hello or goodbye interchangeably.

Yeyu: “Mother/Mom”. the correct romanization on kryptonian.info is /ieiu/, but i guess i found that kind of confusing? I personally have a lot of gripes with overly obtuse romanizations of korean when as a bilingual i know there’s a simpler, more accurate way of writing it- the ipa says [jeju] and if you say ieiu fast then it comes out that way, but idk. I mean i know it makes more logical sense bc the vowel characters for /ie/ and /iu/ are a fusion of the characters for /i/ and /e/, same for /i/ and /u/. Who knows, I might actually go change this later but for now I hope you guys don’t mind me taking a few liberties lskdfjvndfs

TL;DR: “is’kah”= “Little One”, “Ehrosh :Bem, Yeyu”: “Hi, Mom”
“Hi, Mom.”

There’s something that squeezes in Kara’s chest when the Kryptahnioo slips from Lori’s mouth like silk, accentless, perfect in the inflections like she hasn’t heard since her own mother’s last goodbye—and suddenly, the entire moment turns into an ensemble of home away from home. The setting sun glows the red of homesickness, flowing into Lena’s apartment through the two-story high glass wall and brings the ghosts of a morning in Argos city brushing at the edges of her mind.

Lori, a few inches taller than Lena, with the same face and same smile but with Kara’s eyes, with Kara’s language, kissing the side of Lena’s head before heading off with a fond look—all of it is so mundane and yet there’s a gap in Kara’s soul that yearns to fill the mornings of her life with this moment, this familiarity. The could be aches in her chest.

Most of her aches as Lori gently steps away, because Lena’s standing there, so achingly beautiful in the tall shadows cast on the open, wide space. The sunset brings out auburn glints in her dark hair like the firm, encompassing warmth of embers in a languishing campfire, coaxing out the amber sunburst that haloes her inner irises—Lena’s eyes are usually such a vibrant viridian encircled by a ring of deep blue, but right now they remind Kara of young grass peeking through faded red bricks of an old garden by the sea.

Kara’s eyes flit over her pale skin, the way that her cheeks always look slightly flushed like drops of rosewater on parchment—and the purple that’s blooming from the cut on her lip.

“You’re hurt,” she breathes, rushing forwards, hands coming up to hold her, examine the wound—she stops with her fingertips just inches away from Lena’s face, halting at the sudden spike of her human heartbeat. Lena’s eyes flutter from Kara’s hand to her face like shy butterflies. She brings her own fingers up to her lips, pressing gingerly before tucking her chin and averting her eyes, and Kara can hear her breath stuttering in her chest next to her hummingbird heartbeats.

“I’m alright.” Lena’s voice is susurrus and soft in the velvet air between them. She looks back up and Kara can’t help her hyperfocus on the way her lashes flicker so daintily. “Don’t worry.”

Kara’s brows crease. “Does it hurt?”

Lena shakes her head, glancing at the hands still hovering near her face. Kara drops them to her side, tentatively shuffling a little bit out of Lena’s personal space.
“I’m… I’m sorry you got hurt,” she says, guilt gnawing at the hollow of her throat. Lena draws her brows together in a quizzical smile, tilting her head just so—a few locks of dark hair cascade over her shoulder from the movement.

“You have nothing to apologize for,” she half-laughs. “If anything, I should be sorry. It was my mother assaulting you, after all.”

Kara frowns, wringing her hands. “You’re not responsible for your mother’s actions, Lena.”

The way her smile twinges a bit wider with benign disbelief makes Kara want to step forward again and wipe it away from the corner of her mouth, to somehow make her understand how much she doesn’t deserve to bear all that weight—but her ardor catches in her chest again and she just clasps her hands together tightly.

“So,” she starts, trying to resist the urge to rock back and forth on her heels. “Lori’s last name is…”

Lena crosses one arm low across her chest and cradles her other elbow in that slightly vulnerable way that she does, shifting her weight. “Danvers.”

Kara takes a breath. “And she can…”

She makes vague hand motions, trying to convey flying or something to segue into talking about the elephant in the room, but Lena’s soft laugh stops her short. Her hand plops to her side again as Lena bites her lip hesitantly, smile falling into a softer, more solemn expression.

“It’s okay, Kara,” she whispers.

And Kara feels something drain from her shoulders like chips falling into place—of course, of course Lena knows. It would be silly to think she wouldn’t have pieced it together after Lori’s outburst, but more than that, there’s something about the way she smiles at the two of them—the way her eyes always seem to see right past Kara Danvers’s flustered clumsiness and Supergirl’s confident bluster, the way, at some point, she stopped being so disheartened at Kara’s sudden departures or so surprised at Supergirl’s drop-ins.

Blue-green-amber eyes stare into hers—just her. Kara.

(The implication of her own singularity sounds so simple, so right around Lena’s lips.)

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you sooner.” The apology sounds so lackluster. Lena just smiles.

“Don’t be. There was no reason for me to know.”

The smile she offers is genuine, without a hint of blame or sarcasm but Kara feels her stomach do unwieldy flips regardless.

“Still, I…”

“Kara.” Lena softly grasps her forearm, sending a blossom of warmth through her bones. “It’s your secret to tell. You would have told me if you needed to.”

Kara stares at her feet. “I don’t want you to think that it was because I didn’t trust you. I do.”

“I know.” Lena squeezes her arm once before letting go, stepping away to lean against the back of one of her couches and sighing. “I won’t… lie,” she says with a small laugh, crossing her arms and tucking her chin for a moment—she looks up at Kara with a small, wry quirk of the lips and
furrowed brows. “For a while I was a bit angry. I felt like you were trying to get close to me to keep tabs on me because I’m a Luthor.”

Kara takes a hasty step forward, hand reaching for Lena, throat tightening. “It wasn’t like that—“

“I know, Kara,” Lena reassures her, glancing at the hand hovering near her. “I was how I felt at first, but it’s not how I feel now.” She clasps her hands in her lap. “After all you’ve done for me, it’d be kind of silly for me to hold onto a grudge like that.”

Lena gives her such a soft, frank smile, Kara finds herself hesitantly coming to lean on the couch next to Lena, fidgeting with her hands.

“You’re not angry with me?”

Lena lets out a short laugh. “Of course not, I have no reason to be. It wouldn’t be much of a secret if you went around telling everyone you met.” She smirks at Kara before shaking her head. “I knew you’d tell me if I needed to know.”

Something in Kara’s chest feels hollow, almost as if she’s—unsatisfied with Lena’s response. Like there should be more anger, or more guilt, or something. She takes a deep breath.

“I… Thank you.”

Lena gives another rueful smile before shifting and looking down at her hands. “About Lori…”

Kara sucks in a breath.

“We don’t…” Lena stops frowns like she’s struggling with her words. “We don’t have to talk about us.”

Kara furrows her brows, feeling…. Unhappy.

“About us?”

Lena nods. “I mean, the implications of Lori’s parents being you and I are…” She snorts. “Awkward, at best. What with your boyfriend and how I feel about you.”

Kara’s brain does something akin to tripping over a record scratch noise and she blinks several times.

“How you… feel about me?”

Lena stares at her for a moment before looking away with an exaggerated tight-lipped smile.

“Well,” she says, clearing her throat. “This is mortifying.” She laughs the way that people do while they’re crying out for help inside. “I thought you would’ve definitely figured it out by now.”

“I—” Kara swallows harshly. There’s a pressure at her throat, something like fear, even as the all the pieces fall into place. (Of course, Lena’s heartbeat always picks up around her. The tension drains from her shoulders as with no one else when they’re together, and she always delights in spending time with Kara like a sunflower yearning after the horizon—all these little things that make Kara’s chest flush with something like joy.

And now she can’t stop thinking about Winn’s stony silence or Mon-El’s heartbroken face.)

“Lena, I had no idea, I’m so—“
“Please don’t,” Lena says, hurriedly placing her hand on Kara’s. “Please don’t apologize.” She looks up, earnest pleading in the crinkle of her brow and twinkle in her eyes. “These are my feelings. I’m responsible for them, and no one else.”

Kara clenches her eyes shut, trying to even out her breathing.

“I didn’t know.”

Lena brushes her thumb over one of Kara’s knuckles.

“And that’s nothing to be sorry for.”

Kara frowns back up at her.

“I don’t want—to confuse you or hurt you, I—“

“You haven’t,” Lena insists. “Trust me, Kara, I’ve been played with before,” she says with a short laugh (Kara’s chest roils), “and you’ve been…“ she sighs. “You’ve been a wonderful friend.”

And there’s that hollowness again, that unsettled sort of malcontent, like expecting another step at the top of the stairs and stumbling—her shoulders feel weak, somehow, and she realizes she’s been tensed up for a fight that didn’t come.

“Why didn’t…” Kara gnaws on her bottom lip. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

Lena draws her hand back into her lap, leaning away slightly.

“I meant it when I said that you’re my only friend in this city. And no one’s been there for me like you, ever.” She laughs listlessly again. “I didn’t want to make you feel uncomfortable or worse, lose you.”

Kara shakes her head vehemently. “You wouldn’t have lost me—I wouldn’t abandon you like that.”

Lena smiles at her sadly. “I know. That’s part of why, too. You’re so…” She pauses and frowns at the ceiling for a moment. “You’re so selfless. You would have pushed yourself so hard to accommodate me and I didn’t want that.” She shakes her head. “You’ve been telling me about how big of a change it’s been, having to share your sister for the first time—I didn’t want to make your life any harder than it already was. I wanted to be half as good a friend as you’ve been to me.” She sighs. “I want to be.”

Kara sees the determination in Lena—the ardent caring—and she tries to come up with something to say other than the automatic apologies welling up in her throat.

“Apparently, twenty-two years into the future, I invent a fail-safe for accidental time travel,” Lena pushes on, sighing. “When that version of me comes to rescue Lori, we’ll have our memories wiped. Which is,” she laughs, “a smidge bit terrifying, but… Necessary, I suppose. We’ll go back to our normal lives without any earth-shattering revelations about the future. We can just… wait until then.”

To just wait. Just ignore the fact that it’s the two of them who have a daughter together until they don’t remember anymore. Kara feels sick.

“Yeah,” she says, nodding. “That would… that would probably be the easiest.”

She doesn’t know why she’s nodding along and agreeing—maybe it’s, just that. That it’s easier than having to deal with the fact that she’s going to have a child with someone who she isn’t currently
dating and she already loves that child.

There’s a faint groan from outside the apartment.

“Boo.”

Kara laughs and turns towards the glass, leg hiking up slightly on the back of the couch.

“Lori. I thought you were going to give us a moment to talk.”

Lena frowns at her, confused, until a petulant Lori drops into view on the veranda. She drags her feet until she’s pressed up against the glass, making an infinitely miserable face at the both of them.

“Stay for dinner at least?” She mumbles. “I have so much to tell you both.”

Kara laughs, turning towards Lena with a bit of a bashful smile.

“What’s she saying?” Lena asks, bemused. Kara runs a hand through her hair.

“She wants me to stay for dinner.”

Lena rolls her eyes, shooting Lori a look. “You don’t have to. After all that’s happened today I’m sure you’re exhausted—“

“No, I—“ Kara smiles, clasping her hands together. ‘I’d love to. If you don’t mind, of course, I can just, go if I’m being a bother—“

“No, no, of course not—we’d love to have you, if you’d like that. Again, you don’t have to—“

“No, I—“ Kara stops when Lori groans again, loudly enough for Lena to hear this time, and rolls her eyes. She looks at Lena, and they just stare at each other for a moment before breaking into laughter at their own haplessness.

“I have to report back to my, um, organization,” Kara says, finally, pushing up to her feet. “So they don’t mark Lori down as a hostile, but I’ll be back at… seven?”

Lena smiles as she stands as well, starting to walk Kara to the door. “Seven sounds good.”

Kara takes a last look at Lena—at the blue-green eyes burnishing a rich myrtle green and gold—before taking a beat to wave awkwardly and step outside. A short assault of a hug from Lori later, she’s off in the air, hurtling towards the DEO with an unbearable lightness in her chest.

“Supergirl!”

Alex comes up to her immediately when she touches down on the landing, forehead creased with concern. Kara just grabs her hand and starts pulling her upstairs into a briefing room—stopping a moment when they pass by J’onn to grab him as well.

(from the way his eyebrows are inching towards his hairline, he’s already getting a telepathic briefing anyway.)

“Kara, what—“
Kara shuts the door behind them and turns to them with an almost giddy hop.

“Guys, you won’t believe what I found out.”

Alex crosses her arms, shifting her weight. “Did you figure out who that girl really is?”

Kara nods—Alex’s frown just deepens as she looks between her sister’s hysterically happy smile and J’onn’s look of shock.

“She’s my daughter.”

Alex choke.

“She’s your what?”

“My daughter,” Kara breathes out again.

“Okay, Kara,” Alex shuffles her feet and holds out a hand, narrowing her eyes. “Last time I checked, it’s impossible for you to have a teenaged daughter right now. So unless I’m missing something about Kryptonian physiology—“

“Time travel,” J’onn cuts in, crossing his arms. “She’s from the future.”

Alex gapes. Kara nods excitedly.

“Twenty two years in the future. And she’s seventeen!” she crows. “I’m going to have a family in five years.”

“Five years,” Alex breathes, still frozen. “Five years, and you’re not fazed by the fact that she looks exactly like Lena, or that she’s pretending to be Lena’s niece?”

Kara grimaces nervously. “Well, that’s the thing—she’s, um,” Kara gulps, glancing at J’onn. He says nothing. “She’s Lena’s daughter too.”

Alex blinks very slowly.

“I’m sorry, I think I just blacked out and hallucinated you saying that you have a child with Lena Luthor.”

Kara groans. “Alex, how many times do we have to go over this? She’s not like her family—“

“That is—“ Alex laughs mirthlessly, emphatically holding up both hands now— “literally the least worrying thing about all this—am I somehow missing the fact that A, time travel isn’t possible, B, you are not currently dating Lena, and C, you don’t have the— the equipment to get her pregnant?”

Kara blanches. “Well, I could’ve—“

“No, you couldn’t’ve, and we both know that.”

Kara swallows and looks down at her, feet, feeling a sudden weight in her chest. She’s always known that she’s unable to have children on earth, because Kryptonian unvulnerability derives from certain organs that absorb yellow sunlight. An embryo would be crushed, unable to push against her body with enough force, before it could develop at all.

Alex grimaces, reaching for Kara’s shoulder.
“Hey, I’m sorry, I didn’t—I didn’t mean to upset you, I—“

“No, it’s okay,” Kara says, placing her hand over Alex’s and looking up with a tentative smile. “I—I know. That’s why—that’s why I’m so excited, you know? I didn’t think that I could ever have kids, and then, there she is.” She squeezes Alex’s hand lightly. “She’s so smart, and funny, and talented—and she speaks Kryptahniuo, Alex. She speaks it fluently. I haven’t had a proper conversation in my first language with anyone in thirteen years.”

She only notices that her voice has started to shake in the middle of her words when J’onn places his hand on her other shoulder, holding her firmly with a gentle smile. A deep tenor of his emotions wisp along the borders of her consciousness like they do sometimes when she’s around him—little dreams of watching two daughters grow up, a blurred glimpse of the euphoria of finding another of his kind after so many resigned years of solitude.

“I’ll have her marked down as non-hostile,” he says, and Kara gives him a grateful smile.

“Are you sure?” Alex worried her lower lip, crossing her arms again. “We don’t actually know anything about her—“

“Alex…”

“Kara, I—“ Alex sighs. “I trust you, okay? I’m just worried.”

Kara nods, looking down at her feet. “I’m sorry.”

Alex takes her hand again, frowning. “What are you apologizing for?”

“I—I don’t know, I—“

“Kara!”

The door bursts open to a winded-looking Mon-El glaring at her, and she resists the urge to flinch.

“Kara—“ he rushes over, just barely stopping long enough for Alex and J’onn to step away before taking both her shoulders in his hands. “Kara, where have you been?”

Kara tries for a puzzled smile. “Hey to you too—I was working?—“

He makes that little angry face where he clenches his jaw and his teeth bare a little bit—the one that makes Kara’s stomach turn.

“You haven’t been answering any of my texts,” he says, voice rising. “I was worried sick, Kara, can’t you check in at least once?”

Kara frowns, shrugging his hands away and stepping back. “Hey, I’m sorry that I have a city to save, okay? Sometimes between that and CatCo, I don’t even have time to stop and eat.”

“Really, you don’t have time for one text?” he scoffs. “You always do this, Kara! You think that just because you’re a superhero, you’re so above it all, you can’t even stop to tell your boyfriend that you’re fine—” he growls, gesturing angrily. “You are so full of yourself—“

“Hey!” Alex steps in, snarling. “You don’t talk to my sister like that!”

He sneers for a moment, almost as if he’s going to retaliate—Kara moves to step inbetween them, panicked, but he’s already backed off by the time she gets there.
He blinks at her sudden movement, then scoffs. “Are you—are you serious? You think I’d hurt your sister?”

Kara flinches at his pointing. “Mon-El, I—“

“No, this is fine—“ He laughs sardonically, stepping back listlessly, defeated. “Glad to know just how little you think of me, Kara. Just grand.”

His lower lip trembles a little as he glares at her one last time before storming out of the briefing room. Kara screws her eyes shut, winding her hands into her own hair and pacing a bit in frustration.

“I can’t believe him,” Alex scoffs. “Who does he think he is? You’re not responsible for babysitting him—“

“No, no, he’s right, Alex,” Kara sighs. “I’ve been neglecting him, I keep putting work first—“

“As you should, Kara.” Alex frowns at her, disbelieving, and Kara feels some sort of shame burn through her. “You have every right to prioritize your work, you see him like, every night. He’s being a complete asshole—“

“It’s not his fault, okay?” Kara pleads. “I have to run off on him so often, he gets insecure, is all. I need to just—“ she sighs again, heading after him. “I’m sorry, you guys, I’ll talk to you later.”

She steadfastly ignores the ghostly tendrils of deep concern trailing after her.
the unbearable lightness of being pt.2

Chapter Summary

major trigger warning for emotional abuse and minor gaslighting

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Do you think she’ll like pasta?”

Lori glances at her while opening a can of tomato sauce. “I’m pretty sure she likes anything edible.”

Lena snorts as she finishes slicing a mushroom and puts it in the bowl with the rest of the slices before taking another. “Be serious, Lori. I didn’t have much on hand last minute—do you think we should have just ordered takeout instead?”

Lori rolls her eyes as she goes to rinse the can opener under the faucet.

“Neither of you ever have time to cook usually, so she just about cries with joy whenever she gets to eat something you made.”

“Really?” Lena asks, preening, unexpectedly pleased with herself. “I must get a lot better at cooking, then.”

Lori shrugs. “Eh. It’s mostly the novelty factor. Your cooking’s alright, I guess.”

She says it with such reluctance that Lena looks up from her cutting board, scoffing. “Excuse me.” She flings a mushroom slice at the girl and laughs as Lori squeaks when it hits her in the face. “Smartass.”

“You’re being mean,” Lori whines pitifully, pouting up a storm as she picks up the slice to chuck into the trashbin. Lena rolls her eyes.

“Oh please. You could’ve dodged easily.”

The girl breaks character at that, dissolving into giggles as she starts to shuffle linguini into the boiling pot. Lena smiles and shakes her head at the mischievous display.

“Are you always this dramatic?”

Lori looks at her at that, putting a hand to her chest as if ostentatiously offended, tucking her chin in absolute shock.

“Me? Dramatic? I wonder just who I could be getting it from!”

Lena laughs, just hard enough that she has to put down her knife, picking up another mushroom slice and threatening to chuck it again.

“Stop that,” she chortles, wrinkling her nose at Lori. “You’re such a little shit.”
Lori grins at her as she stirs the pasta. “That, I get from Yeyu.”

The soft buzz of Lena’s phone interrupts their antics, and Lena hurriedly wipes her hands on a towel before picking up.

She smiles at Kara’s caller ID coming up on the screen. “Hello?”

“Hey, Lena…” The tone of her voice sets Lena on edge immediately—she sounds so tired.

“Hey, Kara.” She wedges the phone between her shoulder and head before turning back to her workstation. “What’s up?”

“I, um,” Kara sighs. “I have to cancel on you guys, I’m sorry…”

Lena stops her motions and bites back a disappointed sigh.

“That’s alright. We can reschedule for a better time.”

She ignores the way Lori frowns next to her.

“I’m so, so sorry, Lena, I just—“ Kara makes a frustrated noise. “Something came up, and—“

“It’s okay,” Lena laughs softly. “You don’t have to explain yourself to me, Kara. If you can’t make it, you can’t make it. How does tomorrow sound?”

“Yeah, tomorrow works—I just—I’m really sorry—“

Lena knits her brows together. “Hey, you have nothing to apologize for.” She hesitates for a beat. “Are you alright?”

It seems to take Kara off-guard. There’s a pause before she finally says, “Yeah, I’m okay. Why?”

“It’s just that…” Lena tries to tread carefully. “You’ve been so apologetic lately. I was just wondering if everything’s alright.”

Kara’s breath sounds so brittle on the other end.

“Yeah, everything’s—everything’s fine, I’ve just been stressed. Sorry.”

Lena gives another soft laugh. “Don’t be. Text me tomorrow when you’re free?”

“Y-yeah.”

“Goodnight, Kara,” Lena says, going for a reassuring tone as her lips curve up in a smile that goes unseen.

“Goodnight, Lena.”

She holds her phone in front of her for a moment after Kara hangs up, sighing deeply. Worry gnaws at her robustly—Kara doesn’t usually sound so listless, so small, but for the past while she’s been… so meek. Lena chews on her lip for a moment, trying not to be too concerned.

“Kara has to reschedule tonight,” she says, pocketing her phone.


“Hey,” Lena murmurs, reaching over to tousle Lori’s hair. “Don’t look so down, we’ll see her
tomorrow.”

The girl swats at her hand half-heartedly, peering up at her with a small smile.

“Yeah, I know. I guess I was just really hyped to hang out with you two.”

Lena grins at her lopsidedly before putting the last sliced mushroom into the bowl and rinsing the knife.

“Tomorrow, monkey.”

She places the knife on the drying rack, looking up to find Lori beaming at her with the brightness of ten suns.

She smiles, brows furrowing, a little taken aback. “What?” She realizes what she’s said. “Sorry, that was weird—”

Lori shakes her head. “No! It was just—“ she grins wide. “That’s what you usually call me.”

Lena smiles as she moves to put a pan on the stove, feeling her chest fill up with impossibly vast fondness.

“Alright, how about we stuff our faces and you can tell me more about your semester.”

“Thanks for making dinner.”

Kara smiles at him over her shoulder, rinsing the plates.

“No problem.” She dries her hands and goes to sit back across from him, fighting the tiredness in her shoulders. He smiles at her sweetly, reaching across the island bench to hold her hands.

“Sorry about earlier,” he says, eyes softening with vulnerability, rubbing his thumbs over her palms. “I was just worried all day, and then I finally found you and you were just so nonchalant about it…”

Kara swallows, wanting to push up her glasses but not pulling her hands away. “I’m sorry.”

He squeezes her hands. “You just make me feel so crazy. Like, you’re so… strong and dependable, it’s hard to keep up. You don’t need me, and I’m always scared I’m gonna get left behind.”

Her chest clenches. “Mon-El, I’m sorry—I don’t—I don’t mean to make you feel like that.”

He smiles at her ruefully. “I just feel so vulnerable around you, you know?” He sighs. “Could you try to make more time for me?”

She nods, squeezing his hands. “Yeah, I will. I promise.”

Things are fine, she tells herself. They just had a good dinner, they made up, and he’s smiling that sweet, kind of pretty smile at her and his hands aren’t too warm on hers and she’s happy. She’s fine. Everything is fine.
“What are you doing here, Jess?” Lena asks, nearly jumping out of her skin when her assistant steps into the elevator with them. “It’s Sunday.”

“Good morning to you too, Miss Luthor,” she says impassively, scrolling through something on her tablet. Lori laughs.

“Hey Jess.”

Jess shoots her a small, rare smile. “Hey Lori.”

Lena scoffs and shakes her head. “My question still stands, you know.”

Jess glances at her. “It’s your day off too.”

Lena sniffs indignantly. “I was just checking on something in the labs. What’s your excuse?”

“Just checking on something in the network,” she shoots back, shrugging.

Lena shakes her head again. “Workaholic,” she mutters under her breath.

Lori snorts and Lena sees the two girls share a knowing look. They’re getting on like a house on fire, honestly, it’s frightening.

“I saw that,” she says sternly as the elevator dings on the main floor. “Do what you need to and go home, Jess. That’s an order.”

“Of course, Miss Luthor.”

Lori giggles. “Bye, Jess!”

Lena sees Jess wave at her with a smile through the closing elevator doors and puffs out a sigh.

“How did you win her over so fast?” She mutters as she walks towards the entrance, more rhetorically and under her breath than anything. Lori falls into step next to her with a grin.

“Oh, you know. My natural charm.”

Lena raises a brow, giving her an incredulous smile.

“And that shining humility, yeah?” she quips, opening the door for the girl. Lori wrinkles her nose at her and opens her mouth to shoot back before stopping short and grinning.

“Yeyu!”

Lena turns to see Kara walking up to them with a grin, grunting a little when Lori hops over and latches on. (Lena tries not to flush at the sight of her crush in non-work clothes. The blonde looks beautiful, with half her hair up in a braid, in jeans and a handsome Henley shirt underneath a baseball jacket.)

“Oof” Kara laughs, twirling the girl a little. “Hello to you too, is’kah,” she wheezes, putting her down and patting her back. She smiles over Lori’s shoulder at Lena.

“Morning, Kara,” Lena says, walking up to them.

Kara grins back as Lori finally lets go of her. “Morning.”
Lori beams at her. “What are you doing here? I thought you were busy until later.”

Kara smiles. “My deadline got pushed back a few days, so I thought I’d surprise you guys. If you’re okay with that, of course—”

“We are!” Lori looks at Lena. “We are, right?”

Lena just laughs and shakes her head, unable to resist the girl’s enthusiasm.

“We are,” she confirms, running a thumb under the strap of her purse. “Would you like to get lunch with us?”

Kara smiles as she slings an arm over Lori’s shoulders.

“I’d love to.”

“Wow,” Kara breathes, finishing off the last of her ice cream as they sit in the shade in the park outside the restaurant. “So you’re doing an accelerated program at MIT, and you’re graduating next year?”

Lori nods, still halfway through her pint bucket of gelato. (She steadfastly ignores the stares from passerby.) “It’s nothing compared to how fast Mom got through her degree.”

Lena shakes her head as she chews the last bite of her cone. “You’re also training for your superhero debut on the side, don’t forget that. I didn’t even have to work during my program.”

Lori shrugs, hiding her face in her ice cream. Lena laughs and reaches over to shove her shoulder lightly.

“Oh, come on, where’s all your bluster?”

That gets a laugh out of her—Lori sticks out her tongue and makes a show of shoveling a huge scoop of ice cream into her mouth.

Kara winds down from a chuckle and smiles fondly. “So—what does the L in your name stand for?”

Lori struggles to swallow for a second. “It’s actually a funny story,” she says, putting down her container. “So when you guys were getting married, you had this huge fight about who would change their name—” she laughs. “Mom wanted to change hers to Danvers and you wanted to change yours to Luthor.”

Lena ducks her head bashfully. It sounds… entirely like what she would do.

“So you guys compromised on both keeping your last name, with the promise that when you had a kid, you’d hyphenate. Except,” she says, pointing an accusing spoon at Lena. “You went back on your word when you decided to have me—you wanted me to be a plain old Danvers.”

Lena struggles under matching leers of judgement from the two aliens, laughing at the absurdity of feeling guilty over something she hasn’t done.

“Why would you do that?” Kara asks, sounding almost hurt. “You promised!”

Lena raises her brows and laughs sharply in disbelief. “I haven’t done anything yet!”
Lori drops the act and laughs, taking another scoop. “So anyway,” she says around a mouthful. “You guys had a huge fight again until you decided on letting it be L. Danvers. Short for Luthor, but also for the House of El, you know, kind of like a pun.”

“That’s…” Lena shakes her head. “That’s actually kind of brilliant.”

(Just like the smile Kara’s pointing at her at the moment.)

Lori grins. “Well, it was your idea.”

Lena fidgets under twin looks of—of adoration, almost, running a hand through her hair.

“Should you really be telling us this much?” She asks. “I mean, I know you have a memory wipe, but wouldn’t it be smarter to make less thing to, well, wipe?”

Lori scrapes up the last of the gelato and shrugs.

“Well, it’s not really like a memory wipe a la men in black,” she says. “More like an… occurrence eraser?” She pushes up her sleeve to show them her watch. “See this?”

“Yeah,” Lena says softly, hand running over the same watch on her wrist. “That’s—that’s mine.” She takes a deep breath. “It was Dad’s.”

Lori smiles at her. “Luthor heirloom. You gave it to me for my fifteenth birthday. Anyway, when you perfected the time machine, you refitted the inside of the watch with a consequence tracker. It’s recording all of my actions here, and the effects of it right now, so that when we plug it into the eraser, it’ll erase me from the timeline.”

Kara leans forward, alarmed. “What? But isn’t that dangerous?”

“No, not like erase me erase me—it’ll just erase my presence from this part of the timeline.”

Lena frowns. “Wouldn’t that leave a gap in the continuum?”

“Only for a moment—kind of like, if you scooped up a section of water from a pool really quickly. The universe would snap back into equilibrium. It won’t be so much that you don’t remember me—“

“It’ll be that you were never here at all,” Lena finishes, feeling… unduly melancholy at the thought of going on with her life without having met Lori.

The girl nods. “Yeah. So, I shouldn’t do anything huge, because there’s a risk of something happening if the equalizing splash is too big, but otherwise—“ she grins. “I can tell whoever I want.”

She smiles at the two of them, trying to garner a similar reaction, before slumping at her very somber parents.

“Oh come on, guys,” she says. “You’ll see me in five years.”

Kara allows herself a burgeoning grin at that.

“I guess we will.”

Kara and Lena laugh as they watch Lori marvel over the game machines in the arcade, (“these don’t
exist anymore!”) yelling at a driving game.

“Don’t break anything!” Lena calls over the music, unsure if Lori’s even paying attention to her.

Kara laughs. “She doesn’t do anything halfway, does she?”

Lena shrugs. “That might be my fault.”

And Kara just. Laughs again, because that’s all she can do—there’s so much joy bubbling up in her chest when she’s around these two, there’s something about the way that Lena smiles so softly and the way that every time she notices some mesh of herself and Lena in Lori her heart lights up like a symphony of windchimes.

Lena’s phone beeps and she fishes it out of her purse.

“I’m sorry—“

“That’s fine,” Kara smiles, just watching the way Lena frowns at her phone—Kara kind of loves the way she seamlessly transitions into business mode, fingers tapping away at her keyboard with purpose and jaw set in an imperious way that’s nevertheless elegant. Lena glances up at Kara, catching her staring, but doesn’t react beyond a quickening of her heartbeat.

And that’s—that’s another thing that’s really nice, Kara supposes. Nothing’s changed between them. It feels so foreign, like there should be some uncrossable rift between them after Lena’s confession—but Lena smiles at her all the same in that contagious way, teases her the same, shoots her short, fond looks all the same.

Not a hint of scorn.

Lori stalks over to them, hands stuck her pockets and mouth stuck in a pout. Kara laughs and ruffles her hair.

“Ran out of coins?”

Lori nods, petulant, before glancing at Lena.

“Mom? Everything okay?”

Lena nods absently. “Yeah, just—“ she shoves her phone back into her purse and sighs irritably. “I’m sorry, there’s an emergency conference call about to happen, I wish I didn’t have to but—“

“That’s okay,” Lori says, despite her deflation. Kara takes one look at her sad smile before wrapping an arm around her shoulders.

“We can hang out for a bit until you’re done. Text me?”

Lena glances between them, smiling at Lori’s sudden grin.

“I will. I’m sorry, again—have fun, you two.”

“Bye, Mom!”

Lena leaves them with a twinkling wave and a smile.

“So,” Kara says, grinning. “Wanna go flying?”
Lori is fast. Like, insanely fast—like would give Barry a run for his money and leave Kara severely winded fast. They race over the hills, challenging each other to stunts, and Kara can’t remember the last time she’s had to push herself that far on her flying technique.

She can’t remember the last time she’s had so much fun with her powers.

They end up sprawled at the top of the highest peak, out of breath and shaking with exhilarated laughter.

“Rao, you’re fast,” Kara breathes, slumping over her knees.

“And getting faster each day,” she quips in Kryptahniuo, with that perfect intonation—Kara sits cross-legged, looking up at Lori, at her bright grin, her tan skin, the way her smile dimples in the same places as Lena and feels that wholeness in her chest again.

“Your Kryptahniuo is perfect,” she breathes as Lori comes to take a seat next to her.

“Did I teach you?”

“Of course.” The girl sits with her knees loose against her chest, arms balance over them.

“Lena can speak Kryptahniuo?”

“Yeah.” Lori clasps her fingers together, staring out at the horizon. “She’s fluent before I’m born.”

There’s something about the way that Lori slips an English word inbetween the Kryptonian words, so naturally, so casually—something about the mundanity of the hybridity that makes Kara’s heart swell.

“Do you…” She gulps. “Do you have any siblings?”

Lori shakes her head. “Nah. I was… a miracle, of sorts. You guys tried again a few times, but nothing stuck like I did,” she says with a laugh.

“Are you lonely?” Kara asks, because she was lonely when she first came to earth. She was so lonely, being the only one, and she can’t stop thinking about everything Lillian said about Lori—her terrible words about Lori’s hybridity, about her never fitting in.

Lori raises her brows at her.

“No,” she says, furrowing her brows in a bemused smile. “No, of course not. I have you and Mom.”

Kara laughs, so touched, before looking down at her hands. “I meant… If you’re ever lonely because you’re part human. Neither Lena or I can really understand how that feels,” she says, looking over
with a frown, only to find a nonplussed Lori.

“Oh!” the girl laughs. “No, I’m not. Alone, I mean. I have Conner and Jon.”

Kara tilts her head. “Conner and Jon?”

“Uncle Clark’s sons. We’re technically like… distant cousins, but they’re more like my older brothers.”

And Lori declares it with such happiness, such simplicity—while Kara gapes at the thought of Clark having children.

“And they’re—they’re also…?”

“Half human, yeah.” Lori smiles at her. “They speak Kryptahniuo too. I mean, Conner has a little bit of an accent, because he’s older but—that’s kind of a long story,” she says with another laugh.

Clark’s children. Who can speak their language. Kara’s mind reels—that makes the five of them, the last children of Krypton, no longer alone, no longer trapped in the sadness of being the last. They don’t have to be the last. They aren’t.

“How—how are they?” she asks eagerly. “What do they do?”

“Well,” Lori says, leaning back on her palms. “Jon’s doing a B.A. in journalism at Columbia, and I think Conner’s an architect? I’m not sure what he does as a day job, to be honest,” she snorts. “He’s always so busy being Superboy.”

Kara blinks. “Superboy?”

The girl nods. “Yeah, like, Superman, but junior.” She laughs. “He wants to pass it onto Jon and graduate to something else, though. Me and Jon are still in training,” she clarifies. “You and Uncle Clark want to wait until we have the full range of powers, and neither of us have freeze breath yet.”

Kara nods with a chuckle. “Yeah, that one was the last one to show up for me too.”

Lori turns to smile at her, before frowning with concern.

“Mom—Mom, are you crying?” She reaches forward, and Kara hurriedly wipes at her eyes to find that yes, she is indeed crying—she’s not sure when she started.

“I’m—I’m okay, I’m sorry—” she laughs, rubbing the tears away. She tries for a reassuring smile but Lori’s already halfway to tears herself, bottom lip trembling and eyes reddening. “Oh, no, Little One, don’t cry, I’m sorry,” she cups Lori’s cheek. “My little darling, don’t be sad.”

“Speak for yourself,” Lori grumbles, sniffing. “I’m a sympathy crier, I can’t help it.”

Kara laughs and pulls the girl into her arms. “My soft little one. I’m sorry, I was just—I was just so happy to hear that you’re not alone.” She muffles her words into dark hair, pressing a little kiss to the top of Lori’s head. “Clark and I, we were so lonely growing up. We had to hide, we thought we were the last—we started to get so scared of being different, of being from another world. I didn’t want that for you.”

Lori wraps her arms around Kara, squeezing tight enough for Kara to feel.

“I wasn’t scared,” she whispers fiercely. “I was never scared, or lonely. You and Mom—and Clark and Conner, you always made me feel proud of who I am. Proud of where I come from.” Lori pulls
away a bit to peer up at Kara. “You’ve always made me proud to be your daughter.”

Kara sniffs and pulls her daughter back in, holding on tight.

“I’m glad. I’m so glad, Little One.”

Ukiem. This profound wholeness in her soul, this togetherness, this belonging that she didn’t think she’d ever be able to feel again without Clark—it reverberates through her entire being now, as she holds Lori in her arms. She has a glimpse of a future that doesn’t mean eternal loneliness, where she doesn’t feel a chasm between her human family and her Kryptonian descent, where her love of her two homes merge seamlessly, where she’s not alone—

And in the end, that’s what she’s so scared of. Being alone.

And now she’s filled with so much hope.

She crashes down from her giddy high the moment she gets back to her apartment and finds the door open, and Mon-El standing in her living room.

“What are you—” She closes the door behind her, feeling anger burn in her throat when she sees her broken lock. “What the hell did you do?” she hisses, stalking up to him.

He ignores her. “Where have you been, Kara?” He snarls, teary-eyed.

She throws her hands up, outraged. “Out. Doing stuff. Why?”

He grimaces. “So you weren’t even working this time?”

“This time?” She pinches the bridge of her nose. “Mon-El, what are you talking about?”

He purses his lips and nods, laughing mirthlessly. “Of course. You don’t even realize what you did.” He takes a deep breath. “I called you twelve times, Kara, and you couldn’t answer me once?”

“Twelve—” She groans. “Mon-El, we literally saw each other last night. Why?”

“I don’t know, because I was worried about where you were, because you promised me you’d try to make more time for me?” he says, voice breaking. “I knew you’d do this. I knew you’d break your promise, Kara, you always do this—do I even matter to you at all?”

“Of course you do, Mon-El—“

“Then why do you make me feel like I’m nothing to you?”

“I don’t mean to!”

“But you do!”

She feels the familiar burn of shame and guilt in her chest, the familiar push to apologize, try to fix things, that same sense of being such a bad person—

And for the first time in a long time, she feels angry.

“Mon-El,” she starts, trying to keep her voice even. “I’m sorry that you feel that way, but I’ve made
efforts to make time for you. I cancelled on a friend to spend time with you just last night.”

“And then today you didn’t—“

“It’s not my responsibility to drop everything for you at any moment of any day!” she snarls. “I’m sorry that you feel that way, but after some point your feelings are your responsibility, and yours alone.”

There’s a burst of strength when she echoes Lena’s words from earlier—a sort of determination filling her bones. She tries to hold onto memories of spending time with her and Lori, of how good it felt, of how at every turn that she thought she’d feel ashamed, she was reassured. How it doesn’t always have to be like this.

“How could you say that, Kara?” he cries out. “You made me feel like this! You’re just going to—you’re just going to leave me feeling miserable?” He scoffs, wiping at his eyes. “Some kind of hero you are.”

Kara wavers. Of course it would be cruel to just—just force someone to be responsible for hurt that she’s inflicted. What if she’s being horrible? What if she should just—

She clenches her jaw. She thinks, she tries desperately to remember.

“After all you’ve done for me, it’d be kind of silly for me to hold onto a grudge like that.”

Kara has done more than enough for Mon-El.

“Get out,” she says, crossing her arms and taking deep breaths. “And don’t come back.”

He stays deadly silent for a moment.

“What?”

“You heard me.” She doesn’t look up at him. “It’s over. Get out. I don’t want to see you again.”

“You don’t mean that,” he whispers, reaching for her, faltering as she steps away. Tears fill his eyes. “Kara, you can’t do this—you can’t just break up with me.”

“I can, and I am,” she says, trying not to break, trying to keep calm, stand her ground. “Please leave.”

“No, Kara,” he whimpers. “No, you can’t do this! After everything you’ve put me through, after I waited for you, you’re just going to—you can’t just leave me like this again!”

“You didn’t wait for me at all!” she growls, finally snapping and glaring up at him. “You went on to date someone right after I said no the first time, and then you just—you made me feel terrible and responsible that you liked me!”

“What was I supposed to do?” He throws his hands up. “I was hurting—was I just supposed to shut up about it?”

“Stop—“ she screws her eyes shut and grimaces, trying not to let him under her skin, trying to fight that feeling of unfairness, of powerlessness. “Stop making me sound like I’m out to get you! It’s not about you!” She opens her eyes to glare at him once more, not caring that her ears are humming with her heat vision at the ready. “It never should have been my responsibility that you feel that way about me and it is not my fault.”
He takes a step towards her. “Kara—“

“No.” She tries to ride her burst of confidence, her grip on her sense of self, this moment of knowing that she deserves better than this before he can shake her again. “If you won’t leave, then I will.”

And with that, she speeds out her window as fast as she can.

“Is it the frames that are lined with lead,” Lena asks, turning Lori’s glasses over in her hands. “Or is there a lead mesh in the lenses?”

Lori smiles at her ever-growing curiosity, opening her mouth to answer before it snaps shut and her head whips around to the veranda.

“Lori?” Lena doesn’t get an answer as she sees Kara, still in her civilian outfit, touch down and walk towards the door, almost limping as if exhausted.

She follows her daughter, concern thumping in her throat as Lori yanks the door open and pulls Kara into her arms.

“Ta nahn gehd w jolum, eh Yeyu?”

Kara laughs listlessly before shaking her head. Lena hesitates by the couch when she sees that Kara’s been—Kara’s been crying, her eyes are red, and her cheeks are flushed.

(anger and protectiveness flare in her chest. Who did this. Who did this to Kara?)

“Nahn khap w’voi, eh is’kah.” Kara pulls back and kisses Lori’s forehead. “Ta chad rrip w :dehdh vo kryp?”

Lori glances between Kara and Lena before nodding slowly, pulling Kara into one more hug before reluctantly heading out the door.

And there’s a moment of déjà vu, with Lori leaving the two of them alone in Lena’s vast apartment, the sun starting to set, but this time—this time it’s not soft, hesitant Supergirl in her home, it’s frazzled, distressed Kara Danvers, and Lena’s arms ache with the urge to pull her into an embrace.

“Kara,” she starts, tentatively, concern doubling when the blonde looks up at her with such a fragile look in her eyes. “Are you alright?”

Kara opens her mouth, then closes it, and again a few times, frowning as if she’s reaching for words and finding each one lacking.

She seems to settle on some, finally.

“I broke up with Mon-El.”

Lena gapes, because that’s—that’s really not what she was expecting to hear. She can’t tell if she’s happy or worried.

“I’m sorry, Kara.”

Kara laughs at that, only a touch hysterical, wringing her hands as she starts pacing.
“Don’t be, it was—it was a good thing, I should have left him earlier, you know? I was just—I was just so—” she takes a breath. “I felt so guilty that I didn’t like him back, and—and he was the only one paying attention to me at the time, you know? So I thought, I thought I should just stop leading him on and just date him but—Rao, I really shouldn’t have—“

“Kara,” Lena takes a step towards her, worry full-blown in her heart now. “Kara, breathe.”

The alien doesn’t seem to hear her. “I was just—so afraid of being alone, and there he was, the closest thing to another Kryptonian that I wasn’t related to, the only other person who would understand, so I thought I’d be happy, but—“ She stops pacing and turns her full attention on Lena.

(Lena tries not to buckle from the sheer intensity of her starlight blue eyes.)

“Being with you and Lori made me realize that I don’t have to choose. I don’t have to settle for the closest thing to a Kryptonian. I can be with a human and be happy.” She wrings her hands harder. “I should be with someone because I want to be with them, not because I’m afraid of being alone. I should be with someone who makes me feel like I can be myself and it won’t be a bad thing.”

Lena shakes her head, taking another step forward.

“Of course it won’t be a bad thing,” she murmurs softly. “Kara, are you alright?”

“I’m—“ Kara sighs stiffly. “I’m not, but—I need you to listen, please.”

Lena reaches her hands out in an offer, clasping her fingers around Kara’s when it’s taken up.

“Of course.” She squeezes lightly. “Always.”

Kara gnaws at her lower lip, tucking her chin for a moment before looking back into Lena’s eyes.

“When I’m with you, I feel so happy. I feel…” She laughs breathlessly. “I don’t even know how to…” Shaking her head, she presses on. “When I notice things about Lori that remind me of you, I just feel so wonderful, and I realized that it’s because—because I have feelings for you, Lena.”

Lena tries to process her declaration—tries being the operative word.

“And I think—and I honestly think I always have felt this way about you, ever since we met, I just didn’t—I just didn’t know how to even think about it, and I—“ She swallows and shakes her head. “With you, I want to be with you. I don’t have to make myself feel like I should be with you, like I need to be spending time with you. It’s like I’ve fallen in your orbit and I want you.” She brings her hands up to cup Lena’s cheeks, slowly. “You make me feel so wonderful.” She bites her lip. “You made me realize that I don’t have to keep feeling awful.”

And with that, Kara leans down to kiss her and Lena loses the ability to think. It’s just Kara’s lips, so soft, pressing so gingerly, with the slightest of trembles, caressing her with such gentleness—

Lena’s so lost in it that she almost forgets to pull back.

“Kara,” she whispers, breathless, her hands pressing feather light into Kara’s chest. “Kara, wait.”

Kara’s eyes widen, and Lena pre-emptively grasps her wrists before she can jump away in self-contempt.

“I’m sorry, Lena, I—“

“It’s okay,” Lena says, squeezing her wrists firmly. “It’s okay, Kara. I just—I don’t think this is a
good idea.”

There’s heartbreak in her blue eyes and Lena lets go of her wrists to tangle her hands in blonde hair, murmuring soothingly.

“Kara, darling, please don’t be sad,” she pleads. “I’m not rebuffing you, I just—“ she holds Kara’s jaw gently, brushing her thumbs against her cheeks. “You just broke up with your boyfriend.”

“Because I want to be with you,” Kara whispers.

“Exactly.” Lena smiles sadly. “You just got out of a relationship where you felt awful and confused. I don’t think it’s a good idea for you to jump into another one so soon.”

Kara sucks in a breath and frowns. “But you—you don’t make me feel confused.”

“And I’m… I’m happy, Kara, I really am,” she says, because honestly, she would give anything to just give this up and go back to kissing Kara senseless—but she can’t. “But I just think that you should take some time to heal before we get into anything, okay?”

Kara shakes. “Why?”

And Lena thinks she looks… so beautiful, so achingly handsome—she shakes with brittle emotion, blonde hair igniting in the red sunset and blue eyes burning with sadness that Lena wishes she could kiss away.

“Because you deserve the chance to be happy,” she says, finally. “I want you to be healthy, and happy—I want you to have the chance to feel more sure of yourself before you get involved with another person.” Lena lets her hands fall slowly.

Kara catches them, holding on fiercely.

“But I… You…”

Lena shakes her head. “I’m not going anywhere. If, after taking some time to yourself, you decide that you still want me, I…” She takes a deep breath. “I’ll still be here.”

Kara’s jaw sets stubbornly, tears filling her eyes, and for a moment Lena’s afraid that she’ll be angry, that she’ll feel rejected—but then she leans her forehead against Lena’s, taking in a shuddering breath, holding Lena’s hands to her chest.

She feels so small like this, even though she stands much taller—she feels so vulnerable, fragile, and Lena wishes more than anything in the world that she could just damn it all and take Kara into her arms, to whisper assurances against her lips and kiss affirmations into her hair and make all the pain go away, but she reminds herself—the only one who can heal Kara is herself. She would only serve as a crude crutch, no matter her good intentions, causing more pain in the long run.

“I’m here for you,” she whispers. “I’m not going anywhere.”

Chapter End Notes

“Ta nahn w jolum, Yeyu?”: "what's wrong, Mom?"
“Nahn khap w’voi, is’kah.”: "I'm fine, little one."

“Ta chad rrip w :dehdh vo kryp?”: "Can you give us a moment?"

aaaaand thank u so much for your patience guys!!! im sorry about the wait- i had this planned down to the line, i thought it would be a cakewalk, and then i realized i'd overestimated myself. part of the reason why i wanted to include manhell and the breakup so badly was because i wanted to contribute to exposing just how bad the message that SG is sending out is-- having been through abuse myself, it just upsets me so much that they're pushing this as a romance and it was really important for me to make a statement about it.

I just didn't realize that i'd need to bully myself into reliving some of my worst memories to write a realistic portrayal, lmao. even then i kind of chickened out and it might seem a little over the top.

anyway, this isn't the last we see of manhell, but it's mostly smooth sailing from here on out, you guys! just nice fluffy family shenanigans and Lori screaming as she waits for her moms to finally get together. she's meeting Alex next chapter, you guys!!!! i know im the writer and i gotta make it happen but im excited to read it myself lmao!!!!!

yes it's 7am and i stayed up all night writing and im a lil delirious but i hope you enjoyed!!!!!!!!!!!!!

also thanks for all of u who voted for lena's petname for Lori!! i ended up going with monkey bc it's just the right balance of conventional and quirky. i hope i don't regret it later lmfao

edit: I've disabled anonymous commenting for the time being. my apologies to everyone who doesn't have an account; it'll be enabled again as soon as I've dealt with an incident. thank you for your patience and thank you again for reading!
Waking up that morning is like a dream.

Lena wakes up to morning sunlight curled around her, soft cadences of a beautiful voice coming from the door accompanied by smells of fresh pancakes. She smiles to herself and wills her body to get out of bed, sweeping her hair out of her face.

She pads down the steps to a vision—Kara, with a black apron on over Lena’s pajamas, is singing softly as she skillfully minds four pans on the stove (two for pancakes, one for bacon, and one for eggs). Her hair is pulled up into a quick ponytail, lighting up gold in the morning, and there’s not a hint of clumsiness in the way she maneuvers around Lena’s kitchen.

Lori’s slumped over on the island counter, almost falling off her stool, evidently exhausted by the task of needing to wait for food. She’s curled up in one of Lena’s MIT shirts, dark hair falling over her shoulder as she looks up at Lena’s footsteps.

Her pout blooms into a grin.

“Mom!”

Kara turns to smile at her as well, and that—there’s something about that scene, the way it all comes together, that warms Lena to her very bones: Kara, without her glasses but without her uniform as well, as Lena’s never seen her, in just her own skin as she cooks breakfast without either façade, grinning at her brightly enough to light up the world, and Lori, with a twin smile on the face that she shares with Lena, perched on the stool in a way that’s just so young and quirky and—and something that inspires so much affection in Lena’s heart.

It’s all so domestic, in the most ideal way. Everything about it is the future that she so desperately wants, the future she’s told herself she’ll never have.

“Morning, Lena,” Kara says as she goes back to her cooking. “Did you sleep well?”

Lena nods as she takes a seat beside Lori, scratching the girl behind the ear when she leans her head on her shoulder.
“Did you?”

Kara nods, throwing another smile over her shoulder. “Yup. You have the comfiest couch I’ve ever slept on, honestly.”

Lena and Lori had offered their own beds, of course, but Kara had insisted—and after being asked if she could stay because she didn’t feel safe enough in her own home at the moment, Lena didn’t feel that it was appropriate to push her any further out of her comfort zone.

“Thank you for making breakfast—you really didn’t have to.”

“It was the least I could do for you when you’ve let me crash here on like, zero notice.”

Lena shakes her head. “You’re always welcome here, Kara.”

Lori makes an odd noise at that—Lena looks at her pointedly, but the girl feigns sleepy cuteness by hiding her face in Lena’s shoulder (honestly, it’s working) and avoids speaking up.

The girl eavesdropped on everything, of course—Lena doesn’t know which side she gets the nosiness from. She dropped back into the apartment after their conversation, pouting up a storm, obviously unhappy with Lena’s decision.

“I get that it’s the best thing to do right now,” she whined after Kara fell asleep, “but it’s like torture watching you two dance around each other like this. You two are literally soulmates, there’s nothing to wait for.”

And Lena won’t admit how insufferably happy she felt at the idea of her and Kara being soulmates. It’s insane. Crazy. She’s known Kara, for what, a few months?

(something in the back of her head whispers that she’s never felt this in love before without feeling out of control or panicky. Kara makes her feel head over heels and still undeniably herself.)

“Want some coffee?” Kara offers, and with a flurry of hair Lori’s by her side, swatting her hands away from the coffee machine.

“No,” she reprimands with an authoritative pout, and both of her parents laugh. “Coffee duty is mine.”

And there it is, the blooming of joy in her heart. Lena laughs as she runs a hand through her hair, sharing a look with Kara that tingles in her chest.

“Oh, alright, alright, no need for violence, bethgr kir,” Kara laughs, returning to the stove. Lori sticks her tongue out at her mother before reaching for the coffee jar.

(curiosity burns at her. Lori said, she’ll learn how to speak their language one day. Share in their culture, be part of the family.)

“So what’re we doing today?” Lori asks, much bouncier than when she was just sleepily cuddled up to Lena.

“I have to go to work, unfortunately,” Lena says apologetically. “My day’s chock full of meetings.”

“Can I come with you?” And Lori’s smile is just so bright.

Lena purses her lips. “I’m sure you’ll be bored out of your mind.”
Lori pouts, and Kara chuckles as she nudges the girl lightly.

“That’s ok. She can spend the day with me. I have to bring her into headquarters anyway.”

The girl perks up at that all over again. “I get to work with you?”

“No working,” Kara waves her spatula with mock sternness. “We’re just going in so you can meet Alex and J’onn, and walk us through what you know so we can catch Lillian.”

“Aww.” Lori grumbles almost in tune with the gurgling of the coffeemaker. Kara laughs as she ruffles the girl’s hair and tugs her in for a quick kiss to the top of the head, and Lena gets that dreamy feeling of being in a fantasy again.

This is it. This is what she could have.

And when Kara looks over her shoulder with a shy smile, some bashful remnant of her confession from the night prior, something in her chest squeezes. She could get used to this, she could. The way Kara just so instantly loves Lori looks so much like home and Lena would wait forever for Kara if she could—

But she doesn’t have forever. Just a little more until Lori has to return to her own time, and they’ll all forget.

A cup of coffee slides over on the countertop and she looks up to Lori’s smile and lets herself relax. She lets the unbridled happiness of this domestic scene drown out her worries. For now, she knows, no matter what happens inbetween—if this is what’s in her future, things are going to be alright.

Chapter End Notes

and hey, check out the companion series for some more Lori hijinks!

also check out this amazing art that ghastlydisco at tumblr made for this series!!

EDIT: OH FUCK I FORGOT SOMEONE DREW LORI!!!!

EDIT EDIT: im a fucking idiot forgetting everything apparently klsjfnvd "bethgr kir" means "little queen" literally, in this context used as kind of an affectionate "you little tyrant" type quip
i just wanna love you in the morning sun, i just wanna love you when the day is done...

Chapter Summary

more short aimless fluff

Chapter Notes

sldkfjs im so sorry about another teeny update im really... really struggling with coming up with what happens next because i have the ending planned but not the middle and between trying to do homework i felt rly bad so here's another small thing to tide you guys over

Kara hasn’t had a morning quite that lovely in a while.

There’s a kind of domestic charm to sitting in the kitchen with her daughter and her… her future wife. There’s something wonderful about watching Lena and Lori joke and quip at each other, matching each others’ witty sarcasm perfectly but without even a hint of a bite. It makes her feel so unbearably warm inside—a kind of warmth her heart seemed to reserve for when Clark visited, until now.

They’re putting the dishes away together when Kara catches Lena staring a little bit, faltering into a shy smile before she returns to her task and Kara feels adoration well up in her chest. She wasn’t expecting it to hit her that hard, or fast, but ever since she admitted that she… Likes Lena, it’s like she’s finally taken the blindfolds off of herself. Every smile, every nervous glance, every fleck of gold in her eyes inscribe themselves onto the back of Kara’s mind and it’s… it’s really something.

By the time Kara’s suited up and prepared for the day, it’s nine am and Lena’s finishing the last of her coffee while sifting through some emails. She really looks gorgeous like that—soft and pale and warm-looking in her pajamas, curled up on the couch with her hair cascading over her shoulder. It’s such a different image from her usual immaculate charisma—she holds herself like an empress against all odds, even in moments of vulnerability, and it’s so… Kara doesn’t know. She doesn’t have a lot of words to describe the new feelings hitting her like bricks lately and she just feels special, being allowed to see Lena so comfortable and unwound like this. It’s Lena’s turn to catch her staring, now, and she runs a hand through her hair with an embarrassed smile. She’s saved by Lori jumping downstairs, quickly braiding her hair on the way down.

“All set?” Kara asks with a grin. Lori grins back around the hairtie between her teeth before tying down her hair and tugging lightly at the lapels of one of Lena’s jackets.

“All set.” She leans over the back of the couch to throw her arms around Lena, kissing the top of her head. “See you later, Mom.”
Lena reaches up to squeeze her elbow before she lets go. “Have a good day, you two.”

Kara shuffles as she tries to come up with some sort of—of parting, because she feels like she should say something after the display of affection from Lori, but, nothing’s changed? Lena and Kara are still… Just friends. She runs a hand through her hair again, opening and closing her mouth again as Lena gives her an amused glance.

“I’ll give you two a moment,” is Lori’s grin-laced remark as she heads out onto the veranda. “See you there, Yeyu!”

“Lori, w— and she’s gone.” Kara lets out a huff, putting her hands on her hips rather stiffly. She turns back to Lena when the woman gives a tinkling laugh, shifting in her seat.

Kara smiles bashfully, scratching the back of her head. “She’s not very subtle, is she?”

Lena shakes her head. “That she is not.”

There’s a pause where they just smile softly at each other in the wake of the lighthearted moment, relaxed in the morning light but still with some distance between them. And Rao, Kara can’t stop thinking about how beautiful Lena looks, how much she adores the way Lena fidgets shyly with her hands.

She wasn’t this infatuated before. It’s like, admitting it has pulled out all the stops and she’s hopeless now.

“I, um.” Kara swings her hands nervously before taking a few steps towards Lena. “We should—probably talk about… about last night…”

Lena catches one of her hands, holding it gingerly and smiling up at Kara. The touch tingles on Kara’s skin.

“We don’t have to talk about it now,” she murmurs, running a thumb over Kara’s knuckles. “No need to rush. Just take things at your own pace, okay?”

And that—that’s a whole ‘nother thing, really. She sees the affection in Lena’s eyes and actions and the way she’s holding herself back, even though it would be so easy to lean in and Kara wouldn’t say no. Kara even wants her to just give in, but—part of her knows she’s not ready, and the fact that Lena’s willing to be strong enough for both of them makes Kara feels so cared about. Like her needs and feelings really matter to someone, and there’s so much warmth in her chest it feels so right. Like the first time she hugged James, the first time they kissed—it’s like she’s learning what it feels like to fall in love all over again.

(and oh. There it is. She’s falling in love with Lena.)

“I don’t…” Kara laughs. “I don’t really know what my pace is, really.”

“Well, you should probably take some time to think about that, hey?” Lena squeezes her hand again. “Take all the time you need.”

And Kara knows she should keep her distance, but how can she just leave with just a friendly parting after that? After that soft smile and patience and caring? She’s overwhelmed with the urge to leave Lena with some token of her affection, at the very least—so she leans down, bringing Lena’s hand up to press a soft kiss to the back of it.

“I’ll see you later, Lena.”
Lena gives her a smile that quivers ever so slightly.

“See you later, Kara.”

Chapter End Notes

lies down forever im rly sorry ill come back with a bomb ass update when im finally caught up on my assignments

check out wtfoctagon.tumblr.com/tagged/supergirl-in-training for more Lori content! I've been answering a lot of headcanon asks lately and i have like 5 pages of SiT related asks
Kara watches proudly as Lori draws out coordinates on the briefing console.

“CADMUS also had an active compound just southwest of the thermal plant—if I’m remembering correctly this is their main armory.”

She moves to highlight the map section, completely at ease with herself as she briefs J’onn and Alex. She doesn’t waver or stutter once in the stern tension of the room; she’s confident, deft, and focused and Kara feels absurdly proud.

“And that’s all the CADMUS bases and vaults I can remember for now,” she finishes, straightening her shoulders and clasping her hands behind her back. Alex furrows her brow and leans forward, scanning the points scattered across the map.

“That’s a lot,” she remarks. “You have a good memory.”

Lori lights up at the praise before smoothing into a smaller smile. “Eidetic, actually. I would have a complete list but I’m not technically part of DEO operations yet; these are just from the few files I’ve seen on Mom’s desk.”

Alex raises a brow. “Lena works at the DEO?”

It’s said with such surprise and wariness that Kara feels ire rise in her throat, again, because why can’t people just trust Lena? Lori’s standing right there, proof from twenty-two years in the future to prove that Lena’s playing some long game.

Lori just nods. “Her official title is civilian tech consultant.”

Alex crosses her arms. “Huh.”

“In any case,” J’onn cuts in. “We still need to locate and apprehend Lillian Luthor.” He zooms the map in onto a cluster of points just outside National City. “Based on her activity it would be best to start here.”

“I’ll get a recon team together right now,” Alex says.
Lori shakes her head. “It’s too dangerous. We don’t know what kind of surveillance equipment they might have.”

Kara tilts her head. “There’s no chance you know their specs this far back, huh?”

“No, unfortunately.” Lori’s mouth twists wryly as she crosses her arms, and for a moment, she and Alex are mirror images of each other. Side by side, arms crossed the same, with the same thoughtful grimace; Lori inhabits that air of professionalism with passionate drive just underneath the surface that Kara thought so unique to Alex until now.

She gets that warm pang in her chest again. This isn’t just her biological daughter—this girl is her really her family.

Alex purses her lips before shaking her head lightly and uncrossing her arms to put her hands on her hips. “She’s right. We couldn’t identify half the things Hank Henshaw had on him, it’s too dangerous to scope their facilities without more information.”

“I could examine them,” Lori chimes in. “Maybe I can get a better estimate of what they’re up to.”

Alex shakes her head. “I’m sorry, but we have it all down in restricted access—“

“Agent Danvers can escort you downstairs.”

Kara and Alex share a look at that, once again dumbfounded: when Lori and J’onn met they shared a quiet moment after which J’onn squeezed Lori’s shoulder with a fond smile and just about every agents’ eyes bulged out of their sockets. After that, J’onn’s been giving Lori his unmitigated trust—Kara wonders if Lori’s developed some sort of telepathic abilities.

“Director,” Alex says evenly. “Are you sure?”

He nods. “Positive.”

The Danvers sisters share another surprised, mildly alarmed look. They’re so used to J’onn being the big gatekeeper of their more questionable plans, the most cautious one out of all of them.

“Armed bank robbery on fifth,” Winn chimes in, wheeling closer in his chair as he looks between all of them in an annoyed but curious way because he hates being kept out of the loop (they decided the whole daughter-from-the-future thing is best kept on a need to know basis, for now).

Kara tries to appease him with a smile. “I’m on it.”

“Can I come with you?” Lori half hops along to Kara when she starts making for the exit, but her mother turns with a swish of her cape and a stern frown.

“No, it’s too dangerous,” she says, feeling a spike of protectiveness. “Stay here until I’m done, okay?”

“But I’m just as bulletproof as you are!” Lori complains, pouting. Kara crosses her arms.

“You heard me, Lorelai. Stay here and help your aunt.”

She instantly regrets her tone when Lori deflates, shuffling into a neutral but rigid pose and bowing her head.

“Yes, Master.”
Kara flinches at the formal address, the honorific reserved for pupils to their mentors in guild pairs. She instinctively looks to Alex in her panic, not knowing what to do, only getting a defensive sort of frown from her sister in response.

She reaches out to squeeze Lori’s shoulder.

“I’ll be back soon, is’kah.”

Lori looks up with a hopeful pout and Kara nearly caves before Alex comes to her rescue, holding the girl lightly by the other shoulder.

“Come on, let's get to work,” she says, still firm but much softer than Kara was as she leads her niece away to the elevator. Kara smiles at them before sighing and running a hand through her hair when they round the corner out of sight.

“Yikes,” she mutters to herself. J’onn pats her shoulder firmly.

“Don’t worry,” he says, reading her mind.

“I can’t really help it?” She grimaces. “She just… gave in.” Guilt roils in her stomach. “Like, immediately.”

“She respects you as her teacher.”

“I’m not her teacher, I’m her mother,” Kara grumbles, gingerly holding her temples for a moment.

“Mother-to-be,” J’onn reminds her. “As of right now you are a younger version of a woman who’s had time to emotionally prepare herself for the responsibility of a child. Minor bumps are inevitable.”

Kara laughs listlessly. “I guess you’re right.” She squints at him with a curious smile. “You know, you warmed up to her really fast. Not that I’m not happy you trust her.”

He smiles and leans against the briefing table before crossing his arms.

“She showed me her memories from the future. It’s hard to think she has any ulterior motives after that.”

“She—“ Kara reels. “She showed you—how?”

He smiles one of his rare, wider smiles. “She taught herself how to respond to my telepathy as an infant. It’s the closest thing to a Martian Bond I’ve had with an outsider.”

“Wow,” Kara breathes, feeling pride and happiness again; pride for her daughter, happiness for J’onn to have another person to share his thoughts with. “Are you two close in the future?”

He nods. “M’gann and I are her godparents.”

Kara takes a second to process.

“M’gann?” she gapes. “She comes back? She’s okay?”

J’onn nods, smile growing. “Emotionally weary, but intact.”

She remembers how sad J’onn was after she left, the sense of loss and sorrow permeating the air of the DEO building for weeks afterward, and her heart soars.
“J’onn, that’s—that’s amazing, I—“

She grabs him into a hug, at a loss for words, squeezing without reserve. He grunts a little from the force, patting her back placatingly, but she can hear his chuckle rumbling in his chest.

“Uh, guys?” Winn says. “Bank robbery?”


She launches out of the building sheepishly, not before catching a glimpse of J’onn’s grin—the thought of the future she’s going to have fills her with nothing but joy and she soars over the skyline in a burst of vigor.

“This is a Marcinian telepathy disabler, I think?” Lori says, examining the device. “Not sure how they got their hands on that one. Mark it down as harmless, it draws power from the electromagnetic field that only Marcinians biologically generate.”

Alex does so dutifully—they’ve been cataloguing items for a while, Lori rattling off their uses while Alex marks them down in the archive. The atmosphere is a bit stiff, mostly just work-oriented, but Alex has her guard up and unfortunately, it shows.

Well. She can’t help it—it’s not that she doesn’t like this girl, it’s just that it’s hard to trust her. Not when Kara looks at her so lovingly, not when she knows how vulnerable Kara is to her so immediately. Alex was there for Astra’s reappearance and betrayal, she saw how much it broke Kara —

She’s not too fond of another mysterious Kryptonian family member popping out of nowhere.

(it’s hard not to like her, though, Alex admits. Lori’s got Lena’s face but Kara’s smile.)

“Oh, nice,” Lori remarks, holding up something that looks like a handgun clip but with a blue crystal in the middle instead. “You should take this, actually.”

Alex looks between the device and the girl warily. “What is it?”

Lori pushes it over the desk to Alex. “An Alutei-grade heat sink. For your gun. It should be compatible.”

Alex glances at her again before picking it up and examining it, unholstering her alien gun and pulling out the original heat sink.

“You should be able to fire ten times more before overheating with that.”

“Huh.” She slides it into the clip, feeling out the change in weight balance. It would be really nice to not have to pace her shots or risk burning her hand. “Nice.”

Lori gives her a small smile before moving on to the next item on the list. Alex watches the way she methodically examines the device, muttering out loud that it’s human in origin, blue eyes narrowed.

“So,” she says, holstering her gun. “How do you know so much about weapons, anyway?”

Lori glances up at her, hesitant for some reason. “You, actually.”
Alex raises her brows, leaning on the desk. “Me?”

Lori smiles a bit before nodding. “Yeyu and Uncle Clark are really big into the hand to hand, non-lethal approach, you know.” Lori’s grin grows a little when Alex snorts and nods. “But you said I won’t always have my powers and should learn a bit more about weaponry, just to be safe.”

Alex tries to shake off the eerie feeling she gets when this stranger describes something she absolutely would do.

“Alien weaponry, though?”

Lori shrugs. “Interplanet travel starts to boom a little more in the future.”

Alex smirks. “I’m guessing the DEO gets real busy, then.”

Lori laughs too, louder and looser than she’s let herself since stepping into the evidence room.

“Yeah, I guess.” She smiles at Alex freely, before seeming to remember herself and looking back down at the device in her hands.

Alex purses her lips.

“So, what am I like in the future?”

Lori blinks at her.

“Oh. Well. You’re… You?” Lori laughs a little. “Lieutenant Director of the DEO, weapons and genetics specialist, happily married, cool aunt…”

Alex perks up a little at the whole married thing but decides to let it go for now.

“Cool aunt, huh?” She smirks. Lori laughs bashfully.

“Yes, you’re—you’ve taught me everything I know about combat tactics and weaponry and how to kick ass at pool.”

“So all of the important stuff.” Alex grins when Lori laughs again.

“Yeah,” she says, her laugh trailing off.

“Good, then,” Alex says. “You had me worried that I wasn’t around much.”

Lori grimaces. “Sorry, I just—I really freaked Mom out when I acted like I always do around her right away and I’m. Trying not to freak anyone else out.”

She gives Alex a tight smile, the quiet, sad one that Kara makes when she’s hiding something. With the same crinkle, even. She reminds Alex so much of little Kara, trying to stay away and pretending to be fine after accidentally breaking something or hurting someone, so unsure of herself—

Alex sighs. Goddammit.

“You know, I’ve never met a teenager who’s as excited to hang out with her mom as you are,” she teases. Lori shuffles her feet bashfully.

“Well, not every teenager has a mom as cool as mine,” she says defensively. “Besides, we haven’t been able to see each other very much lately, I was just excited.”
Lori’s smile falls into another crinkly pout again. Alex watches her sympathetically.

“You don’t get to spend time with her?”

Lori shakes her head. “I’m going to college across the country. And even when I do fly back on weekends, she’s always so busy, you know? She’s always swamped with running the company, or prototyping one thing or another for the DEO, and so on…”

The girl gnaws on her lower lip as she turns the device over in her hands. Alex sighs.

“Yeah, I get how you feel.”

Lori looks up at that, frowning.

“You do?”

Alex nods. “After Dad… disappeared, Mom threw herself into her work. She was always out at lectures and conferences and stuff. It was usually just me and Kara at home.”

She remembers the few years of late nights, tucking Kara into bed and then quietly waiting for her mother to get home, always leaving some food in the fridge for her to come home to.

“You don’t blame her,” Alex continues, “But you look up to her and you wish you could see her more.”

Lori gives her a piercingly pensive look, brows crinkling again before she nods.

“Yeah, exactly,” she murmurs.

Alex tries for a lighter smile. “Then let’s get back to work so we can let you go see her sooner, yeah?”

Lori grins. “Yeah,” she says, apparently a little too enthusiastic because she accidentally presses something on the device—it lights up and she yelps as she drops it.

“Shit—sorry, it didn’t do anything, I just—” she rattles off a mile a minute, bending down to get it. “It’s just a Geiger counter calibrated for alien radioactive elements, it shouldn’t—hey are these Tamaranean sabers?”

Alex doesn’t know to laugh, be alarmed, or roll her eyes when Lori resurfaces with a saber in hand, a manic look of glee in her face.

“Careful,” she warns as Lori gives it an experimental flourish. “It can cut through your invulnerability—“

“Because it’s made of Piscean alloy, I know,” Lori says, touching the flat side of the silver blade almost reverently. “Man, this looks vintage—maybe 36th, 37th century?”

Alex laughs. “I’m starting to think you know so much about weapons because you like weapons, not because of me.”

Lori pouts, still holding the sword. “Swords are cool, okay…”

The door bursts open to a breathless Mon-El, who stares between the two of them before marching up to Alex.
“What the hell are you doing down here?” Alex starts, squaring her shoulders. “It’s restricted access, you’re not allowed—“

“That’s not important right now,” he pleads, face twisting into a pained grimace. “Where’s Kara?”

“Why do you need to know?” Lori cuts in with a razor sharp glare, already by Alex’s side, saber still in hand. Mon-El frowns at her.

“What’s she doing here?” He asks Alex.

“She was authorized to help with something down here, unlike you,” Alex hisses, crossing her arms. “Now get out before I make you, alright? Whatever it is you need to talk about can wait—“

“It can’t wait,” he begs again. “I need to see her—“

“You have no right,” Lori snarls, and Alex puts a hand out in front of her to keep her from instigating anything.

“I’m sorry, if you didn’t know,” he starts, almost placatingly, “Kara and I are together so I have every right—“

“Liar!” Lori steps forward and Alex has to push back with her arm, concerned. “She broke up with you last night!”

“What?” Alex looks back at Mon-El. “Did she?”

He looks lost for a moment before gesturing indignantly.

“We had a fight. It got a little out of hand.”

“That’s an understatement,” Lori scoffs. “She ended things.”

Mon-El grimaces before waving at her. “Are you really—are you really going to take the word of Lena Luthor’s niece over mine?”

And god Alex hates his face.

“It’s not about anyone’s word, Mon-El,” she says, shifting her weight and putting her hands on her hips. “Did she or did she not break up with you?”

And truth be told, Alex is a little suspicious, a little hurt, because would Kara really not tell her something as important as that? But then again, she’s not surprised—between the way he’s been treating her and everything with Lori, Alex is kind of relieved to hear the news.

He stares at the two of them, face crumpling in outrage, fists clenching, before he sighs.

“Whatever,” he mutters dejectedly. “I just wanted to talk to her. I’ll find her myself,” he says, before turning and walking out.

Alex sighs and pinches the bridge of her nose, turning to Lori.

“Did they really break up?”

She nods insistently.

“He broke into her house last night so she ended things—“
“He what.” Alex pulls her hand away from her face and feels her chest start to boil, mouth twisting into a snarl. “That good for nothing fratboy, I’m going to—“

“Wait,” Lori grabs her by the elbow before she can storm out and skin the damn Daxamite. “He’s probably trying to cause a scene and make her look bad, going after him is just gonna make it worse—“

Alex grimaces. “I’m not going to let him anywhere near her after the shit he pulled—“

“Look, I have an idea, okay?” Lori sighs. “You’re either going to love it or hate it.”

The first thing Kara sees when she touches back down at the DEO is Mon-El stalking towards her with a pained frown, and her stomach twists into knots—she’s not ready to talk to him again, not yet, not yet, Rao he looks so sad and the darker voices in her head start to tell her that it’s her fault all over again—

“Mon-El of Daxam!” A voice bellows through the main room before he reaches her. Kara looks up, alarmed, to see Lori regally striding over with an imperious glare, and Alex walking behind her with—the two Tamaranean swords they lifted from a crashed pirate ship a few years ago?

She feels her heart stop when Lori throws a DEO issue glove straight at Mon-El’s face, barely giving him any time to catch it.

“I formally challenge you to a duel for the honor of being Kara Zor-El’s pupil.”

She declares it in the Daxamite dialect of Kryptahniuo, standing with a ramrod-straight posture just a few feet away from him. The room falls silent as the stare each other down—Kara can’t see Mon-El’s expression, and she’s just about halfway to getting her wits about her and intervening when he throws the glove back at Lori.

“I accept.”

Kara’s heart sinks.

Alex can feel Kara’s glare prickling the back of her neck as she tightens Lori’s dueling glove. She can hear the lecture that she’s in for already—how could you let her do this, I trusted you to keep her safe, I can’t believe this—

She looks up for a moment over Lori’s shoulder and yep. Her sister is glaring daggers at her from across the room, held back from the conflict only by J’onn’s presence. They’re in the downstairs training room, making the duel private—Alex can hear Kara arguing with J’onn under her breath, probably about how he’s lost his mind by letting this happen.

(Alex was really surprised too. But apparently, J’onn is vulnerable to the Lori Danvers Pout more than he is to Kara’s or Alex’s.

That or he’s hoping this’ll get Mon-El to leave Kara the hell alone too.)

“I hope you appreciate me setting this up, you know,” she murmurs to Lori with a half-smile. “I’m in
really big trouble with Kara.”

Lori chuckles. “Would you rather he made her life worse with his awfulness?” She asks, rolling out her shoulders.

Alex snorts and shakes her head, stepping away. “I hope you know what you’re doing.”

Lori gives her saber a twirl. “Don’t worry. This isn’t my first duel.”

Alex raises her brows. “Really?”

Lori grins. “My best friend is Tamaranean—she got stuck in some arranged marriage crap and I got her cousin to give me a crash course on saber dueling so I could get her out of it.”

“And did you come out of that intact?” Alex asks, raising a brow. She’s starting to think this girl has a habit of jumping into situations with one eighth of a plan and seven eighths of a prayer.

“More or less,” Lori says, not reassuring at all, before shaking her head. “Just—don’t worry about it, okay? You told Uncle Winn to set up the cameras?”

“Yeah. And I’ll be here to put you back together when you get sliced to ribbons.”

Lori pouts at the quip. “You’re mean.”

Alex just laughs and ruffles her hair. “Alright. Fratboy’s looking impatient over there. Kick his ass.”

Lori rolls her eyes. “Remember, don’t let her intervene until one of us yields, okay?”

Ales nods and Lori flashes her a grin before pulling her expression back to a regal sneer, twirling around.

“Ready?” He taunts from across the room. Alex hears Lori snort.

“Born ready,” she quips right back, as they walk to meet in the centre to exchange bows. Alex walks over to Kara and J’onn as they fall into their stances and touch their blades together. Kara gives her a worried and angry glance before going back to wringing her cape and staring intently at the duelists.

“What are your terms?” He demands.

“That you stay away from Kara Zor-El here on out. What are yours?”

“The same for you,” he growls.

“On my mark,” J’onn says, deep voice rumbling. “Begin!”

They most almost too fast for Alex’s human eyes to see. Silver clashes against silver with such force that sparks fly on impact, and despite her earlier quip Alex feels her gut fill with nervousness.

It eases up a little when Lori has him on the defensive—easily, with one hand behind her back, a smirk on her face that she’s seen on Lena’s multiple times.

“Keep up, Daxamite,” she hisses smugly. “You don’t have your precious slaves here to do everything for you anymore.”

And just like that the nervousness is back. Alex knows to not taunt the enemy during single combat
—it’s a gamble, it’ll either make the opponent angry and clumsy or just stronger with the force of rage. Lori’s too smug, too arrogant, Alex is starting to see a million ways this could be going wrong—

Lori lunges in a slash, cutting off a bit of Mon-El’s sleeve as he barely dodges. She immediately sweeps her blade up, and he only parries just on time—Alex tries to reassure herself. She’s pushing him off his footing. Things are going to be fine.

“You’re pathetic,” Lori laughs, catching him in a parry before pushing him off balance. “You have a member of the House of El, the greatest warrior on earth to teach you and this is the best you can do?” She laughs again as she parries one of his stabs with barely a flick of her wrist. “Her time is wasted on you.”

He snarls, lunging at her, only to fall to the ground as she lightly sidesteps him. That’s the turning point—she steps on his saber, pinning it to the ground by its flat side, as she holds her own blade to his neck with a flourish.

“You yield,” she commands, peering down at him with her nose turned up. Alex lets herself relax, letting out the anxious breath she’s been gripping in her lungs. She notices Kara do the same out of the corner of her eyes and smiles.

Mon-El glares up at her, teeth grinding, and Alex is waiting to savour his moment of defeat when his eyes flicker down and he kicks her swiftly in the knee—

“No!” Kara cries as she lurches forward, held back by J’onn. “That’s cheating—“

“Stay back, Kara,” Alex warns even as she starts to panic. Mon-El uses Lori’s brief stumble to get back on his feet and press the advantage—she’s being pushed back, on the defensive, struggling to get her balance back.

“Let me go,” Kara pleads. J’onn holds her back still, grimacing.

Alex winces as Mon-El slashes viciously and lands a cut on Lori’s face. A stab there, a lunge here, another slash—Lori’s parries get more and more ineffective as Mon-El moves faster, swings much harder, angrier.

Alex resists the urge to step in—Lori lost the gamble with the taunting, he’s enraged and focused, she’s going to lose—

Lori glances at her and shakes her head, insistent. Alex gulps.

Mon-El lands another cut, a long gash on her arm, and when she stumbles in pain he swings at her sword hard enough to rip it from her grasp and send her falling to the ground.

Lori groans in pain as he levels his blade to her throat. She looks up at him once, snarling.

“I yield,” she mutters through her teeth.

Alex’s heart falls—the plan backfired, and Kara is going to be so angry at her, but at least, at least it ended before Lori was skewered. Alex counts that as a big victory.

But then, Mon-El doesn’t pull back and preen about his victory the way she expects him to—he bends down to grab Lori by the throat, lifting her up—

“I yield!” she chokes out again, scrambling at his hands as he lifts her off the floor—Alex lunges
forward as he pulls back his sword, about to impale her, she has to move, she can’t move fast enough —

Lori crumples to the floor. Mon-El’s sword clatters down beside her as he himself now dangles from a vice grip at his throat. Kara snarls up at him before throwing him to the far side of the room and speeding to tower over him even as he smashes against the wall.

Alex runs to Lori, grasping her around the shoulders, watching in concern as Kara grabs him by the collar and lifts him up again.

“Don’t you ever come near my family again, do you understand?”

“Kara, wait—”

“If I ever see you so much as lift a hand towards her again,” she roars, shaking him. “I will make you regret it.”

“Kara, you don’t mean that, babe—“

“Don’t call me that.” She slams him against the wall. “We are over. Never speak to me or my family ever again, do you understand?”

There’s the telltale hum of Kara readying her heat vision.

“Kara, please, I didn’t mean to—I was so angry, you heard the things she was saying—“

Kara snarls, pulling her fist back.

“Kara!” Alex yells. It stops her only for a moment—but that’s enough. “Let him go. He’s not worth it.”

There’s a pause where no one moves, then Kara slowly lowers him, still snarling. Alex let J’onn take Lori in his arms before jogging over and putting a hand on Kara’s shoulder.

“Easy.”

Mon-El takes a breath and opens his mouth.

“No,” Alex cuts in before he can speak. “Shut up. Don’t push your luck. Get out of here before one of us hurts you.”

He looks between all of them—Alex can feel J’onn pressuring him psychically to leave, and he hesitates for a full ten seconds before stalking off towards the door. Kara finally relaxes and holds her fist to her chest.

“Thank you,” she mumbles to Alex.

*Thank you for stopping me from killing him.* Alex pats her back.

“Anytime.”

Kara wordlessly nods before rushing over to Lori, gathering her daughter into her arms protectively.

“Doshai…” Lori mutters with a weak smile and Kara only glares at her pointedly as she starts walking them to the med bay.
“Zhao’rriv-u gehd. Ta’nahruht-odh, eh is’kah?”

Lori nods. “Zhi, eh Yeyu.”

Alex follows them up the stairs, only to find the agents milling about with faux innocence and glaring daggers at Mon-El as he passes by. She gives Winn a discreet, affectionate shoulder punch as she passes by his desk, feeling a smug sort of pride settle in her chest.

Kara’s twenty minutes into her lecture when Alex is putting the last bandage on Lori.

“What were you even thinking? And roping Winn into broadcasting the duel to the entire building—what were you trying to accomplish?”

Kara waves at the bloody gauze pieces lying on Alex’s table. Lori glances at Alex for help, but she just shrugs as she starts wrapping up the gash on her arm. She warned the girl plenty—this part of the ordeal is hers to deal with.

“I wanted to humiliate him. To prove to everyone what kind of person he is.”

Kara stops and pinches the bridge of her nose, sighing deeply. “You didn’t even know if you were going to win, Lori, you should have thought it through—"

“I didn’t have to know if I was going to win or not,” Lori explains, wincing.

Kara glares at her.

Lori sighs. “Okay, Yeyu, look, when I visited the Tamaranean fleet and learned how to duel, I also learned why they still use dueling as a legal form of settling a dispute. They’re not a primitive people, they should have moved past that by now.”

Kara crosses her arms and shifts her weight, listening carefully, but no less intently.

“And why do they?”

“Because the true purpose of a duel isn’t to see who is the better fighter, it’s to reveal the true character of the participants.” Lori pulls her hands into her lap when Alex finishes wrapping the bandage. “They believe that, in a fight, no one can lie—your body’s movements betray you. The one who acts dishonorably is the true loser of the duel.”

Alex tries to stop the grin spreading across her face when it clicks.

“Everyone saw him trying to kill you after you surrendered.”

Kara huffs again. “I still don’t see the point of you risking getting yourself skewered just to humiliate him.”

Lori frowns, the crinkle mirroring her mother’s. “It wasn’t just to humiliate him. It was to show you what kind of a person he really is.”

Kara hesitates at that, posture loosening.

“Why me?”
“Because, I—” Lori sighs, trying to find her words. “I saw how he acted. Like he was in pain, like he was always the victim. And I know you can’t stand to hurt people. I wanted to…” Lori huffs, wincing when she tries to move her arm and hurts herself. “I wanted to show you who he really was. So that you could let yourself be angry at him without blaming yourself.” She shrugs. “The whole showing everyone thing was just a bonus so no one else could tell you to give him another chance again.”

There’s a long silence where Kara just stares, her mouth starting to tremble—she turns around and runs a hand over her face just before she crumples, and Alex sees the telltale heaving of her chest as she tries not to cry.

Lori, however, isn’t so lucky. Tears dew in her eyes almost immediately and she starts to shake.

“Yeyu, I’m sorry, please don’t be upset—“

Kara cuts her off by turning around and crushing the girl into her arms, burying her face in her dark hair.

“Don’t ever scare me like that again,” she whispers. Lori nods into the crook of her neck, already sniffling. Kara pulls back, evening out her breaths, laughing a little as she wipes away one of Lori’s tears.

“Is’kah kir,” she murmurs. “Is there any chance that I can convince you to take a few hours on the sunbed?”

Lori laughs before shaking her head. “Tamaraneans consider dueling wounds to be a great honor. I’d really like to show these off to my friend when I get back.”

Kara sighs before smoothing a hand through dark hair.

“Well, rest up. I have to go to CatCo for the day.” She glares at Alex. “And you, no more enabling my daughter, alright?”

Alex throws up her hands innocently. “Of course. Never.” She frowns and points at Lori facetiously. “That was a very bad thing to do, young lady.”

Kara squints at them even as Lori stifles a laugh.

“We’re going to have a talk,” she says to Alex before kissing the top of Lori’s head and heading for the door. “I’ll see you both later.”

“Bye.”

They wave at her and wait until she’s out of view before grinning at each other.

“Lori Danvers,” Alex starts, rolling her surgical gloves off her hands. “That was incredibly badass.”

“I heard that!” Kara yells from across the building.

Lori claps a hand over her mouth to stop her snickering.

“Yeah, Aunt Alex, no enabling the troubled youth.”

“Oh, shut up,” Alex laughs, shoving her niece’s shoulder lightly. “Smartass.”
“I can’t believe you think this is funny,” Kara says in dismay, pushing up her glasses. Lena stifles another round of giggles, leaning against the back of her office couch.

“Oh, come on, Kara, you have to admit that was brilliant,” she says good-naturedly. “He’d only humiliate himself if he acted badly—it’s like a greek tragedy.”

Kara pouts as she shoves another doughnut into her mouth. “Well someone’s blasé about our child throwing herself at swordpoint,” she grumbles around her mouthful.

Lena rolls her eyes. “Of course I’m unhappy she was in a fight, Kara, I just think that it was a clever thing to do. Incredibly reckless,” she admits, “but clever.” Her smile softens. “She took away his ability to guilt you. Very publicly.”

Kara sighs. Lena looks beautiful as always in the red glow of the sunset—she muses that they tend to have important conversations at this time of the day a lot, when Kara’s near overwhelmed with how the red tints in Lena’s hair shine through or the way her eyes go green-amber.

“I guess so. I am proud of her, you know?” She fidgets with her hands. “You should’ve seen her today. She’s only seventeen and she knows how to hold herself in a military briefing.”

She gets so caught up in looking out the L-Corp windows at the sunset that it takes her a moment to realize that Lena’s gone quiet.

“Lena?” She asks. “What’s wrong?”

Lena smiles but doesn’t quite meet Kara’s eyes, simply fiddling with her watch.

“I…” she shakes her head. “It’s nothing.”

Kara frowns. “It’s obviously something.”

Lena laughs, finally meeting her eyes to give her a sad smile.

“I’m sorry, I just—I guess I’m worried?”

Kara scoots a little closer on the couch, frowning in concern.

“Worried about what?”

“Well.” Lena goes to run a hand through her hair before remembering she has it in a bun and stopping short to rub the back of her neck instead. “I guess it’s just… Like you said. She’s only seventeen and she’s already keeping up with special operatives.” Lena sighs. “I’m… worried about how much of a childhood she’s had.”

Kara tilts her head, not understanding. “What do you mean?”

“I wonder if she ever has time for fun, you know? I was worried when she told me she was in college, to be honest. It sounds glamorous to be a child prodigy, but let me tell you,” Lena chuckles, “it’s lonely. I spent more time studying than I even did hanging out with friends, if I even had friends at the time.”

Kara pauses, mulling it over—she hadn’t thought much about that, really. She’s just so… proud of Lori. Happy that this girl gets to explore the full range of her capabilities, gets all the opportunities and training she could ever ask for. It’s a luxury that Kara never had—she was always so busy trying
to hide, trying to quash her feelings whenever she heard someone needing help and couldn’t go to
their aid, she never wanted a normal earth childhood, what was the point when she was already sent
off to a different planet to take on responsibilities far too heavy for a child?

“Kara?” Lena asks, putting a hand hesitantly on Kara’s knee. “Are you alright?”

Kara blinks, once, twice, feeling oddly winded. “I… I’m fine. Sorry.”

Lena frowns. “What happened?”

“I’m…” Kara blinks to find her eyes tearing up. “I’m not sure, I just—I guess I was just thinking
about things. About when I was younger. I—I was always so frustrated about following in Clark’s
footsteps that I never really… let myself be a kid, I guess?” She pushes up her glasses. “I mean, I
was happy when I was hanging out with Alex, but eventually she went out to hang out with her own
friends more, and….”

She takes a deep breath, still feeling out of breath even though she’s been sitting down this whole
time.

“Hey, take your time,” Lena says softly, laying her hand over Kara’s. “It happens sometimes when
you realize something you haven’t let yourself feel. Breathe.”

Kara laughs nervously. “I’m sorry, this is embarrassing—“

“There’s nothing embarrassing about it, okay?” Lena waits until Kara looks up to meet her eyes. “It’s
important to take time to process things. You’re going to be okay.”

Kara smiles at her and squeezes her hand. “How are you… How are you so good at this?”

Lena smiles, furrowing her brows. “Good at what?”

“This,” Kara says vaguely, laughing sheepishly when Lena raises a brow. “Sorting through feelings
and stuff.”

Lena gives her a chagrined smile. “Years of behavioural therapy,” she says, chuckling. “I admit I’ve
been neglecting it for a while, but after Lori showed up I’ve been… trying to stick to it a bit more.”

Kara laughs and laces their fingers together.

“Maybe I should set up an appointment,” she jokes. “I feel like… Like there’s a lot more I haven’t
admitted to myself and that’s kind of… Scary,” she breathes. Lena squeezes her hand.

“Getting to know yourself after a long time is a daunting task,” Lena says. “You’re allowed to take it
slow. Just focus on being Kara Danvers for a while.”

Kara studies the specks of gold in Lena’s eyes before taking a breath.

“Zor-El.”

Lena blinks. “What?”

“My name.” Kara smooths her thumb over the lines of Lena’s palm. “Is Kara Zor-El. Kryptonian
daughters take their father’s name.”

Lena holds her gaze for a moment, taking in measured breaths, as if to fully feel the weight of this
confession, awed, reverent.
“Kara Zor-El,” she says, and Kara closes her eyes at the swirl of warmth that pools in her chest when she hears her name wrapped around Lena’s intonations. “You deserve to be happy.”

Kara opens her eyes again. “I’m happy when I’m with you.”

Lena smiles at her sadly. “I’m happy when I’m with you too. But you should focus on yourself.”

“I don’t even know where to start,” Kara sighs, trying not to feel dejected.

“Start with whatever you can handle,” Lena says, still soft, still encouraging. “When I met you, you weren’t so sure about being a reporter. Maybe you could work on feeling out what you really want from your career.”

“Maybe…”

“And you’ve been telling me how you’ve been struggling with sharing Alex for the first time. You could also work out your feelings on that too.”

Kara gnaws on her lower lip, glancing up at Lena. “I guess there’s a lot to start with in the end, isn’t there?”

Lena laughs before untangling their hands and making to stand.

“Take your time, Kara. You can’t rush these things,” she says with a smile as she smooths out her skirt. “I hate to chase you out, but I have a meeting in ten minutes, and if I’m not mistaken you have an article due in three hours.”

Kara groans theatrically as she stands, basking in the way it gets a giggle out of Lena. She smiles as she draws Lena in for a hug.

“Thank you, Lena.”

Lena holds on tight for a moment, letting go with a sigh.

“I’m here for you.”

And Kara doesn’t have the words to describe how grateful she is.

“I’ll drop Lori off at your apartment when I get off work?”

Lena nods. “You can stay over for dinner again, if you’d like.”

Kara pockets her hands and shakes her head. “Nah, I’ve got sister night with Alex. We have a bunch of stuff to chew each other out about,” she laughs. “Well, sister night plus Maggie. So technically I could invite you if you want?”

Lena smiles. “Go spend time with your sister. We can have dinner whenever.”

They hug again, shorter this time, and when Kara steps out into the street she basks in the red sunlight and the happiness in her chest.
Doshai: "sorry" (it means sad but there wasn't a word for sorry so i substituted)

Zhao’rriv-u gehd. Ta’nahvruht-odh, is’kah?
"Don't do that. Understand, little one?"

Zhi, Yeyu
"Yes, Mother"

I'm sorry about the wait and also if this is shit I was just so excited to write it but then I couldn't find a beta on time please enjoy lskdjfvenslkdfjvn
“Do you think it’ll scar?”

Alex laughs as she slaps Lori’s hands away from prodding at her arm for the umpteenth time.

“Hey—stop that. Are you seriously excited to have a ginormous scar?” She asks, getting up from her couch to pour herself a glass of orange juice.

“Are you kidding?” Lori snorts, swinging her legs over Alex’s vacated spot and stretching out on the couch. “Mar’i would be so proud.”

“And girls dig scars,” Maggie chimes in, leaning back in her armchair, and Alex’s heart does a funny little thing at the rather domestic sight of her niece and her girlfriend hanging out in her apartment together.

Lori perks up at that, just the tiniest bit.

“Do they?”

The hopefulness in her voice makes Alex chortle into her glass and just barely avoid choking on her juice. Maggie shoots her a knowing, delighted look.

“Sure do, kiddo,” she says, grinning. “When you get back this Mar’i girl’s going to be swooning over you.”

(and yes, of course Maggie figured it out within ten minutes of meeting Lori. Damn her and her detecting.)

“What?” Lori makes a face. “No, not Mar’i, she’s my best friend.”

“Oh?” Maggie raises a brow. “So there is a girl you wanna impress?”

The girl starts reddening, pushing up her glasses. “No, of course not, why would you—on what grounds are you— I—“
“Oh my god,” Alex scoffs, walking back over to the couch and slapping Maggie’s shoulder on the way. “Leave her alone, she’s gonna combust or something.”

Lori pouts at her as she tries to move the girl’s legs out of the way and reclaim her spot—her niece stubbornly refuses to move until Alex sighs and just plops right down on her shins.

“Hey!” The girl yelps, yanking her legs out from under Alex. Alex grimaces at the jostling before just laughing at her.

“That’s what you get. This is my couch, you know.”

Lori huffs dramatically, throwing an arm over her face.

“I can’t believe you’d treat your own niece this way. I’m wounded. I’ll never recover.”

“Yeah,” Maggie says, trying not to laugh, “what would Little Danvers say?”

Alex raises her hands in an exasperated gesture, giving Maggie an incredulous look. “Excuse me, you were the one teasing her about a girl like two seconds ago.”

“What, I can’t have fun finding out that there’s not a single straight Danvers girl in the batch?”

Alex chokes and Lori burrows further into her arms with an embarrassed groan while Maggie laughs, beyond pleased with herself.

They’re saved by the front door clicking open and shut to one very annoyed Kara Danvers. The apartment falls silent as Lori and Alex straighten up guiltily and Maggie smooths a hand over her smirk.

“Hey, Little Danvers.”

Kara studies her critically, adjusting the strap of her bag as she slowly walks over.

“Hey, Maggie.” She shoots Alex and Lori a look. “I didn’t know you’d be here so early.”

Maggie shrugs. “I got off work a little earlier than I thought, so I thought I’d head on over. We were just hanging out with Baby Danvers here.”

Kara gives Alex a wide-eyed glare. Her sister throws her hands up defensively.

“She just figured it out on her own when we got here, what was I supposed to do?”

Maggie laughs smugly yet again as Kara rubs her eyes under her glasses, groaning. Lori clears her throat for a Quick Topic Change™.

“How was work, Yeyu?”

Kara sighs deeply before looking up with a tired smile and crossing her arms.

“It was good. Come on, is’kah, lets get you to your Mom’s house.”

Lori frowns. “Aw, already?”

Kara rushes over immediately when the girl winces trying to stand up, holding her gently by the arms.
“Yes, already,” she admonishes, checking over her bandages again. “You need to get your rest and I,” she glares at Alex, “need to have a talk with your aunt.”

“Oh!” Alex narrows her eyes as Lori perks up at that. “That’s okay then, I’ll just head off to Mom’s place now.”

Kara frowns. “Are you sure? You need to conserve your energy—“

“Nope!” Lori chirps, grinning. “I’m in perfect flying condition. No need to wait for me.”

A delighted look tossed at Alex over her shoulder confirms it—this little rascal. She’s throwing Alex under the bus.

“Bye, guys,” she says, hugging Kara once and leaning over to hug Alex. “Love you both.”

“You little shit,” Alex whispers under her breath as Lori squeezes her lightly.

“That’s what you get,” Lori whispers back before pulling away with the sweetest of smiles and heading for the window.

“Hey, what about me?” Maggie laughs in mock indignation.

“You don’t get one,” Lori wrinkles her nose at her. “You’re a meanie.”

Maggie claps a hand over her chest as if she’s been shot.

“Ouch, Baby Danvers, that’s harsh.”

Lori sticks her tongue out at her before breaking into a laugh. “Bye, Mags.”

“See you,” she chuckles. There’s a whoosh as Lori takes off, then a heavy silence again as Alex shuffles awkwardly and Kara shifts her weight to stare her down.

The standoff lasts a few seconds.

“You let my daughter get into a deadly duel!”

“You didn’t tell me you broke up with your boyfriend!”

“And I’m going to get some more snacks,” Maggie says as she quickly picks up her keys, shrugs on her jacket, and pecks a petulant Alex on the cheek before quickly vacating the premises.

Kara sighs when the front door closes behind her, shoulders relaxing as she collapses onto the couch next to Alex.

“Okay, we… we need to talk.”

Alex scoffs, but not unkindly. “Understatement of the year.” She sighs, hoisting her legs up to sit fully facing Kara, folding her hands in her lap attentively. “You first. Wail on me.”

Kara rolls her eyes, mimicking Alex’s posture. “You joke but I am actually really mad at you, you know;” she grumbles. “I can’t believe you let her do that; she could have been hurt!” Kara gestures emphatically, pulling off her glasses. “Do you even—do you even understand how worried I was? I know you just met her, Alex, but I need you to understand how much I care about her. I know it doesn’t make any sense but I—she’s my daughter.”
“Hey,” Alex says softly, reaching forward to hold Kara’s hands. “I care about her too, okay? I get it. She’s... very hard not to like,” she chuckles, trying for levity as Kara’s eyes start watering. “I’m sorry. I didn’t know it was going to get that bad.”

Kara pulls a hand away to wipe at her eyes, sniffing. “You should’ve been more careful. I swear I had a heart attack. And I can’t even have those on earth.”

“Me too. I don’t think any of us were expecting that.”

Kara glares poutily. “It wouldn’t have happened if you didn’t let it.”

Alex laughs, tucking her chin as she concedes. “Okay, okay. Point taken. No more enabling.”

Kara pouts, pulling her hands away to cross her arms. “Somehow I don’t believe you.”

Alex snorts. “Okay, but can you blame me? She loves you. She wanted to help you, so I wanted to help her. And besides, her plan might’ve been crazy, but it was crazy cool and smart.”

Kara tries to keep up her glare but ends up breaking into a small, fond laugh. “The worst combination of clever and reckless,” she scoffs, letting her hands fall to her lap. “She gets that from Lena.”

Alex watches the way Kara fiddles with her fingers, the way her eyes soften and the tension just drains from her shoulders, the way her voice just gets that slight bit more tender with ardour around Lena’s name.

She feels a little stupid, in retrospect; Kara’s always been that way around Lena. Soft, relaxed, smiley —giggly, even. Alex chalked it up to displaced feelings of defensiveness, given Astra and her father and everything, but now she starts to see how Kara smiles about Lena the way she used to smile about James.

“So,” she starts, leaning her elbow against the back of the couch, “you broke up with Mon-El, huh?”

Kara’s eyes shoot up to her, and she tenses up all over again.

“Y-yeah. Last night.”

Kara gulps and Alex wonders what it is exactly that she’s so afraid of hearing right now.

“I heard he broke into your apartment.”

Kara grimaces. “Yeah.”

“And you didn’t punch him in the face?”

That finally gets a small laugh out of Kara.

“No, I…” Kara shakes her head. “I really just wanted to get out of there as fast as possible.”

Alex raises a brow. “Why would you be the one leaving? It’s your—“ she sucks in a breath. “Nevermind, of course he wouldn’t fucking leave,” she grumbles under her breath, rubbing her eyes. “I’m sorry I ever pushed you towards him.”

Kara smiles wryly. “No, don’t be sorry, I know why you were doing it,” she says. “You were happy in a relationship, and you didn’t want me to be lonely…”
“Wrong, actually,” Alex says with a small smile. “I didn’t want you to stop yourself from feeling things like you usually do. I thought that you were ignoring your feelings and that I was pushing you to be honest with yourself, but I should’ve known better. At the very least, I should’ve started to notice how small he was starting to make you feel.” She sighs. “So, I’m sorry.”

Kara takes in a shaky breath. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you.”

Alex shakes her head. “You didn’t want to hear me tell you that you should give him another chance. I get it.” She reaches forward to grab Kara’s hands again. “I’m sorry I made you feel like that.”

“It wasn’t your fault—“

“No,” Alex says firmly. “You’re not gonna deflect my apology like that,” she chuckles. “I promised you that I wasn’t ever drifting away and then I still made you feel like you couldn’t talk to me.” She cups Kara’s face, tilting her chin up to make eye contact. “That’s my bad, and I’m going to work on it, okay?”

Kara sniffs and nods. “I just—I didn’t want to bother you, you know? You have Maggie now and I—I was just afraid you didn’t need me anymore.”

“Kara, listen to me,” Alex says gravely. “You are my sister. Yes, I was really excited about Maggie, and I wanted to keep her to myself for a while, but this is literally the first real honeymoon phase I’ve ever had,” she says, getting a little smile out of Kara. “You’re my sister. There isn’t a single woman in all the universes who can replace you.”

She pulls Kara into her arms, holding her head closer when Kara burrows into her shoulder.

“I’m sorry. I’ll try—I’ll try not to get scared.”

Alex pats her head. “It’s okay to be scared. We’re both going to have to work a little harder to talk to each other, okay? There isn’t a single part of my life I want you to be excluded from.”

“Me neither,” Kara says, muffled by Alex’s shoulder. “I love you.”

Alex squeezes her. “I love you too.”

They stay like that for a while, just holding each other, feeling the distance they unwitting let build between them melt away.

Alex jumps at a timid knock at the door, sharing a puzzled look with Kara before getting up to answer it.

“Maggie?” Alex frowns. “Did you forget your key?”

Maggie just smiles softly, readjusting her food cargo a little bit. “No, I just wasn’t sure if you guys were done yet. I didn’t want to intrude.”

That’s Maggie, ever careful and respectful. Alex doesn’t bother to fight off a burgeoning grin and kisses her lightly, ushering her in.

“We’re good. Thank you.”

Maggie winks at her as she passes by, putting the food on the island bench.

“Hey, Little Danvers.”
Kara barely hides another sniffle before smiling.

“Hey, Maggie.”

“The dumpling truck on the corner was still open so I got you an extra box,” she says cheerfully. “I hope you’re hungry.”

Alex glances over at Kara to see her making just the face she expected—a touched kind of gaping, well on the way to full affection. Food’s always been the direct line to her heart, after all. Alex feels that odd little flutter of happiness in her chest again before she joins her sister and girlfriend in picking out a movie.

(Well, arguing over which movie to watch, really. But Kara’s grinning despite her protesting quips so Alex doesn’t mind.)

Lena’s in the middle of typing out an email when something lands on her veranda, startling her—it’s only a second before she’s pushing her laptop aside and starts for the glass door even as a grinning Lori steps through.

“Mom!” She pulls Lena into a robust hug before sniffing the air. “Is that—pizza?”

Lena laughs as she pulls away, holding Lori by the shoulders. “I heard about your escapades today and figured you’d be starving. Let me look at you first,” she tuts, touching the edge of the bandaid on her face. Her chest coils a little—it’s one thing to laugh over Lori’s recklessness, it’s another to see her covered in so many bandages that she might as well be held together by them.

“Are you okay? Does it still hurt anywhere?”

Lori shakes her head. “My knee hurt a little for a while but it’s fine now. Everything’s healing pretty quickly.”

Lena laughs. “You sound disappointed.”

“A little,” Lori grumbles. “The only lasting damage was to your jacket and shirt, though. Sorry.”

Lori apologetically holds up her arm to show her the gaping slash in the sleeve. Lena thumbs at the flaps a bit with a wry twist of her mouth before chuckling.

“That was designer, you know.”

Lori rolls her eyes. “Oh, boohoo, you billionaire,” she says, grinning when Lena laughs at that.

Lena takes a breath as she trails off of a chuckle, pulling Lori into another hug.

“I’m glad you’re safe,” she murmurs.

“Me too,” Lori hums, hugging her back—Lena basks in the warmth of it, feeling relief spread through her chest at the intactness and solidness of Lori. She’s here, she’s safe, she’s okay.

(and maybe, yes, she’s a little unreasonably terrified by the thought of people disappearing from her life to the point that almost anything will set off her knee-jerk panic.)

“Mom?” Lori shifts. “Not that I don’t love you too but… food…”
Lena rolls her eyes as she lets the girl go, slapping her lightly on the arm—Lori barely registers it as she runs over to the kitchen, shucks off her jacket, and basically tears into the first box of pizza. Lena takes a seat across from her, wrinkling her nose despite her grin when Lori stacks two slices in her hand to stuff into her mouth.

“Slow down, you’re going to choke.”

She snorts when Lori stares at her defiantly and stuffs even more in, making her cheeks puff out like a hamster’s—it’s only mid-laugh that she catches what Lori said.

“Love you too.”

The anxiety picks up in her chest again, because, yeah, maybe, somehow, she’s starting to love this stranger who’s crashed into her life with promises of a perfect future, promises that she’s capable of loving someone enough to make them happy. But even then, is she really? She studies the myriad of gauze and bandages covering this girl and tries to swallow her unease.

“Lori, can I ask,” she stumbles, not being quite sure how to phrase her question, “how was—how was your childhood?”

Lori furrows her brows, swallowing her mouthful before laughing lightly. “What?”

Lena snorts at herself, pressing at her temple and shaking her head. “I know that sounds—completely odd, I was just…” she sighs. “When I was little I was being put through private programs back to back, and I didn’t really have time to have fun, or be a kid, except for when…” she gulps. (she’s not going to talk about Him right now.) “Except rarely. I didn’t get to do normal kid things like… I don’t know, go to Disneyworld or anything.” She puffs out a laugh. “I still haven’t been.”

Lori’s eyes bulge at that, and she slowly puts down her pizza.

“You’re kidding.”

Lena shakes her head with a slight smile.

“Wow,” Lori breathes, staring at the countertop blankly. “So you were living vicariously through me when you bought out the entirety of Disneyworld for my birthday so I could go on as many rides without waiting in line for anything.”

Lena barks out a laugh. “Are you s—what am I saying, of course you’re serious, that sounds like something I’d do,” she groans, holding her head in embarrassment.

“And people think I get my dramatic flair from Yeyu,” Lori chuckles, resuming her pizza inhalation.

Lena groan-laughs again listlessly before brushing her hair back and taking a deep breath. “Okay, so, I take you to Disneyworld. That’s a good sign.”

Lori frowns at her. “I don’t really get what you’re worried about?” she says around a mouthful. “I mean, I guess I was kind of busy as a kid, but, I was happy to be skipping grades?”

Lena leans her cheek against her palm and furrows her brows. “It’s kind of lonely to be years younger than your classmates all the time.”

Lori shakes her head. “I’m not lonely. I have plenty of friends my age.”

“Other than Jon.”
Lori rolls her eyes. “Yeah, other than Jon. There’s Mar’i and Damian too.”

“And how did you meet them?”

“Uhhh.” Lori screws up her face. “I think, both at a gala? Mar’i, I definitely met at one of our galas five years ago, but I’m not too sure about Damian, that was a while ago. Probably something similar, though.”


“You and Yeyu work with their parents a lot,” Lori says, shrugging. Lena lets out a defeated laugh, slumping a little.

“Do you have anyone you met other than family friends?”

Lori chews thoughtfully at that, tilting her head a little in confusion. “I guess not. Is it that important, though?”

“Kind of,” Lena laughs. “I don’t know, I just feel like you should have friends who don’t see your parents on a regular basis, you know? Especially since your friends are kids of business associates.”

Lori frowns, evidently still not understanding, and Lena sighs. “I’m just worried you’re too tied into Kara’s and my work life. I know you’re training to be Supergirl and to work at L-Corp, but you getting to be happy comes first.”

Lori’s frown deepens. “But I am happy. I don’t really mind at all? I want to graduate as soon as possible.”

Lena twists her mouth wryly. “You should get to enjoy being a kid, you know. Have time to work on your hobbies and have fun.”

“I have plenty of hobbies,” Lori retorts. “I’ve been taking piano lessons since I was seven. I have a bunch of awards for it!”

Lena smiles, chagrined. “Strict piano lessons don’t exactly fall outside of the whole harsh prodigal childhood thing.”

Lori shrugs, at a loss. “I mean, I don’t know? I—I’m happy, I promise. I practiced really hard so I could be in the senior orchestra with Conner in his last year of highschool. He plays cello and—and we get to hang out practicing a lot, and it’s fun. And Mar’i’s half alien too so we get along really well and—I don’t really know what else to tell you?” she frowns. “Conner and Jon are more like my brothers than anything else and, I guess I haven’t seen Damian or Mar’i in a couple of years but we keep in touch and it’s fine?”

The girl’s flustered, and it’s obvious she’s never thought of her accelerated upbringing as anything than normal, and the worry twisting in Lena’s gut stays even as the girl reaches over the bench to hold her hands.

“I’m happy, I promise. I might not have been out there making sandcastles with the other kids, but it’s not like I wasn’t having fun rigging up robots to wrestle each other,” she laughs. “It’s different but it was still… good. Don’t worry so much.”

Lena smiles sadly, squeezing her hands.

“Okay,” she relents, trying to stave off the unease in her gut with the hope that Lori’s right. After all,
her childhood might have been as unusual as the girl herself, but deviating from the ‘normal’ script doesn’t mean things will be bad or unhappy.

Lori smiles one of those signature Sunny Danvers smiles at her, and Lena laughs.

What an unusual little family she’ll have.

“Stop fiddling with your hair,” Alex snickers, leaning against the briefing console as she swats lazily at Kara.

Kara pouts, threading her fingers through her ponytail for the seventh time that morning. “It smells weird.”

“Well, it’s your fault you accidentally used Maggie’s shampoo.”

Kara wrinkles her nose. “I didn’t think she’d have weird all-natural shampoo, for crying out loud. How hipster can you be?”

Alex laughs.

“I’m telling her you said that.”

“Nooo,” Kara whines, halting her fidgeting. “She’ll give me a lecture about chemicals and haircare,” she groans, “nevermind that I’m impervious to chemicals anyway.”

Alex rolls her eyes. “Well, try to remember to grab the right bottle next time you’re over,” she laughs, before softening a tad. “You’re welcome to stay over again tonight, if you want.”

Kara smiles at her, feeling warm at the offer, since she still wasn’t ready to go back to her place last night—she feels a little pathetic, a little weak, but she swallows it down. It’s okay to be afraid.

“Nah, I’ll be alright.” She grins. “I’ll probably feel better after fixing the lock.”

“Need help?”

“I don’t know, can you help me find lead deadbolts at the hardware store?” Kara laughs. “I’ll be okay. Thanks.”

Alex quirks a brow. “I know you’re joking but if you wanted, we can make one in the lab here…”

Kara squeezes her eyes together, laughing again in affectionate exasperation. “I’m fine, Alex,” she groans, leaning back against the table. “As long as I don’t have to deal with him too soon.”

Alex gives her hand a quick squeeze. “If he shows his face around here, you’ll be the first to know.”

Kara gives her a tight smile. “Thanks.”

The balcony doors on the far side of the building swoosh open as Lori touches down, hopping inside and down the stairs. She spots J’onn first and grabs him into a hug; Alex and Kara try not to laugh at his frown of professional dismay even as he hugs her back quickly, glaring at the agents trying not to gape—it’s a sight to see.

Lori pulls away with a grin and jogs on over to the two of them.
“Morning!” she chirps, tackling them into consecutive hugs. Kara laughs while Alex wheezes at the enthusiasm.

“Morning,” she coughs, patting Lori on the back. “God, you’re even more of a hugger than she is,” she quips, nodding at Kara.

Lori crosses her arms and frowns. “Well, I can stop if it bothers you that much.”

“I didn’t say that,” Alex says, quickly and defensively and Kara muffles a giggle into her hand because Alex just played right into Lori’s hand; the agent tries to look unhappy but she can’t stop the little quirk of her mouth when Lori smugly bumps their shoulders together.

“If we’re done with the morning pleasantries,” J’onn starts, laying a hand on the table, “I’d like to start the briefing now, agents.”

All three Danvers girls straighten up, clearing their throats and nodding. J’onn looks them over critically (ignoring Lori’s little smile) before waving Winn over.

“Agent Schott, if you will.”

“Right,” he says, hopping up from his console, tablet in hand. “So, last night we intercepted a CADMUS message broadcasted from this location—“ he swipes at his tablet and the main screen lights up with a map of the desert, a red dot blinking just a bit off the highway. “Which we hypothesize is Lillian Luthor’s newest base.”

“What did the message say?” Lori asks, leaning forward. Winn kind of—blinks at her before getting his bearings.

“It was heavily encrypted, so we couldn’t understand the full thing—the gist of it is that they’re planning to raid a certain ‘Vault Thirteen’,” he says emphatically, even doing a quick airquotes gesture.

Lori’s heartbeat picks up at that, her entire body tensing up. Kara glances over worriedly as the girl stares at the display.

“You said Vault Thirteen? Are you sure?”

“Yes?” He glances around quickly. “Is that—is that important?”

“Do you know what’s in it?” Alex asks, frowning. Lori opens her mouth to answer, takes a breath, then closes it, frowning down at her hands and Kara can almost hear her gears turning.

“No,” she finally says, clasping her hands together. “No, I just—it sounds familiar.”

Alex and Kara share a look—did she just—did Lori just lie?

Winn blinks before getting back to it. “Well, anyway, I couldn’t decrypt the vault location or raid time, exactly.”

“So what, we raid them before they can act?” Kara says.

J’onn shakes his head. “There’s too much we don’t know. It’s unclear why they’re targeting a vault when they don’t have any means of opening it, or why that vault in particular. We need to…”

J’onn and Alex toss ideas back and forth, coming up with a plan, and Kara only pays attention to half of it—she spends the other half glancing at Lori. The girl’s tensed up, following every word of
the briefing, but, something’s off—with that weird moment earlier as well, Kara’s worried. This is the first time she’s sure Lori’s holding something back, but she’s not sure for what reason.

“Hey,” she says, when the briefing’s over and Alex and J’onn have gone downstairs to go over their plans. “You okay?”

Lori glances up at her quickly, almost jerkily, before pulling her mouth into a smile.

“Yeah, I’m alright.”

“Are you sure?”

Lori laughs. “Yeah. Just bummed out I couldn’t remember more, I guess.”

Kara studies her for a moment, before deciding, yeah, that’s good enough—Lori will tell her when she’s ready to tell her, whatever it is. She slings an arm around her shoulders, smiling.

“Well, I’ve got the day off from CatCo today. Wanna help me fix my apartment door?”

Kara’s gut twists when she steps into her apartment again for the first time in two nights—it’s still the same way she left it that night. Blanket still thrown haphazardly over the couch, the cushion she fixated on to avoid eye contact still leaning on the coffee table, etc. She tries to stop her hand from shaking as she walks in—this is still her space, this was always her space to begin with—the platitudes in her head sound less and less convincing until Lori rushes in with a grin.

“Whoah,” she laughs, looking around at the apartment. “This is where you lived before you moved in with Mom?”

Kara laughs and pushes up her glasses and puts the bag of supplies from the hardware store down.

“Yup. Been living here for years now, ever since I moved to National City.” She remembers the first time stepping into the wide, unfurnished, slightly grimy space, feeling lost and excited at the same time.

“Wow.” Lori picks up one of the many photo frames. “Hey, I know this one! You keep it in your study.”

Kara walks over, peering over Lori’s shoulder—it’s the one of Alex, Kara, and Eliza on vacation to New Zealand, a wide green field with sheep milling about behind them.

“Yeah, that’s from when Alex graduated highschool.” She sighs wistfully.

“You told me,” Lori says. “You cried the last night of the trip because Aunt Alex was going to go straight to college and you didn’t want her to go.”

Kara laughs as Lori puts the photo down.

“Yeah,” she says, rubbing her neck bashfully. “I might’ve sped through my highschool credits so I could join her.”

Lori cants her head. “Is that a bad thing?”

Kara thinks about all the anxiety, the fear after Jeremiah disappeared—don’t draw attention, keep her
head low, don’t stand out or someone will get hurt again—

“Well, I was trying not to stand out too much, you know?” She shrugs. “Suddenly adopted prodigies tend to draw too much attention.”

Lori frowns at that, pushing up her glasses thoughtfully.

“Huh. I... you never really told me much about that. I mean, I know you pretend to not be as smart as you are at CatCo, but...”

Kara tilts her head, curious. “Really? But wouldn’t you—we have been worried about attracting too much attention too?”

Lori shakes her head. “No, I guess—I guess I had the benefit of having a prodigy for a parent already,” she says, shrugging. She laughs a little bit, looking around at the apartment again. “This is so... weird, seeing your life before Mom. You don’t really hold back around us? Sometimes I can’t even keep up with you guys when you really get into those debates.”

“Debates?” Kara furrows her brows, smiling quizzically. “Debates on what?”

“Oh, you know.” Lori waves her hand. “Astrophysics, the efficiency on one of Mom’s new prototypes, that kind of thing.”

Kara thinks back to her Kryptonian education, all the advanced things she learned that were beyond earth’s Ph.D. levels, everything that she learned to lock away and pretend not to know over the years. She thinks about having an equal on earth to talk to about, to even debate with—she’s still trying to wrap her head around it when Lori makes an excited noise from the far side of the apartment.

“Yeyu!” She crows, and Kara laughs as she jogs on over. “Is this your suit?”

Kara looks past the partition and yes, Lori’s holding her spare suit up, marveling.

“Yes,” she chuckles, padding on over. “Do you want to try it on?”

Lori beams up at her, waiting for a confirmation before zipping into the bathroom to try it on—Kara smiles and shakes her head before walking back out towards the front door and rolling up her sleeves to start sorting through the tools.

“It fits!” Lori zips into the living room, and Kara turns to see her twirling around—it does, indeed fit her perfectly. It looks a little odd without the cape, but still—something twinges in her chest at the sight of her daughter, raven hair spilling over broad blue shoulders, a smile to light up the entire world and the family crest emblazoned proudly across the chest.

She can’t be blamed for getting a little emotional, she tells herself. This is the first time she’s seeing her daughter wearing the House emblem, a privilege reserved for members of the clan.

“It’s so old school!” Lori says cheerfully, slipping into English as she twirls around again.

Kara gasps in indignation. “Hey, who’re you calling old school?” she laughs, pushing her shoulder lightly. “That’s my uniform!”

Lori giggles, stepping away a little in defense. “Okay, okay, it’s classic, happy now?” She picks at the sleeves. “Man, I haven’t seen this except in photographs!”
“Huh.” Kara shakes her head with a grin. “I never thought about it, but I guess I’d change suits eventually, huh?”

“We make minor alterations every couple of years. I mean, Mom’s always experimenting on a spare at the lab.”

The thought of Lena tweaking her suit, making it better, more protective, makes her feel impossibly happy.

She looks at Lori, all geared up and looking ready to take on the world, and remembers something that Lena said.

“Is’kah,” She starts, shifting her weight. “You have time to have fun, right? Inbetween all the training?”

Lori rolls her eyes, laughing. “Not you too,” she chuckles.

“Me too?” Kara quirks a brow.

“Yeah, Mom’s already worried all over me about that.” She puts her hands on her hips and smiles. “I’m fine. I’m happy that I don’t have to be stuck in classes I could pass in my sleep. And I might have to hide in public, but I have so many people in my life that I can just be myself around.”

Lori smiles at her, rattling off answers she’s evidently already thought out, so Kara lets herself relax.

“That’s all I want for you, Little One.”

A siren goes off in the distance, much to Lori’s delight.

Kara gives her a warning look even as she brings her hands together to plead.

“Pleeeassee can I come with you?” She whines, pouting on full. “I promise I’ll follow your lead. I’m a good sidekick, I swear.”

“I—you—” Kara tries to hold off against her pout but gives in. “Fine. Not right now,” she adds, before Lori can zip out the window in her spare suit. “But—hey, don’t pout at me, I’m saying yes—but I’m going to go deal with this, you’re going to wait here, then help me fix my door when I’m back, and then we’ll go to the DEO to see if we can’t find something for you to wear while you help Supergirl today.” She raises her brows in a stern way. “Deal?”

Lori beams. “Deal!”

Lena has to admit, she’s a little surprised when the news outlets start going crazy over Supergirl and her new mysterious sidekick, and she’s a little worried when she turns on her office TV to see what is very obviously Lori in a DEO issue tactical uniform and an eyemask flying around with Kara, because, should Lori really be flying around while still recovering? But the newsreel clearly captures just how much fun they’re having together—both of them grinning from ear to ear, in sync, Lori being beloved by the people already—and she lets herself relax.

Besides, it’s kind of funny to watch people scramble around trying to find something to call Lori. The two of them are having so much fun dodging questions.

(“You’re avoiding the question!” a reporter yells after them at some point.)
Lori, having just touched down an ambulance at the hospital with Kara, smiles that million dollar Super smile and winks as she flies off.

“We did it elegantly, though!”)

And in all honesty, she should have been expecting the two troublemakers to pay her a visit at some point.

She jumps a bit when two pairs of boots touch down on her balcony, looking up from her laptop with just the slightest bit of panic (it hasn’t been that long since the latest attempt on her life, after all), only to laugh breathlessly when the two of them strike the classic pose, fists on their hips.

She shakes her head with a smile before waving them in.

“My, my,” she laughs as the two of them walk in and stand side by side with their arms crossed like they’re here on professional business. “Supergirl and her new mysterious sidekick. To what do I owe the pleasure?”

She sees Lori’s mouth quirks in a barely held back laugh before it smooths back into a neutral but friendly look.

“Just checking in, Miss Luthor,” Supergirl says, nodding politely. “You’ve been working very late nights lately, you must be very stressed.”

Lena raises a hand to her mouth to stifle a snort.

“Well, I appreciate the concern, but it’s only six pm—I’m hardly at risk for overworking tonight. Yet.”

“Studies show that stress is the number one cause of health complications in urban workers,” Lori says gravely, as if describing a serious risk. “The most advised time to get off work is five pm, so that one has enough time to have a proper dinner and leisure time with loved ones.”

“My associate is right, Miss Luthor,” Kara tag teams, just as stern. “Seeing as it’s one hour past the advised time, we’re going to have to strongly recommend that you take the night off to relax.”

“And spend time with your family,” Lori tacks onto the end of that.

Lena bites back a laugh, crossing her arms to try and keep her composure.

“You’re absolutely right,” she says. “I can’t believe how reckless I’ve been, what would I do without my two heroes?” She says it with real affection, letting her grin break through—Lori stifles a giggle and Kara nudges her elbow subtly. “If it’s not much to ask, could you do one more thing for me?”

“Ask away, Miss Luthor. We’re here to help,” Kara says, elbowing Lori again as the girl nearly breaks into laughter.

“Would you please let my daughter and her mother know that I’ll be meeting them at their favourite Chinese restaurant in half an hour? If they’re free, of course.”

“We’ll pass along the message,” Lori says, nodding firmly. “Have a nice evening, Miss Luthor.”

Lena hides another laugh behind her hand, almost breaking the façade.

“Stay out of trouble, you two.”
If Lena thought that having dinner with one hungry Kryptonian was an adventure, having dinner with a hungry Kryptonian and a hungry Kryptonian teenager is another thing in and of itself. Lena orders enough food for twelve people, one plus the eleven stomachs that Kara and Lori seem to have, and they demolish it within half an hour. Reasonably she should be self-conscious of the people who are staring as they simply tear through the food, but the sight of them enjoying themselves so candidly just makes her feel inexplicably happy.

They end up watching the sunset on Lena’s veranda after having gotten bubble tea for dessert, talking quietly about their day.

“Hey, Mom,” Lori says, getting up from her chaise. “Do you mind if I play the piano for a bit?”

Lena glances up at her. “Of course not— it’s dusty, though.”

“That’s ok,” Lori says, smiling as she heads inside.

“Leave the door open so we can listen?” Kara asks. Lori waves an affirmative, and Kara smiles.

“Well, I’m glad that grand piano’s getting some use,” Lena chuckles. “It came with the flat and it’s been gathering dust for a while.”

Kara props her elbow on the back of her chair, shuffling to face Lena fully.

“Really? You don’t play?”

Lena shakes her head. “I used to take lessons but I hated them. I was never much of a musician.” She glances at Kara. “Did you play any instruments?”

Kara smiles at her hands sadly. “On Krypton, I played the khahzhorgehd— something like a harp— for a while. I—”

She cuts off suddenly, glancing towards the door as Lori starts playing a song— it sounds unfamiliar, a little sad, a little strange, but beautiful, and when Kara’s hand starts shaking, she reaches forward to hold it.

“Kara?” She asks, concerned. “Are you alright?”

Kara doesn’t answer for a moment, mouth moving like she’s trying to speak but not coming up with any words. She threads her fingers through Lena’s as she tucks her chin and laughs softly, gnawing on her lower lip.

“Yeah I’m— I’m okay. I just, didn’t think I’d ever hear that song again.”

Lena glances towards the door. “Is that…?”

Kara nods. “A classical piece from the Taizhehn period. I don’t even know how she managed to transpose it, the octave doesn’t have enough notes.”

Lena smiles, smoothing her thumb in the curve of Kara’s palm. “Maybe you did.”

Kara grins. “Maybe.” She stands up, tugging lightly at Lena. “Come on. Dance with me?”

Lena laugh bashfully, acquiescing but hesitant.
“I’m going to have to tell you, I’m kind of a terrible dancer.”

“Really?” Kara raises her brows. “But don’t you have to dance at fancy events?”

Lena shrugs. “I can manage if I concentrate really hard, but I try to avoid it as much as possible. I have a terrible habit of stepping on toes rather painfully.”

“Well,” Kara says, raising their held hands and placing her other on Lena’s waist. “My toes are made of steel, so we’re safe.”

Lena rolls her eyes as she places her hand on Kara’s shoulder, trying to follow her lead.

“Don’t say I didn’t warn you. I can’t do much more than a slow waltz.”

Kara smiles. “That’s alright. I don’t really remember any of the proper steps anyway.”

And she looks so sad, so handsome in the red sunlight, her hair glittering a burnished gold, skin glowing radiantly— Lena wonders if this is what Kara would have looked like on Krypton, had she been allowed to grow up there, have her normal life there. Would she have become a beautiful member of the gentry, infinitely graceful without the limitations of human life, would she have been more carefree without the grief of a world on her shoulders?

Would she still have cared for Lena, if they were able to meet?

Kara looks at her with the softest shimmering blues that remind Lena of the sunset on the lake by her dorms at boarding school, where she’d sit alone with her thoughts— Kara smiles as they sway slowly, leaning in to touch their foreheads.

“What are you thinking about?”

Lena hums, closing her eyes. “Something really cheesy.”

Kara grins. “Oh yeah?”

Lena nods.

“And you’re not going to tell me?”

She shakes her head. Kara laughs, bumping their heads lightly.

“Meanie.”

Lena bites back a giggle. “I’ll tell you if you tell me.”

She opens her eyes to look up, not expecting to find Kara gazing back with such open affection in her eyes— her heart thumps in her chest all the harder for knowing that Kara can hear it.

“I was thinking,” Kara murmurs, brushing the tip of her nose against Lena’s. “That you look beautiful in the red sunlight.” Lena closes her eyes as Kara’s breath tickles her skin. “And that I probably would have fallen for you if we’d met on Krypton.”

Lena lets out a shaky, involuntary sigh, knowing that it brushes over Kara’s lips, caressing, beckoning—

They jolt when Kara’s phone rings in her pocket. Lena pulls away, feeling her cheeks heat up, laughing bashfully as she rubs the back of her neck and refuses to make eye contact.
“Hello?” Kara sounds positively annoyed, and Lena ventures a glance—and yup, she looks miffed at the interruption and it somehow makes Lena’s face heat up even more. She watches as Kara’s face goes from pissed off to concerned, stepping away as she nods.

Lena starts to get worried as she sees Lori step out onto the veranda out of the corner of her eyes—she hadn’t even noticed that the music stopped.

“Okay.” Kara nods, hanging up. She turns back to Lena with a frown.

“Is everything okay?” she asks, drawing her jacket around herself. Kara purses her lips unhappily.

“Just something more to do with CADMUS. I’ll be back, just stay here with—” she jolts and looks around, tensing; Lena follows her gaze, finding the veranda suddenly empty except for the two of them.

“Where’s Lori?”

Chapter End Notes

okay I gotta go on hiatus for real now until mid-april wish me luck on my finals guys
asking for forgiveness instead of permission

Chapter Summary

Lori deals with the consequences of her insubordination. Lena and Kara deal with what it means for them.

Chapter Notes

walking in with shades n a starbucks I'm back bitches didya miss me

dsdfjlvs I'm kidding-- thank you all so much for waiting and I'm sorry it's been a while! I thought I would be able to post sooner, but I handed in my last paper on the 21st and needed a break from mental labour- then I went and fucked my knee up yesterday and lost a day to getting it checked out.

I know I'm posting on the night of SG's actual return so it's kind of bad timing lmfao but I still hope you enjoy!! I'm off to watch the episode myself after posting.

This chapter is a little more Lena-intensive; I'm sorry, I'll be getting right back to the supercorp fluff in the next chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Kara watches silently as the DEO agents mill about, cataloguing the rest of the items from the vault; their standard issue boots shuffle against the thin layer of sand in the desert cavern as they walk to and from the huge steel doorway on the far side. The hushed reports and orders sound like a cacophony in her ears and she should probably join them, but she just… stands there, watching her daughter cradle a small infant in her arms.

Lori’s got the baby wrapped up in her jacket, indifferent to the cold, even when bare-armed. She sitting on the open back of one of the vans, adjusting the child every now and then but mostly whispering softly with the smallest of smiles—Kara doesn’t have the heart to listen in. She hasn’t had the heart to do or say much of anything in the time since Lori took off straight towards the vault.

It wound up being a trap, in the end—Lillian Luthor had been counting on them to show up, something about how this particular vault is programmed to open to Lex Luthor and Kryptonian DNA only, how they’ll have no need of them once she’s got her hands on Experiment 13—

She was about to cut off the dramatic villainous monologue when the cavern lit up with red sunlight and the Kryptonians were forced to fight for their lives against a contingent of armed CADMUS lackeys. A couple of close calls later the DEO finally arrived and it all seemed like it was over when most of CADMUS went down and the rest surrendered (Lillian Luthor being nowhere to be found, naturally).

That is, until Kara saw Lori head for the vault panel, knocking down the agent that tried to stop her.
“Lori!”

Kara doesn’t like the way the DEO agents follow her as she runs toward her daughter, but she can’t think—Lori stops at the panel turning to look at them with a panicked, wild look in her eyes.

Kara halts the agents several feet away from Lori—“stand down!” Alex yells, waving at their raised guns—before she shuffles forward slowly with her hand outstretched.

“Lori, what are you doing?”

Lori glances at all of them frantically before her eyes settle on Kara, a grim sort of determination setting on her face.

“Hey,” Alex says, softly, in that strained and tense but still tender worry, as she steps up beside Kara. “Step away from the panel, okay? Let’s talk.”

Lori frowns at them—Kara swears she sees a flash of an apologetic grimace before the girl’s eyes light up with heat vision and a line of flame bursts just in front of them. The agents flinch back, and Kara throws her cape up to shield Alex as she hears the grinding of the giant steel doors sliding open. When she turns back she sees a figure run into the vault, the sight distorted by the heat-woven air—she only hesitates for a beat before bracing herself and jumping through the flames after the girl.

She’s not prepared to see what she does. Lori’s torn her jacket off and she’s pressing buttons on some sort of - stasis pod? lain on the floor, reaching her hands in as the glass opens. Kara lurches to stop her, cries out, there could be something dangerous in there but—she falters as Lori carefully, tenderly pulls out an infant covered in viscous, transparent fluid.

The baby squirms, makes soft noises of discomfort as Lori bundles it into her tattered jacket and cradles it close to her chest.

"Shh, hey, it's okay," she coos, wiping goo off of that tiny face. "It's just me, Conner. I got you."

And in that moment, Kara sees the scene that should have happened but never did, the plan - the dream that stuck to the back of her eyelids for twenty-four empty years. Protect him, protect him, protect him; her mother’s words echoed in her sleep until she could think of nothing else but pulling her infant cousin from his pod into her arms—of turning to face the world and finding a way to live on.

“You’re gonna be okay,” Lori murmurs, balancing the baby in her arms. “I’m here now. I’ve got you.”

Kara feels her heart twist and turn painfully.

Alex walks over and puts a firm but sympathetic hand on her shoulder.

“Hey.”

Kara glances at the worried lines on her sister’s face.

“Hey.” She tries for a small, reassuring smile—Alex doesn’t buy it, not from the way her frown deepens for a short moment but then she’s smiling back, only a little tensely.

“We kind of have to arrest her,” Alex says, nodding to Lori.
Kara groans and runs a hand through her hair. “Do we really have to?”

Alex nods, brows knitting together apologetically. “She assaulted and open fired at government
agents.”

“To save that baby, presumably,” Kara says in her defense, crossing her arms. “She’s my daughter.”

“The rest of the DEO doesn’t know that,” Alex says, trying to placate her. “And if they did, well,
it’d look even worse, like nepotism or something.” She sighs. “We’re not going to do anything. It’ll
just look really bad if we don’t at least detain her until Lena comes to pick her up.”

Kara groans, clapping a hand over her eyes. “Rao. We have to tell Lena about this.”

“You have to tell Lena about this.”


“You’re her other parent. Closest relatives and protocol and all that. There’s probably paperwork
about it,” Alex says, patting her back. “Good luck with that, by the way.”

Kara squints at her sister. “Thanks,” she grumbles, bumping her shoulder grumpily as Alex chuckles
at her.

“Well,” Alex sighs, trailing off the end of her laugh and sobering somewhat. “Wish me luck on
arresting my niece and confiscating a baby.”

Kara lets out a bark of laughter, in a listless sort of way, unable to help herself before putting a hand
on Alex’s shoulder.

“I’ll do it.”

Alex quirks a brow. “You sure?”

“Yeah.” She nods grimly. “I want to.”

Alex studies her for a moment, searching her face for uncertainty because before anything else she is
Kara’s older sister—but she relents and smiles with gratitude.

“Good luck,” she says, reaching up to squeeze her shoulder before walking off to join the other
agents.

Kara inhales deeply, squares her shoulders, and breathes out heavily before heading over to her
daughter.

“Hey.”

The girl looks up from her soft cooing, face falling into an apprehensive pout.

“Hi.”

Kara lets herself smile, just a little bit, just to reassure her as she sits down beside her.

“How is he?” She asks, peering at the quiet but wide-eyed infant.

“He’s doing okay,” Lori murmurs. “I checked, and everything’s normal.”
Despite her words she gnaws on her lip worriedly, adjusting him in her arms. Something about the determinedly firm but gentle way she handles him pangs in Kara’s chest.

“Yeyu,” Lori begins, tilting the baby up a little more and turning towards Kara. “This is Conner.”

The baby tucks his face a bit more into Lori at the sudden shift in angle, and Kara can’t help but smile a little.

“Clark’s Conner?” She asks quietly. Lori nods. Kara shifts a little closer and holds her arms up hesitantly. “Can I?”

Lori leans over and carefully places Conner in her arms, trying to jostle him as little as possible—Kara readjusts her hold once he’s fully in her arms, fitting his head over the crook of her elbow. The last time she’s held an infant was the last time she tucked Kal into bed for Uncle Jor-El, on a night that both he and Aunt Lara were busy. It’s such a mundane memory from before the world ended. Now, with her adult arms, the baby feels so much smaller than she remembers Kal being; but then he finally turns his shy eyes up to her and familiarity spreads through her chest. That same instinctual tugging, of something just fitting like puzzle pieces—she smiles and holds him a little closer.

“He has the family eyes,” she says.

Lori smiles softly. “Yeah. We all do. Seems like it’s a really dominant allele.”

Conner blinks his big, inquisitive blue eyes and Kara can’t help how her smile widens.

“Conner Kent,” she says, as if to test out how the name feels.

“Kon-El.” Lori wrings her hands, glancing up at Kara like she’s gauging her reaction. Kara takes a second to register what she means.

Then she lets out a quiet breath and looks back down at the boy.

“Kon-El. Kon-El and Jon-El,” she says, mostly to herself—it’s just an old naming convention, for brothers to have rhyming names—it’s such a small detail, but somehow such a mundane part of Krypton living on weighs all the more wonderfully heavily in her chest.

“Lori, why…” she starts, trying to find the words. “Why was he in the vault?”

Lori clenches her hands tightly, drawing her knees together and looking away. There’s a long pause before she finally speaks up.

“He’s not Lois’s son,” she says quietly. “Out of the three of us, Jon’s the only natural birth. Conner was made by…” She pauses for a moment, mouth clenched shut. “By Lex Luthor. Using his own genes and Clark’s.”

Lex Luthor and Clark. She tries to wrap her head around it.

“But—why?” She frowns. “What reason would he have to do that?”

Lori shrugs. “I don’t know. I never cared.” She twists her mouth unhappily. “He’s a person. It doesn’t matter why.”

Her shoulders set defensively and Kara lets out a shaky breath.

“So that’s why you went ahead of us.”
Lori nods. “I’m sorry. I couldn’t—as soon as I heard Lillian was after him, I couldn’t let it happen.”

Conner yawns quietly and Kara bundles him a little closer as she frowns at Lori, mouth pressed into a sad line.

“Is’kah, why didn’t you tell us?”

“Because I knew the DEO would never let me bring him out without studying his pod for weeks,” Lori hisses, almost angrily. “I love J’onn but I knew he wouldn’t put the safety of this world above anything.” She runs a hand over her face. “He’s going to be so mad at me but I couldn’t—I couldn’t just—”

Lori almost stutters, hand clasped over her eyes and halting syllables reaching for words.

“Why were you so desperate to get Conner out?” Kara asks gently, wanting to calm the girl. Lori sighs again, and it’s another pause before she speaks up again in a low murmur.

“In the proper timeline,” she starts heavily. “Clark doesn’t find him until he’s already five years old.” She shakes her head, running her hand through her hair and staring blankly at her shoes. “He tells people he doesn’t remember anything, but he said—one he said to me and Jon that he has nightmares.” Her voice shakes a little, and she fiddles with her watch. “He has this recurring nightmare about being in the dark, not even knowing who he is, wondering if anyone’s ever going to find him or if he’s been abandoned and I couldn’t leave him to that,” she hisses out through gritted teeth, her grimace growing fiercer with every word. “I couldn’t do nothing while I knew he was out there, he’s—”

She stumble for words again before Kara steps in.

“He’s family.”

She snaps up to look at Kara with something like surprise or awe, mouth falling slightly open, before the tension drains from her frame in relief. Kara smiles at her before looking back down at Conner—some part of her rational brain says that she should be seeing something different now, that she should be looking at him differently knowing that he’s partly cloned from Lex Luthor. But he ventures out a little hand to try and touch her cheek and all she can think of are the late afternoons she spent with Kal, waiting for their parents to come home while she read him stories.

(She always read them aloud, instead of letting the holos narrate themselves. He liked it better that way.)

Kara smiles at the boy. “He’s family,” she says again, shifting him in her arms. He makes a small, discontented noise, glaring up at her with a frown that’s far too cute. She just laughs softly as he closes his eyes and starts to doze off.

“He’s so quiet,” she whispers in disbelief. Lori scoffs.

“I wish he’d stayed quiet,” she grumbles, and Kara bites back a laugh.

“What happened to your ride or die attitude?” she asks, grinning in amusement as Lori groans.

“Sure, he’s family and I love him. Doesn’t mean he’s not stupendously annoying sometimes.”

Something about the way she says it reminds Kara of Alex when she’s complaining about Kara stealing her food and it makes her smile.
“Yeah,” she chuckles. “That’s family.”

Alex herself shuffles in the distance, getting Kara’s attention and giving her a worried look, and Kara sighs.

“Is’kah, we have to…”

“Arrest me, I know.” Lori sighs. “I didn’t really think this through,” she laughs, grimacing at Kara as she hops to her feet. “Take care of him for me?”

Kara nods. “Of course.”

In all honesty, Lena wishes she’d been invited to the DEO under different circumstances— it’s a sight to see, with the big main console and no expense spared on all the displays. Every piece of tech she gets a glimpse of she wants to ask a thousand questions about— or, she would want to ask questions about, if she wasn’t preoccupied with the fact that she was here to pick up her detained daughter at two in the morning.

She stops for a moment when an agent ushers her into the room, heart jumping to her throat as she takes in the scene of Lori, sitting in a cell behind glass walls. She digs her nails into the strap of her bag for a moment as she stares down the long concrete room— Lori looks up, giving her a guilty smile and Lena chokes back her anger.

Her heels clack loudly and authoritatively in the room (she maybe gives her steps some extra force) as she walks over to the cell glass, stopping a couple of feet away and taking in sharp breaths.

“Hi, Mom,” Lori says, almost bashfully as she stands up. “Sorry.”

Lena’s hands flutter tensely before she settles on holding her temples for a moment.

“You’re— you’re sorry?” she asks, incredulous, hand jerking out in an angry flourish.

Lori winces. “Wow. You’re really mad. I guess they told you what happened?”

“Director J’onnz briefed me on what happened, yes,” she replies tersely, and Lori puffs out a sigh.

“You, J’onn’s really disappointed in me,” she laughs, trying for levity. “He even made a point to tell me telepathically.”

The girl grins up at her hopefully and Lena just— stares. Because really, is this the time to be trying to make jokes?

Lori’s grin falls and she swings her hands together in kind of a ‘yikes’ motion before sighing.

“I’m— I’m really sorry.”

Lena tries to gather up all her rationality and calm and fails.

“You assaulted a DEO agent and open fired at the entire team,” she starts, slow and measured in a brittle kind of way, “and you tampered with unidentified equipment.”

Lori groans. “To save Conner. You know, my cousin?”
“And you didn’t think to tell me that he was Lex’s clone at any point?” she hisses.

Lori changes then, from apologetic and guilty to planting her feet into the ground and squaring her shoulders.

“No, I didn’t because it doesn’t matter,” she says, brows furrowed fiercely.

“It doesn’t matter?” Lena asks. “In what world does it not matter, Lori, he’s Lex’s clone—”

“Which is not his fault!” Lori grits her teeth. “It doesn’t matter because he is good and he is kind and he is nothing like what people expect him to be.”

(Lena doesn’t dwell on how much Lori looks like Kara did, when she squared her shoulders and defended her against all odds.)

“What—” Lena squeezes her eyes shut angrily and takes a deep breath. “What were you planning to do with him, then? Did you have a plan on how to take care of an infant, much less an alien one?”

“I—” Lori falters, looking lost. “I thought I’d figure it out as I go—”

“So you weren’t even thinking at all?”

“Yes— No, I—” Lori screws up her face as she struggles for words. “I didn’t have time to plan, I just had to get him out of there!” she pleads, gesturing angrily. “I couldn’t just sit there and do nothing while I knew he was out there somewhere.”

“Is that your only reason?” Lena shoots back just as angrily. “You won’t have actually saved him from anything, you realize that? Once you go back everything will return to the way it was— what you did won’t matter, Lori.”

The girl visibly bristles at that, clenching her jaw.

“It will always matter, even if it’s written over.” She shakes her head. “It’ll matter that in some continuity, he was rescued and he was loved, even if just for a few days, even if it’s not the real timeline, even if he doesn’t remember, because that’s important.” Her eyes gloss with tears but her voice doesn’t shake, not even once. “It’ll matter because I had the power to make a positive change in his life and it was the right thing to do— and you don’t do the right thing only if it’ll make a difference. You don’t do it because you want to, you do it because it’s the right thing to do.” She presses a hand against the glass, her bluefire stare unwavering. “You’re the one who taught me that.”

Lena’s nails dig into her palms for a moment— there it is again, this idea that somehow she’s passed on something good, that she’s capable of being more than alone and in pain. She takes in a deep breath, steadying herself, before exhaling quietly.

“Please,” Lori says, pleading now. “I’m sorry for springing another thing on you again, I’ll do everything to help, everything you tell me to do, for real this time— just please, help me figure this out.”

Her voice finally breaks a little at the end, brittle with fear, and Lena almost wants to laugh in a dark sort of way, because what does Lori have to be afraid of? It’s not a decision. It’s not up for debate.

*The right thing to do.*

She turns to the agent standing a few feet away, readjusting the strap of her bag on her shoulder.
“When can I take them home, agent?”

She sees Lori light up out the corner of her eyes, the girl’s entire frame straightening up and her face splitting into a grin.

“They’re both cleared to be released into your custody,” the agent says, stepping forward to unlock Lori’s cell. “You’ll just have some paperwork to file upstairs.”

Lena nods. “Thank you.”

The agent barely has time to acknowledge her before Lori pushes through the door and grabs Lena into a hug.

“Thank you, Mom,” she says, squeezing hard enough to make Lena wheeze.

“Easy,” she chokes out, taking a deep breath when Lori lets her go. “Don’t thank me, it’s not like I could abandon either of you.” She pauses, narrowing her eyes for good measure, crossing her arms. “And don’t look so happy, either— you were still reckless and you are still grounded.”

Lori pouts. “Can you still ground me if you’re not technically my mom yet?”

“Lori.”

“Yes ma’am.”

Kara’s waiting for them upstairs, still in her Supergirl regalia, pacing nervously next to Director J’onnz in that adorable way she does with her hands wringing— Lena swallows the sudden flutters in her chest as she makes her way over. Kara looks up at them the moment they start walking and smiles so softly.

So much for not being nervous, Lena guesses. Her own hands start wringing as she heads across the raised walkway towards what seems like a medical bay— through the glass, Lena sees Alex carefully scan a bundle of blankets and her heart jumps to her throat again.

Oh. She’s not sure if she’s ready for this.

Kara tries to smile as reassuringly as she can when she makes her way over, bless her.

“Miss Luthor,” J’onnz says genially.

Lena nods, appreciating the quiet amiability. “Director J’onzz.”

He looks past her shoulder at Lori and a kind of… tenseness fills the air, Lena can’t put a finger on the unsettling feeling. Lori bows her head apologetically and the ambience somehow relaxes, J’onnz’s frown falling into a look that’s stern, but softly. Lena looks to Kara inquisitively, only getting a reassuring smile.

She takes in a brittle breath. “Is he— is he alright?”

Kara glances behind her. “Yes, he’s fine— Alex is just doing a last scan, just in case.” There’s a warm kind of exasperation in her voice, and Lena stifles a laugh.

“I suppose I could do that paperwork while we’re waiting.”
Kara shakes her head. “That—I’ll take care of that for you.”

Even J’onn raises a brow at her.

“Oh, no, it’s alright—”

“It’s no trouble, really,” Kara insists. “I—I’m kind of tied up here all night to help deal with the rest of the vault, so I can’t really help with— with Conner. It’s the least I could do.”

There’s an implicit apology and a kind of caring in her halting statement that struggles to be polite. (as if it’s a given that she would be expected to help them out—a rather… domestic thought.) Kara leans towards her just the smallest bit, so much earnestness in her eyes that Lena knows she wants to hug her, comfort her somehow.

But they’re in the middle of the DEO, not in her office, so Lena gratefully takes the offer.

“Thank you, Supergirl.”

“Anything,” Kara says, so quietly she almost misses it— J’onn graciously ignores it and opens the door to the med bay for them. Lena nods gratefully and steps inside to find Alex waiting for her with the baby already in her arms.

Lena swallows. She tries not to shake as Alex starts to hand him over.

Here goes nothing. She starts to wrap her arms around him, following Alex’s murmured instructions carefully— careful, support his head here, there you go — and before she knows it, she has a small human bundled in her arms.

There’s a spike of panic— she’s never held an infant before, what if she screws this up, what if she hurts him, god what if she fucks up because that’s the only thing she’s good at—

Conner opens his eyes to look up at her with bright blues, wriggling a little at the new person holding him. Then, he smiles up at her, with his kind of sticky-outy ears and mismatched dimples just like Lex’s and oh, there it is. There he is. He giggles a little when she adjusts him in her arms and she loves him, instantly and unconditionally, just like Lex did when she first stepped into that dark mansion for the first time.

“Hi, Conner,” she whispers, doing nothing to stop the smile from spreading across her face. “It’s nice to meet you.”

Later, when she’s changed into sweatpants and taken her hair down, someone knocks on her door. Lena raises her brow when she opens the apartment door to a Lori with way too many baby supplies in her arms.

The girl grimaces helplessly. “I didn’t know what to get, okay.”

Lena just laughs as she steps aside to let her in, shaking her head. “So you got a little bit of everything?”

“Don’t act like you’d know any better, you haven’t had a baby yet,” is the grumbly response. Lena shakes her head again before conceding, closing the door before heading over to help Lori sort through the supplies.
“Alright,” the girl says, laying her cargo down on the floor in front of the couch where Conner is bundled up, giving her a nonplussed look. “Let’s start off with your pacifier, little guy.”

She rips the packaging away from the little piece of plastic with a frown.

“Wait,” Lena says, “I think you’re supposed to clean it before you can use it.”

“Oh. Right. Where do you keep your sanigel?”

Lena blinks. “My what?”

Lori frowns at her in confusion before pouting in dismay. “Right. You guys don’t have that yet.”

Lena’s burning with curiosity, but Conner makes an impatient noise so she just laughs it off and takes the pacifier from Lori. “I’ll google how to do it.”

“Oh. Google. Right.” Lori runs a hand through her hair as Lena walks over to the kitchen tapping away at her phone. “I could’ve used that to figure out what I needed.”

Lena chuckles again as she pulls up the page. “What, do you not have Google anymore?”

“No,” Lori says almost absently, reading the instructions on a formula box. “Their empire fell when I was thirteen. Corporate overextending and all that.”

*Boil the pacifier in water for five minutes before first use.* Lena raises her brows as she take a small pot from the rack.

“Wow. That’s… unexpected,” she chuckles, turning towards the sink. “How do you find anything on the internet, then?”

“I just ask Kelex,” Lori calls over the sound of running water. Lena furrows her brows as she shuts the water off, putting the pot on the stove.

“Kelex?”

“Yeah, our helper AI. I think he’s named after an AI that kethgyr— grandfather— used to have?”

Lena looks over to see Lori carefully opening one of the bottles and walking over. “I think we need to boil this too.”

Lena nods and double-checks on the internet quickly as she tries to wrap her head around everything Lori’s saying— it makes sense that the world would be so different so far in the future, but it’s another to hear about it. There’s a bit of a childish tingle of glee as she thinks of all the technological innovations she’ll get to see in her life.

“Is it very different, being this far back in the past?” Lena asks as Lori hands her the formula powder while she reaches for a clean mixing glass. The girl laughs a little.

“Yeah, I mean, it’s definitely making me grateful for all the things I take for granted,” she says, measuring the water in the glass. “I keep turning around to do this or that and realize oh, that hasn’t been invented yet. And hanging out with you in your twenties is always new,” she adds with a laugh.

Lena moves over to the stove as the pot starts to boil. “Am I really?” she asks, brows knitting bemusedly.

“You have a shorter temper, for one,” Lori snorts, and Lena’s heart drops, thinking of earlier. The
girl freezes, taking in her sudden change and grimaces. “Shit, I didn’t— I didn’t mean it as a jab, I’m sorry—”

Lena shakes her head, giving her the best smile she can manage. “It’s okay,” she says, slowly lowering the plastic pieces into the water. “I shouldn’t have yelled at you like that.”

“It’s okay, Mom, I know I was being reckless,” Lori says unhappily, hands resting on the countertop. Lena turns to her and squeezes her shoulder.

“Being reckless doesn’t mean you deserve to get yelled at,” she says, “I’m sorry. I get angry when I don’t want to admit that I’m scared. I shouldn’t have taken it out on you.”

Lori frowns, mouth pressing into a sad line. “What were you scared of?”

Lena takes in a brittle breath, turning to lean back against the counter while she fiddles with her ring.

“When you took off like that, I was just… freaking out until Kara called me to say you were okay. I didn’t know if you were in danger or not, and I guess I’m—” she sighs. “I’m not… very good with feeling like I might lose someone.”

There’s a quiet pause before Lori sets everything down on the counter and turns wrap her arms around Lena, tucking her chin on her shoulder in a slightly ungraceful side-hug. Lena brings her hands up to hold Lori’s arms gratefully.

“Another thing that’s different,” Lori begins softly, the pot simmering quietly in the background. “Is that I think I’m beginning to understand you better.”

Lena laughs, leaning her head against Lori’s. “How so?”

“I always knew you had a hard time before meeting Yeyu, but I never really… thought about how it would’ve felt for you. You are so …” Lori casts around for a word. “Beloved, you know? L-Corp is one of the most respected companies out there, nearly everyone who works for you loves you, weekends are so loud because our family’s always coming over last minute,” she adds with a small laugh. “I could never understand why you tried so hard to make me happy, or why you always got so worried about me. You’d think that having a bulletproof kid would be less stressful.”

Lena chuckles along at that, shaking her head and patting Lori’s arm. “I’m not sure my anxiety cares what bulletproof means.”

Lori snorts, holding her a little tighter. “I’m sorry I kept you worrying for hours. I promise I won’t do it again.”

Lena laughs, pulling away to turn the stove off.

“Don’t make promises you can’t keep, Supergirl Junior,” she teases, poking Lori on the nose.

Lori wrinkles her face and swats at her petulantly, laughing as she’s about to make a quip but they’re interrupted by Conner’s small, but nonetheless insistent and unhappy cry.

“Shit—” Lori scrambles to get back to the formula, but Lena pushes her lightly.

“I’ll take care of this, go give him the pacifier first,” she says, re-checking the measurements. “Remember to cool it off,” she adds as Lori plucks it out of the boiling pot and superspeeds to the couch.
“Here you go, buddy,” she hears her murmur to Conner. “Sorry about that.”

When Lena comes over with a full bottle, temperature-checked and everything, Lori’s cradling the baby in her arms, re-bundling him.

“Here,” Lena says as she hands her the bottle. “Sit him up a little, and tilt it until the milk fills the nozzle completely.”

Lori follows her instructions carefully, murmuring in a soothing tone all the while. “There you go. Easy. Jon’s gonna die laughing when I tell him I bottle fed you… You’re gonna try to kick my ass but I’m gonna tell him anyway…”

Lena laughs, sitting down on the carpet just in front of Lori’s seat on the couch. “You two seem close.”

“Me and Conner?” She glances up at Lena. “Yeah, I guess. I mean, I’ve known him all my life.”

Lena smiles, “You’re awfully protective over someone who’s a fair bit older than you.”

Lori hums thoughtfully. “I mean, it’s kind of hard not to be. I remember he was always so… quiet and sad. Before puberty turned him into a sarcastic pain in the ass,” she snorts. “But I guess… He’s been through a lot, you know? And for most of it I wasn’t really old enough to realize what was going on, much less do anything about it.” She grimaces. “I always wished I could go back in time and… I don’t know, protect him somehow.”

And Lena inevitably thinks of Lex, and how she was so blind to how Lillian pushed him, how she didn’t realize until adulthood that Lex wasn’t the golden boy. Lillian’s affection for him was just as conditional on him meeting her expectations as it was for Lena, except that she actually was affectionate to him— in some ways, Lena thinks, that was much crueler than the constant coldness Lena suffered, that palpable love and affection was dangled in front of him like a carrot. Lena thinks about the double-edged words he had to balance in his life, she thinks about how she was too young to understand, how it was too late when she finally caught on.

She looks at Lori getting the chance she never got to have, no matter how inconsequential, and it’s… cathartic, if a little bittersweet, if a little wistful.

She asks the question she’s been trying to forget for a while now.

“Lori…” She starts picking at the threads of the carpet. “Before, you called… You called him ‘Uncle Lex’.” She grimaces at the sound of his name. “Have you… met him?”

Lori’s quiet for a long time, and Lena doesn’t dare look up. Finally, the girl sighs.

“I didn’t want to upset you by bringing it up,” she prefaces, “I know he’s still… Like that right now.”

Lena scoffs, more bitterly than she intended. “Does he ever stop being a murderous maniac?”

Lori hesitates, as if knowing that Lena might not be ready to hear the answer to that.

“I met him for the first time when there was a CADMUS attack a few miles out of San Diego,” she begins. “The entire DEO was on alert, and no one would tell me anything so I stupidly thought I could take them on my own. Dragged Conner into the mess, too,” she says wryly. “I walked right into a trap and nearly died and then he… He just showed up and saved my life. Our lives.”
Lena tries to fight the tears in her eyes, the bruised beating in her heart.

“Does he change?” she asks, her voice trembling.

“I…” Lori gulps. “I think that he has. After everything was done, he just… he just turned himself in, just like that, once we were safe. I visited him in prison afterwards and…”

“You what?” Lena looks up at that, and Lori looks remorseful.

“I wanted to figure it out. He was just… so different than everything I’d heard about him and I wanted to know why. He wouldn’t… he wouldn’t tell me much. Just kept telling me to go home and that I shouldn’t be there.”

Lena’s mouth opens and closes over a few silent words, not being able to choose a single one, fingers picking at the carpet a little more frantically now.

“Is he—” (Is he different?) “How—” (How did he change?) “What…” she swallows. “What’s he like?”

Lori lets out a soft breath. “He’s… sad,” she says. “Quiet. Paints a lot. I don’t… He didn’t really let me learn much about him. I wish I understood him,” she whispers.

Lena swallows back another wave of grief, nodding. “Me too.”

She looks up with a tired smile, and Lori smiles back, idly bundling Conner a little tighter as he sleeps. They both start at a tap at the window, falling into soft grins when they see Kara standing outside the veranda door, looking a little meek despite her uniform.

She opens the door when Lena waves her in, walking over soundlessly.

“I’m sorry,” she says, glancing at the haphazard pile of baby supplies. “Is this a bad time?”

Lena shakes her head. “How did the wrap-up go?”

Kara smiles at her as she crouches down next to her. “It went well. All finished. I came over when I saw that your light was still on,” she says, disgruntled. “It’s four am. You two shouldn’t be up.”

Lena makes to brush off her concerns but ends up yawning instead, having the grace to look a little sheepish when Kara gives her a disapproving look.

“Hey, she stayed up too,” she says, tiredly jerking a thumb at Lori.

“I need a lot less sleep than the average human,” she quips right back. “Don’t try to drag me into this.”

“Hey,” Lena swats at her thigh with a sleepy smile.

“You still shouldn’t stay up this late, is’kah,” Kara reprimands, getting a conceding yes ma’am before she turns to Lena. “And you need to go to sleep before you pass out on the floor.”

Lena rolls her eyes. “I’m not that tired,” she grumbles, even as her eyelids get heavier and her head lolls to the side a little. She opens one eye to peek at Kara’s raised brow before groaning in defeat. “Fine, I’m a little tired, happy?”

“I’ll be happy when you’re properly in bed,” she huffs, sliding her arms underneath Lena. “Come on.”
Lena slings her arms around Kara’s neck as she’s hoisted up effortlessly. A thought comes to mind and she doesn’t bother to stifle her giggle. Kara peers down at her curiously.

“What is it?”

A part of her knows she shouldn’t, but in her sleepiness she throws caution to the wind. “Are you taking me to bed, Supergirl?”

Kara laughs at that, jostling her a little on purpose. “I would be so lucky, Miss Luthor.”

It’s said as a joke but with such a soft timbre that Lena feels butterflies in her chest again, snuggling up closer to Kara.

“Eeeeww.” Lori groans from behind them. “Guys,” she whines, and Lena stifles her giggles into Kara’s shoulder.

“Sorry,” Kara says sheepishly.

“Whatever,” Lori says, in an eyeroll kind of tone, “just tuck her in.”

Lena’s eyes are closed, and her family’s voices are a bit far off to her now, so she huddles closer to the warmth on her cheek as she drifts away.

“What about you?”

“I’m gonna make his bed basket and then bring him up with me, don’t worry.”

“Alright. Ukiemiv'odh w’rrip, eh is’kah.”

“Ukiemiv'odh, eh Yeyu.”

Chapter End Notes

ukiemiv is just the verb form of familial love- they’re saying "love you" to each other

Special thanks to mestronot on tumblr for a really great piece of fanart:
http://maestronot.tumblr.com/post/159885842969/aaaaaah-i-drewed-something-this-is-lori

and to sogayitarts also on tumblr for this great manip:
http://sogayitarts.tumblr.com/post/159501174697/i-got-so-obsessed-with-this-fic-i-had-to-know-what

if you've sent me fanart and I forgot to link it, let me know so I can plug you in the next update!

I'll be writing the finale to Gold-Crested Ravens, my other fic after this, then I'll be writing Supergirl in Training full-time so the updates will get a little more consistent (provided life doesn't fuck me over lmfao) but thanks again for waiting!

Have a great night y'all
Hey guys! I'm so sorry about the delay - things got really crazy with my financial situation and between looking for jobs and class, I didn't have much time or energy to write.

Things have eased up a little bit, though, and I should be able to post on a regular basis! I'm sorry this one's a little shorter than usual.

The Shitstorm will be in three parts exploring Kara's growth - the plot is a little hamfisted to facilitate the character development, but I hope you don't mind. (will you look over the odd plot hole i might accidentally slip on if i pout n beg hard enough)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Hey. No spare parts in the kitchen,” Lena says, nudging Lori as she comes to sit down at the island next to her with her bowl of cereal.

Lori pouts at her, making no move to put away the device she’s taken apart on the granite countertop.

“But you work in the kitchen all the time,” she whines.

Lena just crunches down on her cereal unsympathetically. “Future me does that all the time,” she corrects. “Take it to my office and work on it later.”

Kara looks up at them from across the island, mixing pancake dough as she comes to Lori’s defense. “She just wanted to keep me and Conner company while we made breakfast. Isn’t that right, us’kah?”

The baby, strapped to Kara’s back, simply looks at them over her shoulder and makes a small noise.

“See!” Lori gestures enthusiastically. “Conner agrees with me.”

“He did not,” Lena laughs, bumping her shoulder indignantly. “Your cousin has been out for less than twenty-four hours, you are not allowed to use him as emotional blackmail.”

“But it’s okay if he’s been out for a while, right?” Lori quips, and Lena scrunches her nose at her.

“Blackmail is what started this venture, really,” Kara adds with a laugh, turning to start ladling the pancake mix onto the pan. “She’s fixing her phone so she can take videos of Conner.”

Lena peers over at the parts. There’s a solid, rectangular piece of glass glinting with translucent circuit patterns, and what she can only assume are the metal caps for the oddly shaped ends of the glass. Lori’s got the caps taken apart, prodding at the inside of one of them.
“Trying to, anyway,” she grumbles, poking at a little gold piece. “If I can just get this Teklin bit to work.”

Lena pushes her cereal to the side and scoots her stool a little closer, humming as she takes everything in.

“What’s wrong with it?”

Lori pokes at the gold piece again. “This is the Teklin bit—it’s a photonic frequency measurer that regulates the energy going through the entire phone so that the conduit doesn’t overload.” She points to the small silver lines running throughout the device, matching the odd patterns on the glass.

“Because it’s the thing that keeps the phone from blowing up, it’s wired in at a crucial junction of the circuit—the entire thing doesn’t actually run if it’s not working.”

“And I assume it’s not working,” Lena says, taking the magnifier that Lori hands her.

“It got torn loose when I dropped it, that first night. I’ve wired it back properly and everything, I can’t figure out why it won’t power up.”

Lena hums. “Have you thought of an internal malfunction? Something might have been damaged inside the bit itself.”

Lori shakes her head. “That’s not possible—it’s just a solid piece of gold alloy.”

Lena looks up at her in surprise. “How does it work as a frequency measurer, then?”

“It emits specific frequencies of baryon waves at certain photon levels. The receptors on the side powers the phone down if it gets to a critical point.”

“Baryon waves?” Lena furrows her brow. “How can a subatomic particle be a wave?”

“When it’s emitted from an alloy with a deliberate composition that facilitates quantum harmonics,” Kara adds, turning to look at the bits. “We called it the Jek-Val Effect. I didn’t think it was possible to replicate it in this system because there are no natural deposits of valthahnyn but a gold alloy—that’s brilliant.”

“If that’s possible,” Lena adds, lowering the magnifier thoughtfully, “then the implications are huge—we’d be able to measure energy the an infinitely precise degree, allow us to harness all the quantum technology we’ve only been able to theorize: quantum coupling relays, graviton charge limiters, even axionic pulse relays—“

“Hey, hi, excuse me,” Lori interrupts. “Teenage daughter in need of help here, not a science conference.”

They both laugh sheepishly, and Kara turns back to the pancakes as Lena turns back to Lori.

“Sorry, Monkey,” she says, squeezing the girl’s shoulder. “Walk me through it again?”

After thirty pancakes and some more suggestions from Kara, they decide fixing it’s going to take longer than either of them have before work.

“That’s okay,” Lori says, taking Conner from Kara. “I’ll figure it out with this guy while you’re gone.”

Lena smirks as she pulls on her coat.
“Making him participate in his own downfall? Stone cold.”

Lori shrugs nonchalantly. “I have full faith he’d do the same if he were in my place. As with Jon. I’m just honoring the family code.”

Kara laughs. “I don’t remember anything like that in the House traditions,” she teases, pulling her shoes on and standing up. “Are you sure you’ll be all right taking care of Conner alone, is’kah?”

Lori rolls her eyes, adjusting her hold on the infant. “I’ll be fine. It’s not like he’s fussy or anything. And Mom taught me how to use Siri.”

“Still,” Lena says, fiddling with her bag strap anxiously. “Are you sure you don’t want to come into work with me? You can bring his basket and work on the couch.”

“And Lena Luthor showing up to work with a baby would be a PR nightmare,” Lori says. “We’re going to be fine.”

“Okay,” Lena breathes, still uneasy. “Don’t forget that your burner phone’s on the table, okay? Call me if you need anything,” she insists.

“And I prepared the formula for you,” Kara adds. “All the bottles are clean, and you should only have to change his diaper a few times before we’re back. I left instructions on the fridge—“

“Yes, yes, I promise we’ll both still be intact when you’re home, now scram before you’re late.”

“Don’t talk to your mother like that,” Lena laughs, tussling her hair. “I’ll see you both later. Be nice to your cousin.”

Conner smiles at Lena when she softly pats his head.

“Have a good day, is’kah,” Kara says, squeezing the girl’s shoulder. Lori scrunches the side of her face that her mother kisses. “And you too, us’kah.” Conner squeaks at the soft peck on his head.

“Bye, you two,” Lori groans, shooing them out the door and closing it behind them. Even Lena can hear the ‘finally’ that she grumbles through the door.

Kara and Lena look at each other for a moment before breaking into laughter, shaking their heads. Kara grins as she pushes up her glasses a little bashfully, clearing her throat as she shifts her coat from her right arm to her left.

“Well, Ms. Luthor,” she says gallantly, holding her arm out for Lena to take. “Shall we be off?”

Lena smiles right back, biting her lip for a moment just to get a hold of the butterflies in her chest before she takes Kara’s arm.

“Lead the way, Ms. Danvers.”

It’s just half past three when the shitshow starts.

Everything was going alright for a while, despite the fact that both of them got to work late, having only woken up at like eleven am after the late night. Well, since Lena did. Kara managed to pass off some sort of emergency to account for her tardiness, and Jess had rescheduled everything after getting a call from Lori.
(“I don’t know what I’d do without that girl,” Lena said when Lori told her. “What do I do without that girl?”)

Lori shrugged, making the I-don’t-know sound through a mouthful of eggs before swallowing.

“I guess we’ll find out if she ever quits being your CFO or something?”

So Kara’s sat down at her desk by the afternoon, texting Lena periodically. It makes her smile uncontrollably and wiggle side to side a little in her spinny chair, as usual. Nothing’s out of the ordinary.

(Well, minus the whole… daughter from the future and sudden nephew appearance thing. They haven’t called Clark yet. When she brought it up quietly before Lena woke up, Lori looked at her so sadly that she suddenly remembered how he left her with another family and stopped visiting after a few years.

They’re probably not going to call Clark.)

It starts when she gets a text and picks up her phone a little too enthusiastically.

(It’s been a whole hour since Lena texted her back, and it’s not a huge deal or anything, but… You know. She has a massive crush on and is possibly in love with the woman, she can’t be blamed.)

But it’s from Alex on her Supergirl phone, and the text itself is really… vague? Which is kind of unusual because Alex is never vague unless she’s upset or hiding something.

[Agent Danvers: Might need you to come in. Be on standby]

It’s kind of alarming. If it’s a Supergirl thing, Alex usually just shoots her a few key points of information and leaves it at that—“fire on 22nd, residential building” and nothing else, sort of thing.

[Supergirl: What’s going on?]

She feels her brow scrunch even as she puts her phone down and gets back to her article. She strains her superhearing to try and figure out what it is—sometimes the DEO will handle a situation without her but keep her on standby. But even then, Alex gives her a rundown of what’s happening so she can respond as fast as possible.

She doesn’t hear anything so urgent. She doesn’t notice how on edge it’s gotten her until her phone buzzes again and she nearly stabs the ‘h’ key through the desk.

[Agent Danvers: Nothing important. At the morgue rn. Just be ready to respond]

[Supergirl: ???????]

morgue as in like city morgue?? why??

alex????]

She puts her phone down on her desk, face-up and still open before she crushes it out of anxiety. She doesn’t do well with sitting still while not knowing what’s going on—anxiety makes her nervously energetic and that usually ends up in a lot of broken things.

Case in point: she almost splinters her desk with her knee when her personal phone buzzes.
Kara laughs, part in shock and part in delight—she’s never seen her first language written in an Earth alphabet, phonetically. It’s infinitely endearing and cringe-worthy at the same time.

[supermom: oh rao please never text me kryptonian again thats AWFUL to look at]

[little one <3: give me a break im still trying to come to terms with these old ass emojis
this is what ur stuck with until uncle winn makes the kryptahniuo keyboard]

Her heart swoops in happiness at the thought of Winn programming a keyboard for them. One day she’s going to be able to write to someone in Kryptahniuo again and just like with all the other wonderful revelations that Lori’s brought with her, Kara can’t wait.

[little one <3: anyway pay attention please
is everything ok she never takes this long to text back without saying she might]

[supermom: uh your aunt sent me a weird text on the deo phone but i dont think it has anything to do with your mother
ill keep you updated
hows conner?]

[little one <3: alarmingly well behaved
its kind of creepy]

[supermom: be nice >:()]

[little one <3: oh rao do you really still use sideways faces
and im being nice !!]

Kara chuckles and shakes her head—then her work phone buzzes again and her heart nearly drops out of her stomach.

[Agent Danvers: Briefing in 5. Ask James for the rest of the day off.]

[Supergirl: whats going on??
alex?]
“going on?”

Alex gnaws at her lip for another moment before answering.

“You’re not going to like this.”

“Yeah, I gathered.” Kara runs a hand through her hair. “Why were you at the morgue?”

“She was with Detective Sawyer,” J’onn says as he walks into the briefing room from one of the hallways, carrying a PDA. “The NCPD was called in this morning to investigate a few deaths on the suspicion of foul play.”

Kara glances between the two of them. “Well, what did they find?”

“Two people died from poisoning from some sort of contaminant in the air,” J’onn says, firmly compared to Alex’s hesitant shifting.

“Whoah,” Kara leans forward. “What’s happening? We need to call the city—“

“It’s not affecting everyone,” Alex cuts in. “It came from a minor blast concentrated in one area. The contaminants reacted with a certain part of their physiology, but we’re still waiting on the autopsy to tell us exactly what it was.”

“Okay, so…” Kara glances between the two of them. “That’s good, right?”

J’onn sets his jaw grimly. “For now. We only have a few hours before it spreads to the rest of the city.”

Kara grimaces. “So we need to stop it. We’re on top of figuring out where the contaminants came from, right? Who do I need to visit?”

“Kara,” Alex starts, the two syllables of her name weighing so heavily on her mouth that Kara tenses in response. “The chemicals came from an L-Corp facility.”

She freezes for a moment—it’s like she understands each of those words individually but putting them together and parsing the implications is like trying to unscramble a particularly long anagram, because really, written English is hard enough to keep up with considering the seven other languages she’s fluent in—

“The contaminant was identified to be a compound being produced exclusively by L-Corp for unknown reasons,” J’onn says, bringing up the report on the big screen.

“No, that’s not,” Kara laughs breathlessly, holding up a finger. “They can’t have released it on purpose, we need to talk to Lena—“

“Lena Luthor has gone off the grid three hours ago, and all facility operations have been halted,” J’onn says. “It’s most likely that she already knows.”

“She can’t have—“ Kara stutters on her thoughts. “She’d have told me.”

“Kara—“

“No, this is ridiculous,” she snaps, pushing off of the briefing console. “I’m going to go talk to her right now and clear everything up—“

“Kara, no,” Alex grabs her shoulder, and she pulls away a little more harshly than she meant to.
“Why, because you think I’m compromised?” she hisses.

Alex crosses her arms. “Calm down—“

“No,” Kara growls. “I’m tired of everyone treating her like her family even though she’s done more than enough to earn the benefit of the doubt—“

“Kara.” Alex leans in and grasps her shoulders again. “You’re not going to talk to her because I am.”

That throws Kara for a bit. She opens her mouth and closes it again, halting on an angry inhale before breathing out, confused.

“I’m perfectly capable of going.”

“You’re angry and confused,” J’onn says, stepping around the console, looking at the two of them with a gentler expression now. “It wouldn’t be good if you lost your temper.”

“I wouldn’t—” Kara huffs. “You really think she’d give me a reason to lose my temper?”

Alex squeezes her shoulders once to get her to relax before letting go. “Listen, running a company and being a superhero are two very different things,” she says. “She’s not just looking out for herself —she’s got the livelihood of all her employees in her hands and you know how seriously she takes that responsibility.” She crosses her arms and purses her lips wryly. “I don’t want you two to get into an argument.”

Kara runs a hand through her hair, antsy for answers.

“She wouldn’t—“ she stumbles again and huffs.

“Under normal circumstances, you might be able to calmly discuss things despite being at odds with each other,” J’onn says, carefully. “But this only happened a few hours ago. She’s probably as agitated as you are.”

Kara glances between the two of them again, noting their worried expressions and how their words have gotten softer since she first flew in. A lump tugs a little at her throat.

They’re not really her superiors giving orders right now, not really—there’s no reason for the DEO to care if Supergirl gets into an argument with Lena Luthor beyond it being mildly inconvenient. Right now, they’re her family asking her to let them help her—Kara remembers the way J’onn hugged Lori like it was nothing and how Alex smiled at Lori like they’d known each other forever and she lets her shoulders untense.

“So what—what should I do?”

Alex gives her this little smile like she’s proud and grateful. “Help Winn parse through the samples, see if you recognize any alien components.”

Kara nods. “What about the city? People need to know what’s happening.”

J’onn frowns. “We’ve notified the city council, but they haven’t done anything so yet. I doubt they will—they don’t want a mass panic on their hands.”

“But that’s—“ Kara sighs. “That’s not right, National City deserves to know that something’s coming their way. Can’t we say anything about it?”
J’onn shakes his head. “Technically, the DEO doesn’t exist. We can’t compromise our operation.”

“And the council won’t agree to release any statement until they know more about the contaminant and how to counteract it. Otherwise the entire city would panic,” Alex adds.

Kara lets out a puffy sigh and holds her hands out for a moment before letting them fall to her sides. “So, I guess that’s what I’m doing for the rest of the day. I’ll figure out a way to get the word out through CatCo. Text me as soon as you find anything out.”

Alex nods. Kara shoots her and J’onn a grateful look before jumping out the balcony, heading fast for her office.

[Little Danvers: and alex?]

thanks]

[Big Danvers: for what?]

[Little Danvers: for looking out for me and lena]

[Big Danvers: She's important to you. So it matters to me too.

I'm always here for you.]
Hello hello, it's your local sad gay possum with your weekly friday night update of Supergirl in Training!

I'm so sorry for the hamfisted plotline. it's what kept me from writing this fic for the better part of a month, so I decided to screw my plothole standards and just push ahead because it's never getting finished otherwise.

Meeting with Snapper about the story proves to be incredibly unfruitful. He just—he doesn’t yell at her, he brushes her off, waves her draft like it’s a particularly insignificant napkin before throwing it back at her and just going back to his business.

“Not enough sources”—she feels like rolling her eyes and mocking his tone under her breath as she stomps back to her office, but yeah, okay, fair, maybe. Maybe she’s gotten a little complacent because she only needs to quote herself and the police for stories and that’s… probably a little unethical. But, hey, it’s not her fault sometimes if she’s so busy that she doesn’t have the time to draft up a huge bibliography, she has an entire city to defend.

And yeah, sure. Clark manages to pull off being a hard-working full time journalist and a superhero but, well, he’s got a decade on her in experience. She literally started being a journalist like… a few months ago.

“You look like you just swallowed something awful.”

Kara’s eyes snap up to see James leaning against the doorway of her office, smiling with a paper bag in his hand.

“James!”

He laughs as he pushes off the doorway and walks in, dropping the bag in front of her on the desk.

“Winn said you’d been running in and out all day, I thought you might like a little pick-me-up.”


James shrugs with a brilliant grin as Kara digs in. “I try,” he says as he takes a seat on the small chair in the corner of the office. “So what’s the big buzz?”

Kara goes from enjoying a mouthful of pastry to souring immediately.

James barks out a laugh. “That bad?”

Kara grimaces as she pokes at a glazed round.

“It’s kind of…” she sighs. “Awful? Ugh,” she grimaces. “I shouldn’t be eating donuts right now, I need to work…”
“Hey,” James says softly, leaning forward with a concerned frown. “Are you okay?”

Kara looks at him and her heart warms impossibly at the way he’s looking at her, so worried and ready to help.

Really, she’s… so lucky to have been able to keep him as a friend after everything that they’ve been through.

(Everything that she put him through, a part of her snarks darkly.)

“Yeah, it’s just—“ she tries to find a word for the anxiety that spikes in her stomach when she thinks about Lena, “—just a lot of stuff going on.” She shakes her head. “But it’s fine, I’ve got it handled—what about you?” She leans forward earnestly. “What’s been going on? We haven’t talked in a while.”

He gives her a dubious look like he’s not quite convinced, but thankfully he decides to go along with her.

“Not much- just a new gang cropping up on the east side of the city. I’m trying to figure out how to shut them down.”

“Need any help?” Kara secretly hopes he says yes, because Rao- punching out baddies sounds so much easier than dealing with the bureaucratic mess that she’s been heaped with.

But he just smiles easily and shakes his head.

“Nah, you look like you have enough on your plate.” His smile grows softer. “Take care of yourself, alright?”

She smiles back, running a hand through her hair and sighing.

“I can try,” she laughs, and he grins lopsidedly.

Then his phone beeps- Kara recognizes the tone of his Guardian phone- and he checks it with a frown before standing up.

“Duty calls,” he sighs, pocketing his phone. “Enjoy your donut holes. I’ll see you late.”

She waves him off with a smile, gratefuly popping another pastry into her mouth- mostly to just wash off the odd taste in her mouth that rises as she watches James walk away. Because there was just something so- clipped about that conversation, like they both wanted to talk but had nothing to talk about, and she’s… anxious. Because it feels too much like the tail end of a friendship, where they both keep up the pretenses while drifting away from each other more and more.

She snaps out of it when her own phone buzzes.

[little one <3: yeyu moms in her office but not answering any of my texts

im kind of freaked out can you check on her?]

Kara’s up and out of her seat just like that.

Lena’s never considered herself a particularly resentful person. Yes, she’s been unhappy for a great
deal of her life, and certainly a bit crueler than necessary sometimes- but never resentful. She’s never thought of herself as someone who holds grudges, or goes out of their way to spite someone-

(That was always Lex. She thinks, maybe if he hadn’t been so obsessed, if Lillian hadn’t pushed him so hard, none of this would’ve happened.)

She hated Superman, once upon a time. She hated him for bringing her brother down and for being forgiven no matter what he does, but she didn’t sit on that hatred and let it fester- she packed up her things and moved on. Because, that might be the only thing she’s truly familiar with- packing up her life from the orphanage, from the Luthor Mansion, from her dormitory, from her apartment in metropolis- always packing, always moving on. By choice or otherwise.

So when everything goes to hell for the umpteenth time in her life, she sits in her office, a little shocked at the bolt of resentment that shoots through her as Kara walks in through the doors.

Kara Zor-El Danvers. Supergirl. National City’s darling, so easily forgiven after the Red Kryptonite incident- all it takes for her to win the public back is putting out a few fires and punching out a few aliens.

It’s different for Lena. For L-Corp. Lex has sapped the public of all their sympathy and all it’s gonna take is one hit for everything to fall to shambles. There’s no redemption, no coming back- she could save the entire city and people would still whisper behind her back and yet it’s only going to take one accident to ruin everything.

One accident. One neglectful employee, and another opportunistic CADMUS mole- which, counts as neglect on her part as well. Somehow one of the lab technicians at the facility they used to test air purification devices had inserted another copy of the medusa virus, properly bonded to isotope 454 this time, into one of the main airtanks before forcing the controls to malfunction and put too much pressure on the pipes-

And then it went boom, or so she’s told. The mole’s been detained, but the airborne Medusa virus is on a slow crawl to the main part of National City. She’s managed to manufacture a neutralizing agent in the few hours after the incident but she doesn’t- she doesn’t know hot to drive out a truck into the outskirts to implement the agents without drawing attention and inevitably admitting to L-Corp’s blunder.

How to save the lives of National City’s aliens without letting her entire life crumble into nothing.

It’s a selfish choice to be sure, and if she were a better person, it’d be a snap decision- but then again, would it be? One blunder and it’s not just L-Corp that’s over, it’s all the good they could have done in the future- and perhaps she’s being arrogant here but she knows that she hasn’t even scratched the surface of how much she can change the world for the better. All of that, just gone. Because people don’t forgive, because people have already decided what they think and are just waiting for confirmation, because only people like Kara Danvers get a chance at redemption.

“Lena?”

She snaps back to the woman in front of her and tries to make sense of the resentment and affection and anguish that runs through her at the sight. Here she is. Kara Danvers. The woman she’s in love with, her future wife, the mother of her daughter and she can’t do anything except clench her fists tighter and stare.

“Hello, Kara,” she forces out, and is a little embarrassed because she’s normally a far better actor than this- her clipped tone gives her away immediately, and Kara comes up to her desk, frowning
“Lena, is everything okay?” Kara bites her lip, uncertain, and shifts her feet. “You haven’t been replying to texts and Lori’s been getting worried.”

The worst part of her mind hates Lena for bringing up Lori, as if they both don’t know exactly why she’s here. It’s almost insulting.

She thinks of her daughter, waiting at home with her cousin- her daughter, who looks at her like she holds the entire sky up, and her chest squeezes in on itself.

How is it fair that she’s being driven to this? She thinks about Lori being disappointed with her and is almost certain her world would cave in on itself.

“We both know why you’re here, Kara,” she says evenly, swiveling in her chair to look out at the city.

She hears Kara shift behind her. There’s a pause until she speaks up.

“Alex told me you refused to talk to her.”

It’s a statement that doesn’t quite warrant a response. Not one that Lena’s willing to give, anyway. Kara tries again.

“What happened at the facility?”

Lena closes her eyes and opens them slowly, willing herself to speak.

“A CADMUS mole sabotaged one of our prototypes and injected the Medusa virus into it before blowing it up.”

She sees Kara tense up in her faint reflection on the window.

“Medusa,” she hisses. “Can you disable it like last time?”

Lena shakes her head. “It’s already been bonded to isotope 454. The only way to disable it is by releasing a neutralizing agent to create a chain reaction that’ll render it inert.”

“Okay, so, where can we get the agent?”

Lena wonders if that ‘we’ means her and Kara, or Kara and the DEO.

“It’s been made. I have a vehicle ready for deployment.”

Kara sighs.

“Thank Rao. Do you need help deploying it? I can escort it to wherever it needs to go-”

“The agent will render the virus inert, but create a chemical byproduct that’s poisonous to humans,” she cuts in. “it won’t be in a high enough concentration to cause any real damage, but people with respiratory problems should stay inside.”

“Okay, well, I’ll help get the word out,” Kara says, nodding decisively. “I just need some documents from you, and a quote on the record-”

“I can’t do that.”
She waits as Kara pauses, parsing over what she just said.

“I can’t.” Kara laughs nervously. “I can’t publish anything without official sources.”

“And I can’t say anything on record without admitting to L-Corp being the source of the incident.”

The next pause feels like it takes forever, because Lena can practically feel the air in the room change— it’s charged with something a bit more aggressive, something that scares her but drives her even further into her cold shell.

“Are you serious?” Kara says quietly. “People need to know about this, they deserve to know the truth—”

“Can you disperse the information without disclosing that it happened at L-Corp?” She says, still turned to the window. She can feel Kara glaring at the back of her head.

“It won’t be credible. People need to know where it came from and why—”

“So say it’s an unexplained phenomenon. You secret organization types are good at that, no?”

It’s far harsher a quip than warrants the situation and she regrets it as soon as it leaves her mouth but she can’t bring herself to take it back— she’s on edge, she’s resentful even though she doesn’t mean to be, and she doesn’t want to fight Kara right now but everything’s such a mess right now.

“People deserve to know the truth,” is all Kara says.

Lena shoots out of her seat, whirling around to face her.

“Kara, I am asking you to do this thing for me— it won’t make a difference, people will still know enough to stay safe, just this one detail,” she emphasizes, “is life or death for L-Corp, you know that.”

She’s practically begging— but when she looks up, there’s fire in Kara’s eyes and she knows it’s no use.

“And what if CADMUS makes another attack, elsewhere? They deserve the truth, Lena.”

Lena growls, rubbing her temples. “It literally decides whether this company stays afloat or not, Kara, I’m begging you,” she hisses. “Why is this so important to you?”

“Because my planet died when a handful of people decided to hide the truth!” Kara bursts out, and Lena flinches from the sheer force of anger and determination. “My aunt tried to save Krypton but she was arrested for trying to tell the public that the planet was dying— we all lost our entire home, and it drove her so crazy that she wouldn’t stop at anything to stop that from happening to this planet.” Kara’s shaking now, fists clenched at her sides, a force of nature wrapped in a blue sweater. “My legacy is a mother who let our planet die and a father who made a virus to kill,” she hisses. “And I may not be able to save all of humanity by myself, but I will die defending their right to know, their ability to decide their own future.”

And with that, Kara storms out the door.

Just when she thought her day couldn’t get worse, Kara gets the text that James has been hurt— she zooms to the DEO as fast as she can, stopping short at the med bay when she sees Lori standing
outside, nearly in tears.

“Is’kah,” she says in a rushed breath, wrapping her arms around Lori when the girl launches herself into Kara’s arms. “What happened?”

“I heard him- in a fight and- I was so scared, I thought that, I’d done something wrong, I pushed the timeline too far and changed too much and he-”

The rest of her sentence is jumbled Kryptahniuo mumbled into Kara’s shoulder, and Alex comes up with a sympathetic look.

“She rushed in to pull him out of a firefight,” Alex explains, rubbing Lori’s back gently. “Just in time- he’s banged up pretty badly.”

Kara inhales sharply. “And Winn?”

“Beating himself up for not being able to help. He’s picking up a fresh set of clothes from James’ apartment.”

Kara nods. She runs a hand over Lori’s hair before pulling away and grasping her shoulders.

“You did well, okay?” She squeezes reassuringly. “Thank you for saving him. I’m proud of you.”

Lori looks up at Kara with watery eyes before nodding once, gnawing on her bottom lip.

“I’ve got it from here,” Kara says. “You should get back to Conner. I’ll keep you updated, okay?”

Lori nods again, drawing Kara into another tight hug before letting Alex lead her down the stairs.

Kara watches them go for a moment before steeling herself and stepping into the medbay.

Alex wasn’t kidding. James is propped up on one of the beds, covered in bandages, his left arm in a brace and sling. He looks over at her when she walks in and grins sheepishly.

“I promise it’s not as bad as it looks.”

Kara lets out a breathless, exasperated laugh as she comes to stand by him.

“What happened, James?”

He grimaces. “Walked right into an ambush. We were set up with bad info.” He sighs. “Did Winn make it out okay?”

Kara nods. “He’s just picking some stuff up from your apartment for you.”

James furrows his brows with a sad kind of fondness. “Tell me he’s not beating himself up over the setup.”

Kara’s shoulders slump. “I mean, I only know what Alex told me, but,” she sighs. “We both know how Winn is.”

Too loving, too anxious, takes too much blame whenever things go wrong, really, and Kara knows that both she and James wish that he could be kinder to himself.

“Yeah…” James exhales heavily. “I gotta get him something to cheer him up. Any ideas?”

“Well,” Kara says in a mischievous tone as she pulls up a stool to sit at is bedside. “As his official
best friend, I know for a fact that his favourite flowers are yellow. And chocolate chip pancakes will get him out of bed even on the worst depression days.”

James grins. “Flowers and breakfast. Duly noted.” He frowns after a moment. “And that girl?”

Kara gulps. Okay, she and everyone else decided to keep it under wraps but she honestly has… no idea what she’s going to tell James. And dropping the whole getting-married-to-Lena bomb isn’t something she wants to drop while he’s literally in his sickbed.

“What about her?” She tries for nonchalance.

He sees right through it.

“Getting rescued from a firefight isn’t how I’d liked to have found out that there’s another bulletproof flying girl in town,” he says, raising a brow. “And she looks- have you noticed that she looks like Lena Luthor?”

Kara sucks her lips in and nods as casually as she can, breathing in deeply.

“Yeah, she’s, uh,” she struggles. “Just- don’t worry about her for now, okay? She’s not hostile. Trust me.”

He studies her for a moment, perceptive brown eyes staring into hers, but then, because he’s being wonderful and understanding as always, he relents.

“Alright. Weird thing, though, I could’ve sworn she called me ‘uncle’.”

Kara laughs at that, squeezing her eyes shut for a moment before giving James a soft look.

“You know, I remember when you’d be here to grill us about ethics, not to get patched up.”

His grin slips a little at that.


Kara crosses her arms and shakes her head. “You know I still- I still can’t get on board with this. Guardian.” She frowns at him worriedly. “I don’t understand why you’re doing this.”

His mouth sets into an unhappy line. “We’ve talked about this, Kara. I want to help people.”

“But you already were,” Kara insists. “James, you were a hero before any of this. It’s why I…” (loved you; the words hang on the tip of her tongue but she’s not going there right now.) “… why you made me better.” She lets her hands fall into her lap helplessly. “You inspired me, James, because you proved that it doesn’t take powers to be a hero- you taught me that it takes heart and values. You helped people by standing up for morals, and with the stories you told with your pictures.”

He shakes his head and looks away, setting his jaw.

“It wasn’t enough, Kara. Why can’t you understand that I want to do more?”

“How is punching bad guys more important than telling the stories that need to be told?” Kara wrings her hands. “I understand that your father served, and fighting out there makes you feel closer to him, but-” she breathes in deeply. “-you don’t need to prove anything to honor his memory, James. You need to forgive yourself for losing his camera.”

His reaction is instant for a human, but to her it seems like it takes eons- it starts in how his arms
tense and shake with strain, then his heartbeat starts to run, and she can see the tendons of his neck standing as he turns his head towards her.

“You have. No right. ” He says, anger laced deep in his voice. “Get. Out.”

She thinks about staying, hashing it out with him, because she cares and she still loves him in a way and she so desperately wants him to stop putting himself in danger- but then she remembers that she knows how it feels to lose family, too, and that yes- she crossed a line there.

So she just looks at him sadly before getting up and getting out. It’s barely the late afternoon, and she’s managed to push away the only two people she might have really been in love with in this world.

What a mess.

Chapter End Notes

Despite being hamfisted narrative arc that I thought I would hate, it's shaping up to be a decent character study about grief and trauma. I hope you enjoyed!

And hey- want the next chapter now? early access and previews? WIPs and more? please check me out on my blog:

http://wtfoctagon.tumblr.com/post/161395827596/wtfoctagons-extra-content-masterpost

Now available: Supergirl in Training Chapter 13 sneak peek/early access, Gold-Crested Ravens Finale WIP sneak peek
death is harder to come by (than it is to breathe)

Chapter Notes

Hey guys, sorry for the delay! the updating schedule was a bit punishing, so I decided to update on saturday nights instead. so this will be a weekly saturday night update!

just a few notes: the soundtrack for this chapter is Great Unknown by Kenz Hall until Alex gets into Kara's apartment, and then Up We Go acoustic version by Lights from there until the end.

In This House We Love And Respect James Olsen

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She’s just finished texting Lori the situation and wondering if she should even bother going back to the office or just go home and mope until Alex and J’onn have a plan when she gets an email from Lena. Which is odd in and of itself, because she’s never gotten an email from Lena- they’ve always texted or met in person from the start.

She’s braced for the worst when she opens it, but all it has is just… a few pdf attachments and only one line of actual content.

[I’m sorry.]

She opens the files to find an official release of information from L-Corp, detailing the incident and the neutralizing procedure. A request for the DEO to approve of and help in the dispersal of the agent. A few quotes from Lena formatted as a press release.

Her chest clenches painfully as she thinks about their earlier encounter. The yelling and the disappointment and the sinking feeling of fear as she stormed out of there—

She was afraid. She is afraid. Of losing Lena or pushing her away when she’s the only thing she’s been sure of wanting in her life lately. But more than that, she’s afraid because she felt something in her shatter through the surface and stand as strong in her chest as the steel she claims to be named after. Ad if a part of her soul finally burned through as she stood in front of Lena, being asked to go against what she believed in the name of love. As if, now, she knows a pivotal aspect of her being and is all the more sure of herself for it—

Kind of like when she realized that she wanted Lena. Like when the realization sundered the haze of all her cowardly rationalizations and gave her the strength to stand up for herself.

This time, it isn’t that it gave her the strength to stand up to Lena. It’s that she was faced with a choice and somewhere along the way her heart has become strong enough to refuse to be anything but true to itself. And it scares her because— because now she’s found the conviction to be herself no matter the cost and she’s not sure if she can turn back. Because now, she’d rather be alone than give up a part of herself as admission to a relationship.

She sends the request to the DEO and opens up an empty document, trying to think past the ringing in her head. She thinks of how angry and scared Lena had been in her office. She thinks of the lives
weighing on Lena’s shoulders and the fact that they both have inherited awful, crumbling legacies in
different ways. The difference is that the people of earth don’t know and hate Kara for what her
parents have done. Kara only has her conscience to hold her to redeeming herself.

So she rubs her temples once, squares her shoulders, and starts writing.

“Aunt Astra!”

Astra laughs as she easily catches Kara in her arms, picking her up and twirling her once before
setting her down and squeezing her tightly.

“Oh, it’s good to see you, Little One,” she wheezes as her niece squeezes her back just as tightly.
“It’s been far too long.”

“Way too long,” Kara whines petulantly as Astra pulls away. “You went away for the Generals’
summit weeks ago. I missed you!”

“Well, my darling, Thoron is many stars away and you have no idea,” she says, leaning in
conspiratorially and squishing Kara’s cheeks, “how long-winded old men past their prime can be.”

Kara pouts, tugging at Astra’s sleeves. “Well, everyone’s General should be a young lady like you.”

Astra chuckles, stroking Kara’s hair. “If only, Little One. We would have half the problems we do
now.” She takes her small hand and leads them further into the estate, looking around. “Where is
your mother?”

“In the sitting room with the baby,” Kara says, swinging their linked hands a little bit.

“And Lady Lara? Is she well?”

Kara nods as they turn in the hallway. “Father and Uncle Jor took her to stay at the Healers’
Temple for a night. They said she was having post-birth fever, but she’ll be alright.”

“That’s good to hear,” Astra smiles, relieved. “The House of Van has had such a tragic history with
motherhood, I was so worried when the missive came,” she says as they turn into the doorway of the
sitting room.

“Rao has happier plans for us, it seems,” Alura says, standing with the infant swaddled in her arms.
“Lara is on a fast track to recovery and the child is as healthy as can be.”

“Hello, sister,” Astra says with a bright grin, leaning in to kiss Alura on both sides of the cheek.
“May I see him?”

Alura nods with a smile just as brilliant, carefully hoisting the baby into her sister’s arms.

“Oh, he’s beautiful,” Astra breathes, tucking a stray fold of the blanket away from his face. “Hello there.”

Kara peers over on her tiptoes and laughs as the baby looks between his twin aunts with a wide-
eyed stare.

“Welcome to the family, us’kah,” Alura chuckles before she pats Kara’s shoulder. “I’m sorry, I
have to take a call from the council at the moment. I’ll be back.”
“Is it from Consular Gor-Zedd again?” Astra asks with a lopsided smile as Alura heads for the door. All she gets in response is a deep, beleaguered sigh and she giggles with her niece.

“Don’t tell mother,” Kara whispers mischievously, “but I think he’s a menace. I don’t know how they let him past the Academy.”

Astra barely contains a guffaw and nudges Kara in a half-hearted chastisement before taking a seat. “I can only hope that you’ll turn out to be a better Officiant than one who calls during a House Event,” she says, gently poking the baby on the nose to receive a small squeak. “When is the naming ceremony?”

“In three days,” Kara says eagerly as she sits next to her on the lounging chair. “They’re going to name him Kal.”

“AFTER Kal-El the Conquerer?” Astra raises a brow. “That’s quite a name to live up to.”

“Archon Velera Kiv-Bem said that his stars are aligned for great things,” Kara shrugs.

“Ha,” Astra snorts. “I never took Lord Jor-El to be a particularly religious man. I suppose it’s true that parenthood changes you.”

Kara frowns as she leans over to tickle her cousin on his little chin. “I hope I don’t change all that much.”

Astra smiles and shakes her head. “Everyone changes, Little One. You will be many different people even before you have a child.”

Kara gnaws on her lower lip apprehensively, staring down at her feet. Astra leans over to bump their shoulders together lightly.

“And it will be a good thing, Kara,” she says reassuringly. “There is a reason neither your mother nor I believe in the Starsung Prophecies. Our lives may change beyond our control, but we always decide who we are. The true measure of fate lies in the caliber of our hearts and the choices we make.” She looks down at Kara with a smile.

“Remember always to be kind, be brave, is’kah. Choose to be the self you are most proud of.”

When Snapper sends her article back with edits, she plugs them in quickly and barely waits for it to finish publishing before leaving her office and trudging home. Home as in her apartment, not Lena’s— the thought that Lena’s penthouse has become a different home to her in a way leaves a strange pang in her chest that she can’t decide is painful or happy. Perhaps both.

She locks the door behind her and slides the deadbolt shut, leaving herself standing alone in her sanctuary— hers and hers only, once invaded but now returned to her, slowly. Dusk seeps in dimly through the windows. She lays her keys on the counter as she walks by limply, and makes it to the couch before she breaks.

It’s been a long time coming, she thinks, because she may be the Girl of Steel but her bones are made unbreakable by the yellow light of Helios and it cannot bear the weight of memories tinged red with heartbreak. She cannot bear the brunt of the long years away from home, not by herself, not anymore.

All of it burbles in her chest, her lungs slashed open by sobs as she thinks of how they could have
saved Krypton—how they chose to do nothing, how her mother chose to silence her own sister instead, and how it’s cost her everything. Her family. Her future. Her dreams, her life, her home.

Because she can never have her home back. Homes can be made, perhaps, and cherished all the more for having been earned rather than bestowed by circumstance but they can never be given back. Nor can she ever be free of it. She can make her home on earth, love her human family, love her human life and the ones she protects but this sense of belonging will always feel incomplete—this feeling of home will always be haunted by the one she’s lost.

Because it is a haunting. It haunts her in the moments she goes to describe something that has no word in any human language and finds that she can’t remember the word save for wisps of sounds on the tip of her tongue. It haunts her in the times she catches a whiff of something that reminds her of her mother’s cooking and feels hollow for weeks no matter how much she eats. It haunts the sockets of her eyes like lead when she can’t sleep without the warbles of greengale birds but cannot remember how they sounded.

Kara grieves. Kara grieves, and it feels like being haunted by the ghost of a girl who should have died with the rest of her people so many years ago.

It feels like the gaping wound of thirteen years is catching up with her—thirteen years of hiding and refusing to be herself and then having to split her being into two people, thirteen years of thinking her parents did all they could to save their home and only just finding out that no, they left her people to die—thirteen years of thinking that all her loved ones were dead only to find her aunt and lose her all over again.

And perhaps the thing that burst through her fear and stood fierce against Lena isn’t a new, brave conviction of hers. Perhaps it’s just a scar—a scar that runs the entire length of her soul, that aches and aches and aches as if a part of the Phantom Zone was caught in her chest and keeps her in her most painful moments forever—the moment her home died, the moment she found a stranger in the place of her cousin, the moment she found her parents were murderers in their pride and neglect, the moment her aunt died in her arms—it keeps her grieving over and over again, forever.

And she laughs, because, Astra was wrong all this time. Because this black hole of anguish in her chest isn’t something she ever chose and yet it takes up all of who she is underneath the sunny smiles, the uniform. Her heart is just a singularity of grief and she is just the shell of a hero bound together by guilt.

She thinks of her heartbreak when she looked at her mother clearly for the first time, and she thinks of how Lori loves her like she used to love her mother, and she is afraid. She is afraid of breaking Lori’s heart or passing on the ghost of Krypton that lives in her veins and she is so afraid that she is simply fated to tragedy, that the small bit of a happy future that Lori brought back with her will always be out of her grasp.

She flinches at the knock on her door, jerked back into the reality of the cold floor on her skin and the rug fraying in her grasp. Her floors are brown and a little dusty and she sits up her head spins a little bit—it takes her a moment to concentrate enough to stare through the door.

It’s Alex. Kara wipes her face on her sweater and takes a deep, muffled breath.

Alex is standing there with an armful of food when Kara opens the door. She tries for a small smile that sits between sad and sheepish and Kara wills herself to smile back but all she can do is slump against the door to let Alex in.

“I thought you might be here,” Alex says as she lays the food on the kitchen counter. “You haven’t
been answering your phone.”

Kara nods as she takes a seat on one of the stools.

“Sorry.”

She can feel her sister studying her as she moves around the kitchen, pulling out two big plates to pile the pizza and potstickers onto. Kara knows she probably should say something. But her head feels hollow, like an empty room or that deafening echo of silence that follows loud screaming.

When Alex puts the heaping plate in front of her, sitting down across the counter with her own plate. There’s an expectant silence that Kara can’t stand.

“I don’t—” she swallows heavily. “I don’t want to talk about it.”

She expects a worried frown, a concerned but firm question, but when she looks up Alex is just giving her this… look. Just the slighted furrow to her brow and a tilt of the head, eyes soft in the way that Alex is.

“Okay,” Alex says, offering a small smile. “You don’t have to.”

And that’s that. Alex reaches across the countertop to give Kara’s hand a squeeze before digging into a slice of pizza. Kara just stares for a moment because she’s really trying not to burst into tears again. She stares across the counter and sees the girl who was asked to take her hand and hasn’t let go since. She sees the face that has taken up Kara’s understanding of bravery and strength in her mind. She sees the woman who never should have been made to become so strong, so hard, and yet persists in a soft kindness that Kara thinks is the strongest thing in the world.

Because, yes, she is still soft—they are still soft, and when it comes down to the wire it will always be the two of them like this. Two sisters sitting across from each other, laying down to rest the weight of the world on their shoulders, if only for a moment.

They couldn’t be closer if they were related by blood. Kara spares a fleeting thought to destiny and choice and thinks that she wouldn’t have made it this far if Alex had decided to let go. She may have been forced to hold Kara’s hand at first, but it was her choice to hold on. Every day it is her choice to keep holding on.

And maybe, that’s the only real choice anyone has control over. To hold on or let go.

“Hey, Alex,” Kara mumbles. Alex slows down mid-chew and gives her full attention. Kara sniffs as she reaches for her food. “I love you.”

Alex stops, raising her brows at the sudden declaration—but Kara stuffs an entire slice of pizza in her mouth to avoid explaining so Alex smiles that smile that crinkles the edges of her eyes.

“I love you too, you sap.”

It breaks Kara’s heart a little when Lena opens her door and makes this relieved, grateful, fearful expression as if she didn’t expect Kara to come. Kara offers a wry little grin in response.

“Hey.”

Lena leans against the door, looking a little vulnerable.
“Hi.”

There’s a beat of silence where they’re just basking in the sight of each other. This is the first time, Kara realizes, since Lori’s arrival that they’ve been completely apart for so long. Kara studies the slight fray of the long sweater that Lena loves to wear—Kara loves how it makes Lena look younger, comfier, at home.

“Can I come in?” she asks, shifting her weight hesitantly, and Lena springs into action.

“Yes—of course, I’m sorry, I just—” Lena stammers as she closes the door behind Kara and rubs her palms on her jeans. “I’m sorry.”

Kara bites her lip and pockets her hands. “I’m sorry too.”

“You have nothing to be sorry for,” Lena insists, crossing her arms before rubbing her temple lightly with one hand. “We should—we should probably sit for this. Is that okay?”

Kara nods as she pads over to the living area, hesitating a bit before taking a seat on the couch without the chaise.

“Where are the kids?”

“Lori took Conner to get ice cream,” Lena says, sitting opposite to Kara across the coffee table and looking just as nervous as Kara feels. “I was worried about her going out alone but I think she’s got the hang of this decade.”

Kara chuckles good-naturedly at the attempt at levity. Lena leans forward and wrings her hands for a moment before looking back up at Kara.

“The agent—did—?”

Kara nods. “It was dispersed successfully. And an official advisory went out too. It’s in a small enough concentration that it’s easy to filter.”

Lena nods, gnawing on her lip. Her hair falls over her shoulder as she looks down at her hands again.

“Thank you for the article,” Lena says quietly. “It was—it was kinder than I thought it might be. It helped a lot. Stocks took a moderate hit instead of a severe one,” she adds with a small smile.

Kara shakes her head. “I only wrote the truth,” she says simply. “None of it was your fault.”

Lena laughs dryly. “That’s… debatable.”

Kara frowns. “I’m sorry if I made you feel that way. I shouldn’t have been yelling—”

“No, Kara, please—” Lena holds her hands out for a moment, looking up at Kara with a pleading half-grimace. “I’m the one who should apologize. I was… angry. And resentful. And scared out of my mind,” Lena adds with a self-deprecating laugh.

“It’s understandable,” Kara adds with her own sigh. “I know that it’s. I know that it’s different for you. It’s not just yourself you’re looking out for. The situation is more or less constantly volatile because people are waiting for you to mess up.” Kara cards her fingers through her hair, wincing when she accidentally catches one of her braids. “It was a hard situation for you.”

Lena smiles wryly as she shakes her head. “It could’ve been easier if I’d asked the DEO for help
immediately instead of panicking.” She laces her fingers together. “I let the worser part of me win.”

Kara shifts forward in her seat. “It wasn’t your fault. You didn’t ask to be in this position.”

There’s a pause as Lena clamps and unclamps her hands together, seeming to think hard about something. She finally bites her lip once before looking up.

“I appreciate that you’re trying to be understanding,” she says in an even, practiced tone. “It means a lot. And I’d like to think that I deserve at least a little sympathy, given everything, but I…”

Kara waits as Lena searches for her words once more.

“Inside, I’m really just a mess of emotions.” Lena shakes her head. “It always feels like— like I’m drowning in all the anger and hurt. My first instinct is always to blame someone else, because I feel so helpless.”

“Lena, you’re not—” Kara stumbles over her protest. “You’re one of the kindest and most responsible people I’ve met.”

She only gets a sad, adoring, grateful smile in response.

“It really… means a lot to me that you think so highly of me,” she begins carefully. “But the truth is that I have to make the choice to be a better person every day.”

Make the choice. Kara stills at Lena’s quiet words.

“It’s always going to be up to me to see myself past that…” Lena gestures vaguely with her hands, “shitstorm of feelings, really,” she says with a laugh. “Being the person I want to be isn’t a state of being. It’s a constant effort. And I really messed up today.” Lena stops to look Kara in the eyes and for a moment she is all ambers and greens in the dusky light filtering in. “I’m sorry.”

Kara measures the span of her breath against the beats of her heart, weighing Lena’s apology in her mind, word by word.

I think I love you. The thought comes to her, sudden but burgeoning and warm.

“Would it be weird for me to say that I’m glad you yelled at me?” Lena chuckles, rubbing her palms together idly. “I mean. You being angry with me was awful. But I think it was a good thing.”

Kara’s face twists into an almost comical frown of confusion as she tries to decipher just what Lena’s smiling about.

“Well, I don’t,” Kara laughs breathlessly. “I hated yelling at you.”

Lena bites down a shy smile and she looks so beautiful.

“You stood up to me,” she says. “I asked you to do something you didn’t want to do for me and it wasn’t even… You stood by yourself without being afraid of losing me.” Lena runs a hand through her hair. “You’ve come a long way since you-know-who. I’m… happy to see that.”

Kara laughs, feeling loose and at home. “I was terrified of losing you.” She pushes up her glasses. “But I guess I just…” She presses her lips into a flat line. “I was tired. I made myself a person that I didn’t like to be with someone that I loved and I didn’t want to go back to that.”

Lena’s smile is loving and blinding.
“Would it be alright if I said that I’m proud of you?”

“More than.” Kara beams back. “You were right. I really…” Kara sighs. “I haven’t let myself really be just me in a long time. Being alone for a while has been exactly what I needed.” She looks at Lena. “You’ve been exactly what I need.”

Lena hesitates for a moment, before rising from her seat and rounding the coffee table to sit at Kara’s side and lace their fingers together.

“No matter what happens,” she says, touching their foreheads together, “I will always try to be good for you.”

Kara feels her chest well up with tears and coughs out a laugh, blinking quickly. “You make it so hard to stay away sometimes,” she laughs, bumping their heads lightly. She pulls away a little as she lets her smile fall a little. “I really want to kiss you right now,” she whispers.

Lena smiles sadly and looks down at their linked hands like she wants that, too. She brings up their hands to kiss Kara’s knuckles instead.

“When we’re ready,” she promises. “If you’ll still have me.”

_I might never want anyone else_, Kara thinks.

- 

The next morning is another one that feels like a domestic fantasy. Lena’s going through her emails at the dining table while Kara feeds Conner and Lori’s still messing with her phone—

(Shetouched down on the veranda with Conner silently a few minutes after Lena and Kara finished talking.

“I hate it when you guys fight,” she said with such a small voice that Kara gently moved Conner into Lena’s arms and crushed the girl into a hug so tight she was flapping her hand at Kara’s shoulder like a wrestler desperately tapping out.)

They’ve already had breakfast. Lena is half-ready to go, her makeup done impeccably but her oversized pajamas hanging loosely on her frame. Kara’s almost done except for her loose hair that Conner grabs at softly with burbling giggles.

The doorbell rings and Lori looks up with a frown.

“Who’s here this early?”

“That’s probably—” Lena says before she gets up to get the door.

Probably Alex here to pick Lori up for the day, she probably meant to say. She has a cute habit of cutting off in the middle of a sentence sometimes when multimanaging a million trains of thought.

“Morning,” Alex greets with a small wave and an slightly awkward smile when Lena opens the door. Lena doesn’t have a chance to reply just as awkwardly because Lori jumps up from her seat to barrel over.

“Aunt Alex!” She beams as she wraps her arms around Alex, picking her up and twirling her once before setting her down and squeezing her tightly.

“Oof—” Alex grimace-laughs, patting Lori’s shoulder. “— easy, kiddo, you’re gonna snap me in
Lori pouts as she lets go. “What, am I not allowed to miss my aunt?”

Alex laughs as she ruffles Lori’s hair. “You saw me two days ago.”

Lori sniffs imperiously as she grabs Alex’s sleeve and leads her into the apartment. “Linear time is an illusion.”

Lena and Kara share a look across the room, breaking into grins. Lena chuckles as she closes the door and makes to join them.

“Is that the baby?” Alex asks with a bit of soft wonder. Kara smiles as she stands, bouncing Conner lightly as she lets Alex peer over at him.

“Can I?” Alex holds out her arms a little hesitantly, and Kara carefully heaps him onto her and instructs her.

“You gotta hold him right— here.” Kara smiles as she takes a half-step away. Alex looks down at the baby with an awed kind of smile, the kind of care no one would expect from Agent Alex Danvers— but Kara knows that Alex has always been exceptionally good with children.

“Hey there, buddy,” she coos. “He’s so pretty. Probably gets that from Lena’s side of the family.”

And Lena’s so taken aback by the easy smile being shot her way, the casual joke that doesn’t painfully dig up or conspicuously dance around Conner’s human father. Alex smirks at her so easily, as if she hadn’t been an uncooperative adversary just the day before. She gapes like a fish for a few moments before forcing her face into an amicable smile.

Lori scoffs. “It doesn’t really count as winning the genetic lottery if you were genetically engineered, you know.”

Kara chuckles as she herds them towards the couch.

“That makes you a cheater in the lottery too, you know,” Alex adds incredulously as she takes a seat.

“Perfection takes effort,” Lori says in a mock haughty tone, nose upturned until Alex pokes her in the side and she breaks into a laugh.

The easy way they break into banter kindles something familiar in Kara’s chest, something like a memory, something like happiness, something like the hope that this home she’s made will last, this time.

(She has a sudden thought as she goes to finish getting ready. Lori hasn’t mentioned anything about having cousins by way of Alex— she wonders if Alex never settles down, ends up giving up more of her life for Kara yet again and the anxiety bubbles in her chest for a moment.

Then she remembers the way Alex took to Lori so easily, the affection she showed Conner. She remembers that she and Alex were both desperately lonely children despite having each other; Kara, for want of her long-gone family, and Alex for trying to fill the parent-shaped hole in Kara’s chest and getting her too-young heart stuck there for years.

She imagines that she’ll be happy with Lena, with Lori, with the family and belonging she so wished for. She imagines Alex traveling far and wide on a whim, and coming back with trinkets for Lori and all the love still in her heart.
She imagines that they both get what they always wanted, in the end.)

“You look like you stepped on something awful.”

Kara tries for a sunny smile when James looks up at her, arm still in a sling and bandages showing through the edges of his clothing.

“Kara,” he says, and to her relief he smiles softly instead of kicking her out. Which, she would deserve. Instead, she eagerly takes the invitation when he waves her in and closes his laptop.

“Winn told me he couldn’t convince you to take another day off work. I thought you could use a little pick-me-up.”

She places the plastic cup on his desk as she takes a seat across from him.

He picks it up with a grin. “Greek yogurt smoothie?”

“Organic with locally grown blueberries,” she says brightly. “Just the way you like it.”

He gives her this little, soft, furrowed-brow smile, the one that never fails to warm her heart and put her at ease.

“Thank you.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Kara gnaws on her smile and glances down at her hands quickly before deciding to be brave and pushing on. “Listen, I wanted to apologize for yesterday.”

His smile falls into a neutral but patient expression, and she’s grateful.

“I was totally out of line,” she confesses. “I have really bad abandonment issues. I’m terrified of losing you. And I should’ve just told you that clearly instead of— instead of bringing your father into it.” She sighs. “It was completely uncalled for. I’m sorry.”

He’s quiet for a moment, glancing down to fiddle with the straw of his smoothie, his expression unreadable.

“Thank you,” he says finally, “for apologizing.”

Kara shakes her head. “I— you—” she stops to take a breath. “You’re really important to me, James.”

He looks up from his smoothie and gives her a small, lopsided smile.

“You’re really important to me too,” he says, before sighing and sitting up. “I wanted to apologize too. For blowing up like that.”

Kara shakes her head vehemently. “You had every right to be angry.”

“Maybe so,” he laughs, not unkindly, “but you weren’t completely wrong, either.”

There’s a heavy pause as Kara waits, giving James the time he needs as he stares out the window at the morning cityscape.

“I felt so cut off after his camera broke,” he says, fiddling with a pen. “All I had left of him was that
photo, where he’s in uniform, and, I dunno,” he sighs. “I felt like I needed to have something of him back again.” He looks back at Kara with a wry grin. “And I feel kind of stupid complaining to someone who’s…”

He makes a vague gesture with a self-deprecating laugh and Kara shakes her head.

“It’s not— a competition, or anything,” she gives him a small smile. “It’s not stupid. I of all people know how it—” she stumbles. “I understand what it’s like.”

He nods appreciatively, swiveling his chair back to face her fully.

“I think,” he begins with a lighter, brighter tone. “I’m gonna go shopping for a new camera. Make a day out of it with Winn. Annoy him with technical talk he doesn’t understand.”

James grins, his full, brilliant one, and Kara can’t help but grin back.

“I think that’s a great idea.”

He nods, taking a sip of his smoothie. “You were right. I mean, I’m not going to stop being Guardian entirely, but... When I was taking pictures and showing the world the things that needed to be seen, I felt like myself. Like I was doing something important. I should try my hand at that again.”

“Levelling your portfolio back up from Instagram photos of aesthetic healthy food?” she teases, and he leans back in his chair.

“How. Dare. You.” He deadpans, managing to get the third word out before his mouth twitches and he breaks into a grin. “You’re insulting my craft!”

They laugh, and for the first time in a while Kara feels like they’re okay again. Like they can breathe around each other again— affection wells up in her heart.

They’re both taking new steps into themselves. Punching things or lashing out won’t bring their loved ones back or make the hurt and guilt go away— and maybe grief is like being haunted, but nothing is stopping them from taking charge of their future. Making it better.

And Kara couldn’t be more proud to be embarking on a new beginning with a soul as brave and kind as James Olsen.

Chapter End Notes

Next time you're curious about the updating schedule, or I'm late, check me out on twitter @wtfoctagon for status updates! I probably got hit by a car or got yelled at by a rando and had an anxiety attack or something equally crazy because of my stupid bad luck.

and hey! want the next chapter? WIPs and behind the scenes stuff? check me out on my blog for more info:

http://wtfoctagon.tumblr.com/post/161395827596/wtfoctagons-extra-content-masterpost
to give it all away without a fear of what's to break (the answer that we never seem to find)

Chapter Notes

Sorry about the shorter chapter, you guys-- due to some shit happening last week, this chapter got bisected into two. This is part one. But hey, this was supposed to be the last chapter full of cathartic fluff before I started the finale, so, delayed gratification?

The soundtrack to this chapter is "The Best Is Yet To Come" by Sheppard

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You guys should go on a date.”

Lena looks up from wrapping Conner into a fresh blanket, raising her brow. Kara just laughs quizzically over her coffee.

“And you suddenly thought of that because…?” Kara asks, gesturing at Lori to elaborate but the girl just shrugs as she wolfs down another waffle.

“You guys have been so busy the past couple of days with cleaning up the L-Corp stuff,” she says simply around a mouthful. “You deserve some time off. I could go hang out with Aunt Alex with Conner or something.”

“I’d feel awful asking her to babysit three days in a row,” Lena says with a wry smile. “Besides, I think she said she was going on a double date with James and Winn today?”

She looks to Kara for confirmation and Kara nods, grinning.

“Yeah. Apparently Maggie knows this great place for James to test out his new camera. It’s cute.” She sips her coffee. “Speaking of, do you think we should tell them?”

“Who, James and Winn?” Lena asks.

“Yeah,” Kara sighs. “They’re getting more and more suspicious, I guess. Lori came to have lunch with me yesterday and James kept shooting us weird looks. I don’t want them to think I’m hiding anything from them.”

Lena nods, looking down at Conner when he gurgles for her attention. “If Lori’s alright with it, I think we should tell them,” she says absently as she lets Conner fiddle with her hair. “I’m just worried about how they’ll take it.”

“I’m pretty sure Uncle James has figured it out by now, anyway. He had this like… knowing look when you introduced me to him. Which,” she adds, waving her fork, “is impressive, because I am an impeccable liar.”

Lena laughs. “That’s not something you should be so happy about, Monkey.”

Lori wrinkles her nose. “Oh, come on. You know you’re proud of me.”
“I feel like I should step in here as a sworn protector of justice,” Kara comments, grinning. Lori rolls her eyes.

“You know what’s the real injustice here? Me not getting to hang out with younger versions of my favourite people when I have the chance.” Lori waves her fork again as she talks. “So can we tell them? Not today, though,” she adds. “Because you guys should go on a date.”

“Why don’t we all go out together?” Lena says. “There’s a new exhibit at the botanical gardens opening up today.”

“Won’t it be a bit crowded if it’s the first day?” Kara pushes up her glasses.

Lena smiles sheepishly. “Well, it’s sort of an early opening. For contributors and other people involved with the gardens only.”

Kara laughs. “Do you get VIP access to everything?”

“Yup,” Lori answers for her without skipping a beat or looking up from her fruit dissection. (she likes to eat her strawberries in small pieces, for no reason at all, just like Lena does.) “I had a very privileged childhood.”

It’s Lena turn to roll her eyes as she laughs, bouncing Conner a little in her arms. “It’s the pre-opening for the Sato Garden. They expanded the Japanese gardens to commemorate Dr. Sato’s one hundred and fifteenth birthday.”

“The queen mother of modern engineering herself?” Kara asks, raising her brows as she takes another sip of her coffee.

Lori perks up at that, pressing her utensils against the table and looking at her mother with side eyes. “Oh my god, is she gonna be there?”

Lena laughs as she nods. “Yeah, she’s giving a little thank-you speech.”

“Does she—” Lori blubbers, “will she have time to take questions or talk to people afterwards?”

“Yeah, I guess?” Lena looks between her and Kara quizzically. “It’ll be like any normal fancy reception, you’ll have to beat out some of the snobby investors.”

She’s about to ask why Lori’s so excited when a thought occurs to her:

“She’s not around during your time, is she?” Lena asks. Lori shakes her head with a frown.

“She passed away when I was five.” Lori shakes her head like she’s trying to toss the sad thoughts out of her head and brightens up. “This is so cool. I get to talk to my hero.”

“Hey, I thought I was your hero,” Lena says in mock offense.

“Sorry, Mom, I love you, but you didn’t jump human technology ahead five decades. Yet,” she adds defensively when Lena gives her a facetious glare and Kara just grins in exasperation as she drains her coffee and makes to stand.

“Alright, how about we start getting everyone ready to go?” she says, pushing her chair in. They all laugh when Conner burbles in agreement and Kara can’t help but drop a little kiss to his head as she takes their finished breakfast plates to the sink.
“I’m happy they get along so well,” Lena says as she sits next to Kara on one of the benches. Kara glances at her quickly, then looks back at Lori showing one of the flowers to Conner a little distance away. People mill about around them quietly, admiring the restored pagodas and stone lamps and wooden bridges that span the small stream that leads out into the lake.

“Those two?”

Lena nods. She looks up at Kara to find her blonde hair haloed in the late morning light, gold glinting off her glasses as she studies the kids.

Kara turns to look at her with a soft smile and Lena admires the way her dimples crease.

“Any reason in particular?” Kara asks with a slight tilt of her head and Lena looks down at her hands to get a hold of the butterflies in her chest with a grin she can’t help.

“No, I just,” Lena presses her lips together as she thinks, drumming her fingers on the edge of the bench as she looks back at the kids. Conner watches with rapt attention as a butterfly lands on Lori’s outstretched hand. “With everything that’s happened between me and Lex and Clark, I just… It would have been so easy for them to resent each other, you know?”

Kara’s studying the kids as well when Lena looks back at her.

“I think that…” Kara begins softly, tilting her head. “I think that they could never have resented each other as long as they had you.”

Lena frowns. “What do you mean?”

Kara laughs a little wryly before continuing. “I know you don’t think so, but you… “ Kara turns to give Lena a measured smile. “You have this incredible capacity to love, Lena. More than that, to put the needs of the person you love above anything you might want from them.”

Lena shakes her head. “Anyone can do that. That’s just…” She mulls over the words before giving up. “That’s just loving someone.”

Kara chuckles quietly. “I used to think so too. But with everything that’s happened in the past year, I guess I’ve been realizing that…” She sighs. “When you love someone, you want them so badly. The happiness they give you, the safety, everything— and you don’t think it’s selfish at first because you would give anything up for them. And that’s how it feels.”

She pauses for a while, and Lena waits.

“It was funny when Alex started dating Maggie and I started feeling left behind,” Kara says with a chagrined smile. “I would die for Alex; I have made the decision to die for Alex when I didn’t know she’d save me. But apparently losing her while we were both still alive was too much for me to handle.”

Lena shakes her head, covering Kara’s hand with her own. “You have every reason to be afraid of losing your family, Kara. It’s not selfish.”

“I know,” Kara nods quickly. “I talked it out with Alex, and it was fine, and I know— I really am trying to be kinder to myself, I promise.” She smiles, somehow brightly and with a tinge of sadness. “It’s just that I’ve realized lately that just loving someone isn’t enough. You have to be particularly brave and strong-willed to put what someone needs above how much you want them. And you are, Lena,” she says, lacing their fingers together and looking up at Lena with a shy, affectionate smile.
Lena shakes her head again. “I just…”

She tries to come up with some sort of rebuttal that isn’t rude or disregarding how much Kara means when she says that, but Kara just laughs and lets go to turn her palm up and really hold Lena’s hand.

“From everything Lori’s said, Conner’s going to have a hard time feeling wanted for a while,” she says. “But I don’t think that he’ll ever feel that way with you. I think you’re going to be really good at making him feel loved because of who he is, not in spite of. And from the looks of it Lori’s going to take on the same protective attitude.”

Lena just stares for a moment, because her insides are just arguing with each other at the top of their lungs and she’s trying to sort through her thoughts— the urge to somehow refute all this tangles with the want to thank Kara for thinking so highly of her and it all happens atop a messy jumble of cynicism that no, in no world will she ever be able to love people without ruining them or herself.

“I…” She swallows thickly. “I want you to know that that means a lot to me, I’m just… I’m sorry,” she says before running her free hand through her hair anxiously. “It’s still hard for me to believe that I’m going to be any good at raising kids.”

Kara smiles. “That’s okay. Me too.”

Lena looks at her a little incredulously. “You’re a natural with kids, Kara.”

“With kids, maybe,” she says, “but my own kids? I’m…” She pauses for a moment, sighing. “It’s just a lot to think about, you know. Ever since I started being Supergirl it’s been a really hard balancing act. If my personal life was going well, there was always some Supergirl crisis going on. If my work at the DEO was going well, something in my personal life was always messing up. It’s just so hard to believe that I’m going to end up figuring it out in the end.”

She furrows her brows and looks up at the statue standing in the middle of the lake.

“That makes me really hopeful and jealous.”

Lena glances at her. “The statue of her wife?”

Kara nods. “She and Dr. Sato spent so many years together. I guess it just makes me think about how it must have felt back then. Two women together, just barely twenty at the onset of World War II.”

Lena wonders as she stares at the statue of the woman, depicted as she was in her twenties as if to immortalize her youthful grin.

“It must have been hard,” she says. “I think her father was arrested on suspicion of being a spy at the time. And she herself got sent away to the internment camps. Not to mention that two women being together back then must have been…”

“It must have felt impossible,” Kara finishes for her with a laugh. “But it happened. They got the fantasy happy ending that you’d think would only happen in dreams. They lived through the war and spent a lifetime together. That’s…” Kara shakes her head as if she’s still in disbelief. “The thought that I might get to have that too, after all this is over, seems so unreal.”

“I get what you mean,” Lena says softly. “It doesn’t seem like we’re ever going to figure out everything going on with CADMUS and the DEO, but,” she sighs, squeezing Kara’s hand. “Lori’s here, and she’s real. That has to mean something, right?”
Kara smiles at the girl in question, watching as Lori squats down and balances Conner on her leg as she points out a yellow flower.

“Yeah,” Kara murmurs, “it does.”

- 

Kara and Lena are in the gift shop of the gardens, showing Conner all the little trinkets when Lori finally hops up to them.

“Hey, guys.”

Lena laughs. “Hey, monkey. Did you finish grilling Dr. Sato?”

“I was not grilling her!” Lori pouts, but she looks over her shoulder a little guiltily anyway. Dr. Sato catches her eye and gives her a small wave with a gracious smile that Lori returns before a young woman in a pale green dress wheels her away.

Kara shifts Conner in her arms. “Who’s that?”

“Who, Lian?” Lori glances over her shoulder quickly again. “That’s her daughter. She adopted just after her wife passed away. It’s weird to see her this young.”

Lena raises a brow. “You know her?”

Lori shrugs. “We’re both daughters of mega CEO engineers. I see her from time to time at galas and stuff. Anyway,” she says, tucking her chin on Lena’s shoulder and looking at the display. “What were you looking at?”

“Not much,” Lena says, knocking her head to Lori’s lightly. “Just some of the potted plants.”

“Save it until after Yeyu moves in,” Lori deadpans. “You tend to kill plants just by being in their vicinity.”

Lena huffs and goes to pinch her, unable to help her grin when Lori jumps away with a giggle.

“Hey, behave, you two,” Kara says sternly, adjusting her hold on Conner. “Or we won’t go for ice cream after.”

She’s met with two matching incredulous stares, with the same imperiously raised brow and hand on the hip and all.

“...What?” she asks.

Conner burbles in disapproval.

Chapter End Notes

for those of you wondering about the Korrasami reference-- it's a bit of a tribute, really. This whole thing is my ode to fanfiction, and specifically how far the wlw fandom has come in terms of transformative fanworks and actual media representation.

Next chapter coming next week! If you want it now, check me out on my blog!
and we chase her through the springtime

Chapter Notes

hey guys! So this is the last hurrah of fluff before the ending arc kicks in. It's been an amazing journey with all of you, and I'm so so grateful; this is my last thank you gift to all of you, in a way. I know a lot of you wanted Lena or Kara coming back to show present!supercorp how good their life is going to get, and I'm sorry I couldn't deliver that plot-wise; but I'm hoping this will hit the right emotional notes for you.

I hope you'll stick around and enjoy the ending as much as I enjoyed planning it out.

The soundtrack to this chapter is "I Was Made For Sunny Days" by The Weepies.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Lena nearly drops a plate while cleaning up after dinner as Lori whoops loudly from the living space. Conner starts whimpering unhappily in Kara’s arms and Lori shrinks in on herself.

“Sorry, buddy, don’t cry, I just got excited,” she murmurs to him across the coffee table, hands held out placatingly. Kara hugs him closer and rubs his back, frowning quizzically at the girl.

“What happened?” Lena says, walking over as she dries her hands on a hand towel. Lori smiles a bit sheepishly and holds out her phone.

“I fixed it,” she says with a grin, wiggling the phone a little. “There’s something I’ve been dying to show you guys.” She hops to her feet, setting the phone on the floor by the small partition wall between the living space and dining space. “I was afraid I wouldn’t fix it on time.”

After a few beeps, the phone lights up and projects an image onto the wall just above the glass-case fireplace. Lena stares in awe as the image shows what looks like a phone main screen, with streamlined app buttons and a picture of Lori and another dark-haired girl as the background picture.

“Can all phones turn into projectors in your time?” Lena asks, crouching down next to Lori and peering at the device.

“Yeah,” answers absentmindedly as she opens up her video gallery and starts scrolling through an alarming number of thumbnails.

“Who was the girl on your background picture?” Kara asks, a little bit mischievously. Lena sends her an affectionate ‘leave her alone’ kind of look and Kara shrugs, but Lori seems oblivious to it.

“Huh? Oh, that’s Mar’i. You know, the Tamaranean friend I told you about.”

“She’s cute,” Kara tries again, and Lena mouths a ‘stop it’ to her around a grin.

“I guess,” is Lori’s noncommittal answer. “Aha!” she taps on a thumbnail and looks up at the projected version of her screen. “Found it!”

A split second of it plays before Lori pauses it, leaving it frozen on a blurry image of a hardwood floor. Lori jumps up, zooming upstairs and then returning with an armful of blankets just a second
“Cushions on the floor, everybody!” she orders as she heaps the pile of comforters on the floor just behind the phone. “We’re gonna cuddle while we watch this. Come on, folks!”

“Okay, okay,” Kara laughs as she holds Conner to her chest with one arm and starts piling some cushions on the floor with the other. “She gets her bossiness from you, you know.”

“As if you’d have me any other way,” Lena quips quickly without thinking, immediately feeling her stomach flip in embarrassment. She tries to ignore the fact that she really just said that by occupying herself with helping Lori build the nest and pretending not to hear Kara’s quiet laugh and ‘no, I wouldn’t’.

“Okay, settle in,” Lori says, zooming around to click off all the lights so that the room is only lit dimly by the projection. She situates herself in the middle of the nest in front of the phone. She holds her arms out. “I’ll hold him, you guys get comfy.”

Kara does so as she sits on the left side, sharing a bemused smile with Lena when they bump shoulders. Lori shifts to sit Conner in her lap and leans over to press the button.

“Everyone comfy?” She asks, her finger hovering over the screen. Kara and Lena look at each other expectantly, waiting to see if the other has any complaints before smiling and nodding at Lori.

“Alright.” She taps the screen and leans back with Conner.

[[The video starts again, showing the feet of the person filming tapping across hardwood floors into be bright daylight. The person opens a door and points the camera upwards into a large, well-decorated bedroom with two people sleeping on the bed.

A voice calls out from behind the camera, and it’s definitely Lori—she sounds just a little younger, somehow.

LORI: (sing-song) Good morning, parental units! It’s time to get up! We have a big day ahead of us!]]

“This is from two years ago,” Lori whispers.

[[The two people on the bed groan, shifting a little, and one of them sits up a little to squint at the camera. It’s a forty-something Lena Luthor, with definite signs of aging in the lines around her eyes but when she runs a hand through her hair and grumbles at her daughter she doesn’t look a day past thirty.]]

Lena feels her heartbeat pick up at the sight of herself. Her older self. A forty-something Lena Luthor is… the same, and yet completely different to what she sees in the mirror now, it’s surreal.

“My hair is so short,” she whispers to herself, fascinated as she absently runs her own hand through her own long strands.

[[LENA: (groggily) It’s eight am on a sunday, Monkey. Go back to bed.  

Lori only laughs behind the camera as she steps up even closer to the bed.

LORI: It’s not just a sunday, mother dearest! It’s you and Yeyu’s twentieth anniversary!  

The other occupant of the bed groans, only her blond hair visible with her face planted into the]
pillows.

KARA: (muffled) It’s only been sixteen years since we got married, is’kah. Try again in four.

Lori huffs.

LORI: Obviously not your twentieth wedding anniversary. Your twentieth of being together. Twenty years ago today, you guys made it official!

Lena, a little more awake now, rubs her eyes and smiles bemusedly.

LENA: You’re aware most people don’t celebrate dating anniversaries after getting married, right?

LORI: (petulantly) and you’re aware that we’re not most people, right? (whining) Come on, come on, come on!

The camera shakes she she appears to jump onto the bed, bouncing a bit. Kara squeals and sits up, dodging away and rolling out of bed. Lena fares much the same, shifting out of frame on the other side.

KARA: (laughin g) Alright, alright, by Rao, please, we’re up!

Kara stands in her plaid pajama set, blonde hair grown to her hips, not looking a day older save for the more confident set to her shoulders. She puts her hands on her hips and looks up at the camera with a raised brow and an exasperated smile.

KARA: Happy now, i’skah?

The camera bounces once.

LORI: Yup! Now proceed to the kitchen—(camera swivels to Lena sitting on the other side of the bed with a smile)—both of you!]

Lena watches as the Lori on screen herds the older versions of themselves down an unfamiliar hallway through a brightly lit house with art pieces on the walls and little potted plants and signs of home and living — that’s where she’s going to live, she thinks to herself. That’s her future home, with her family.

[[ Kara and Lena slow down as they step into the kitchen, appearing to be marvelling at the breakfast banquet laid out on the island counter.

KARA: Did you make all this, is’kah?

Lori laughs as her parents tentatively approach the counter.

LORI: You know I can’t cook for crap. Conner made it.

The camera pans as Lori walks to the other side of the counter, near the stove, and her parents’ expressions come into view. Lena looks up at Lori with an awed expression.

LENA: Conner flew down here to make all this?

The camera shakes just a little.

LORI: Yup. He’s busy so he had to take off like right after, but he left you guys a note.
Kara picks up a neatly folded piece of paper tucked between the waffles plate and eggs plate. Her head tilts as she opens and reads it, mouth slowly stretching into a grin.

**LORI**: Hey, read it out loud! Filming for posterity here!

**KARA**: Dear Aunts Lena and Kara, I hope you’re having a good morning.

**LENA**: Debatable, given the way we were woken.

**LORI**: Shhhh.

**KARA**: *(laughs before continuing)* I’m sorry I couldn’t stay, but I hope you enjoy the breakfast I’ve made you. You’ve probably noticed that Lori’s in an even more harebrained mood than usual today —

**LORI**: *(indignantly)* Hey!

**LENA**: *(facetiously, a little smugly)* Shhhh.

**KARA**: *(with an exasperated laugh)* — But hopefully she doesn’t bother you too much. She told me she has a big day planned for you so it’s either going to be awful or brilliant—

**LORI**: *(small, displeased noise)*

**KARA**: — but I hope for the latter. I’m sure you agree with me that celebrating dating anniversaries after marriage is a little odd, but in the spirit of it I’d like to wish you both happiness. You’ve found and nurtured a wonderful and genuine connection that all of us aspire to. I’m very grateful— and proud— to be able to call you my family. Love, Conner.

**LENA**: *(fondly)* That’s so sweet.

**KARA**: *(with a touched sigh as she takes a seat)* That boy is an angel.

Lori’s grumbling can be heard as the camera is positioned somewhere on the counter, pointed at Kara and Lena. Lena takes a seat next to Kara and sounds of a stool scraping lightly against the floor can be heard out of frame.

**LENA**: *(filling her plate)* So, Monkey, what are your ‘big plans’ for us?

Utensils clank loudly right next to the microphone, out of frame.

**LORI**: *(slightly muffled, as if her mouth is full)* Okay, so, we’re going to the fireworks festival in Athens first.

**KARA**: *(laughs)* You woke us up early in the morning just so we could fly over to where it’s nighttime?

**LORI**: Okay, listen. Tonight is the last night of the festival and Conner told me that a Zordanian pyremaster came in as a last minute entry. It’ll be like, the first Zordan Skypyre Ceremony held on Earth ever. I couldn’t *not* include that.

*Lena looks over at Kara with a smile.*
LENA: That sounds wonderful.

Kara grins as Lena holds her hand.

KARA: It does. The last time I saw a Skypyre was for my eighth nameday. *(laces their fingers together over the counter, smiling between Lena and Lori)* I’m so excited for you two to see one. It’s spectacular.

Lena’s smile widens into a loving grin.

LORI: *(overly cheerfully)* See? Today’s gonna be great. We’re going to Paris for brunch after that and then back here for the aquarium, then to the art museum, then to Metropolis for dinner. I made reservations. Have some faith.

KARA: *(laughs)* Okay. We’re trusting you, is’kah.

LORI: You say that you usually don’t.

A pause.

KARA: I love you.

LOLI: Hey!

*The screen cuts to a fireworks display. Stunning colours light up the sky, the fireworks pulsing different colours and twisting and turning into shapes many seconds after they detonate. The crowd gasps as sparkling blue sparks form into a sparrow and twirl through the sky before dissipating. The camera shakes a little before turning to the left, where Kara and Lena are seated on the grass next to each other. They’re both in civilian clothes. Lena has a simple button up and jeans, while Kara is in a yellow sundress with her hair braided into intricate knots. Kara leans in to Lena’s ear to whisper something.*

“Crap,” Lori says. “I forgot to edit the subtitles in. You’re explaining that the pyres correspond to the pyremaster’s emotions. Zordanian pyremasters spend years learning the art of honing their emotions to make art.”

“Are those new glasses?” Kara asks.

Lori nods. “Yup. Mom made us a matching set when you broke yours in a fight about five years ago?”

[[ Cut to a gravelly beach. The camera looks out at the sea, with Kara and Lena seated on a picnic blanket facing the sunset.

LORI: So we’ve decided to some watch the sunset in Ireland for brunch instead of Paris. Here you see two lovebirds in their natural habitat.

Kara turns back to her with a laugh that’s muffled by the distance.

KARA: *(shouting distantly)* Are you sure you don’t want to just come sit with us?

LORI: I’m the camera girl! Just pretend I’m not here!

KARA: Okaaaay. *(picking up one of the sandwiches)* These bocconcini melts are soooo good, but if
you insist.

Kara makes an exaggerated show of taking a bite while Lena laughs and slaps her shoulder lightly, saying something unintelligible at this distance but sounding somewhat chastising.

**LORI:** *(pained noise)*

Lena and Kara laugh.

“I see you’ve always been a food loving munchkin,” Kara says.

“Oh shush,” Lena chuckles. “She gets it from you.”

[[CUT TO A DARK, VAGUELY ILLUMINATED HALLWAY. THE CAMERA SHIFTS AND ADJUSTS, BALANCING THE LIGHTING AND COMING INTO FOCUS TO SHOW AN AQUARIUM WALKWAY. KARA AND LENA ARE HOLDING HANDS, MILLING AROUND WITH THE REST OF THE ATTENDEES. LENA POINTS EXCITEDLY AT THE TANKS, TUGGING AT KARA’S HAND.

**LENA:** *(DISTANTLY, THROUGH THE AMBIENT NOISE)* — SO THOSE HAVE A DEFENSE MECHANISM — *(INDISTINCT)* — SPINES, THEY ONLY DISCOVERED IT A FEW YEARS AGO—

The rest of her explanation is mostly unintelligible from the distance. Kara nods along, but is looking at Lena with a dopey expression rather than the fish she’s pointing out.

**LORI:** They’re so in love.

*The camera zooms in on Kara’s lovestruck face.*

**LORI:** It’s disgusting.

[[CUT TO A BRIGHT ART MUSEUM. THE CAMERAWORK IS SIMILAR TO THE AQUARIUM, WITH KARA AND LENA WALKING THROUGH WITH HELD HANDS IN THE DISTANCE. KARA IS THE ONE POINTED EXCITEDLY NOW, WHISPERING INTO LENA’S EAR.

**LORI:** Sometimes I forget Yeyu had a minor in art history.

Lena smiles and whispers something back.

**LORI:** *(DISGUSTED GROAN)* Mom, oh my god. *

“You told a really bad pickup line about artwork,” Lori explains.

[[CUT TO A RELATIVELY WELL-SET UP SCENE. KARA AND LENA ARE SITTING ACROSS FROM EACH OTHER AT A CANDLELIT TABLE, SET FAR APART FROM THE OTHER TABLES ON THE TERRACE. THEY’RE LEANING TOWARDS EACH OTHER WITH MATCHING SMILES, DRESSED DIFFERENTLY FROM THE PREVIOUS SCENES. KARA HAS A BLAZER OVER A WHITE BUTTON UP SHIRT WITH THE SLEEVES ROLLED UP TO HER ELBOWS, AND HER HAIR IS SIMPLY PINNED TO THE SIDE. LENA’S IN A DEEP GREEN DRESS, WITH HER HAIR SWEEPT BACK. THE CAMERA SHAKES A LITTLE BIT WHEN A RUSTLING SOUND COMES SOMEWHERE OFF-SCREEN.

**UNKNOWN VOICE:** Relax, it was just a raccoon. You can keep filming your creepy video.

**LORI:** It’s not creepy!

**VOICE:** You’re filming your parents having a romantic dinner. While floating behind a hedge. That’s kind of creepy.
LORI: I didn’t pay you to be a smartass, Jon.

JON: Sorry, I’m getting paid to be your weird lookout boy? ]]

Lena feels Kara gasp quietly and tighten her grip on a cushion. She reaches over and squeezes her hand in solidarity— Kara is about to see another Kryptonian child. Her nephew.

[[LORI: Can you not?

JON: Okay, even you have to admit it’s weird. No one celebrates dating anniversaries after getting married, Lor.

LORI: (deep sigh) Listen. I wasn’t sentient enough for their tenth marriage anniversary to do anything for them. And it’s going to be four whole years before their twentieth. And I’m going to be moving out for college soon. Maybe I want to be able to see them without having to fly over every time I miss them.

A pause.

JON: I’m gonna miss you too.

LORI: (overly shocked gasp) Jonathan Samuel Kent, did you just admit to caring about me?

JON: Oh my god. (distantly) Bye!

LORI: Jonathan Samuel Kent, did you just admit to caring about me?

JON: (overly shocked gasp) Jonathan Samuel Kent, did you just admit to caring about me?

LORI: (overly shocked gasp) Jonathan Samuel Kent, did you just admit to caring about me?

JON: (overly shocked gasp) Jonathan Samuel Kent, did you just admit to caring about me?

Wait— (the camera shakes, pulling away from Kara and Lena) — Jonny! Wait!

KARA: If I knew we were going to get interviewed, I’d have worn something more professional. We’re a bit overdressed, don’t you think?

LENA: (teasing) You’ve said ‘posterity’ so many times today I can’t even compute what it means.

LORI: (clearing her throat) On this day of your twentieth anniversary, what would you like to tell your past selves?
KARA: *(laughs)* I think time capsule recordings go the other way around, usually.

LENA: Behave. *(to the camera)* How far back are we talking?

LORI: Twenty years ago. Before or after you started dating, take your pick.

*A pause as Lena and Kara frown thoughtfully. Kara drums her fingers on the countertop before looking over at Lena, and they look at each other for a moment, smiling inquisitively.*

KARA: Do you wanna—?

LENA: I don’t mind, do you wanna go first?

KARA: You sure? Ok— alright, I’ll go first. *(laughs, looking back at the camera)* Okay. Dear Me, I hope you’re doing well.

Lena feels Kara shift beside her, and squeezes her hand. The direct way that future Kara is looking into the camera makes it feel like a real conversation, addressed to Kara.

[[KARA: *(laughs)* Well, you probably aren’t, since you-know-who is probably still bothering you about getting dumped. Don’t take him back, though. He’s nothing but trouble. I know you probably feel like you’re the one being cruel right now, but trust yourself. You’re better without him.

*Lena smiles sympathetically and squeezes Kara’s hand.*

KARA: You know, everything’s going to feel kind of awful. It has been for a while, hasn’t it? Between losing Krypton and Clark being distant, and then trying to be Supergirl— *(wry laugh)*—Rao, I remember being you. You looked around at the happy people around you and didn’t think you’d ever be able to have that. What James and Lucy had, what Alex and Maggie had. You thought you’d have to be alone, and that you-know-who was your only chance at being understood in a relationship. Of having a family. And, to be honest, a part of you is afraid of having a family. You’re so afraid you’re going to lose them again. But it’s going to be okay, okay? You don’t have to give up. You don’t have to choose. Because, soon, you’re going to fall in love with this amazing woman —

*Kara smiles over at Lena for a moment.*

KARA: — and you’re going to marry her. And when you come home to be you— not Kara Danvers, not Supergirl, just you— you won’t have to be alone anymore. You’ll have someone who understands every part of who you are. And then you’re going to have a daughter with your amazing wife and that kid— that kid is going to be phenomenal. She’s going to be all the best parts of you and your wife and you’re going to love her so much—

*She cuts off, sniffling, laughing as she wipes at her eyes. Lena rubs her back.*

KARA: Sorry, look at me, I was making fun of it and now I’m getting emotional. *(deep breath)* Whoo. Okay. I’m good. Sorry. *(looks back at the camera with a smile)* Anyway. You get my point. It’s going to be okay. Against all odds, against your entire planet dying and having to rebuild your life over and over again, you end up figuring it out. You earn it. You never break, you never stop trying, and you make it. You get to be you, and you get to love, and be loved. I know it feels impossible right now. But it’s going to be okay.

*A heavy pause. Kara smiles and glances down before looking over at Lena. They break into matching grins and Lena presses a short kiss to Kara’s cheek.*
KARA: Okay, now you go.

LENA: Alright. Okay. (looks at the camera) Dear Me, I know you’re doing awful, but I’ll wish you well anyway.

Kara laughs.

LENA: Your brother’s in jail. Your mother’s in jail too, and now you realized that you’re actually related to your father. Being an illegitimate Luthor feels so… bitterly ironic, I know, and you’ve basically given up on having a family. I mean, hey, we never really thought about it much anyway after we came out, right? (a short laugh) You thought that you were destined to screw up relationships. You didn’t want a child fifty miles near you because you knew you’d screw up that kid. You didn’t think you deserved a family, really, because you didn’t think you’re the kind of person who can have that kind of life and not break it beyond repair. But guess what?

She smiles mischievously and Kara chuckles quietly.

LENA: You’re going to be a great wife and a wonderful mother. I mean, not to be vain— (laughs) — but I think I’m doing a pretty good job. I keep this one pretty content— (grins playfully at Kara) — and I managed to raise a happy kid. At least, I hope so, anyway.

All three of them laugh. There’s a slight shuffling sound out of frame.

LORI: Yes. A very, very happy kid.

Lena beams at someone behind the camera. Kara squeezes her hand, smiling just as brightly and lovingly. Lena takes a deep breath.

LENA: So, you get the gist. It’s going to be okay. All the work you’ve done— all the thinking, the hurting, the surviving— it’s going to mean everything. You’re going to build a happy life with your own two hands, Lena Luthor. You have what it takes inside you. You have the strength to take everything horrible that’s happened to you and turn it into happiness. Despite everything, you are worth so much. It’s okay to feel. It’s okay to be sad, to be angry, to be resentful— because you will always be strong enough to rise up through that. Because those things don’t make you weak or unworthy of love. Those things make you brave, because you still choose love after all of it.

Another heavy pause. Lena smiles down before looking over at Kara, and they smile lovingly at each other. Kara goes to press a kiss to Lena’s head and Lena closes her eyes as she leans in. The screen fades to black. []

Kara sniffs. Lena wipes at her own tears before leaning her head on Kara’s shoulder.

“Wait—” Kara says. “There’s more.”

[[ Cut to a warmly lit living room. Lori walks in, with bright purple hair, patting her pajama pants pockets and frowning. ]]

Lena laughs.

“Oh, you look so cute. How did you do your hair?”

Lori shrugs. “Hair doesn’t regenerate. Whatever you do to it in the red sun room stays.”

[[LORI: Yeyu, have you seen my phone— (looks up at the camera) — hey!]]
Kara laughs off-screen. The camera shakes as Lori comes over to try and retrieve it.

**LORI:** Give it back! What are you doing?

**KARA:** I’m filming for posterity!

**LORI:** That’s not funny!

Kara clearly disagrees as she continues to dodge Lori’s swipes. Lena enters the room in sleepwear as well, makeup scrubbed off, shaking her head.

**LENA:** Behave, you two. Monkey, come on, sit down, we have something we wanna show you.

Lori eyes the camera warily as she slowly goes to sit down on one of the couches.

**LORI:** I’m not appreciating this whole ‘the filmer becomes the filmed’ thing.

**KARA:** Oh, come on, is’kah. You got to film us all day. Give us five minutes.

Lena taps Lori’s shoulder to get her attention, sitting sideways to face her on the couch. The camera moves to look at them from a better angle across the coffee table. Lena puts a box between herself and Lori.

**LENA:** So your mother overheard you talking to Jon during dinner tonight.

**LORI:** (groans)

**LENA:** (laughs) Bear with me. Today was wonderful, and so thoughtful, Lori. We thought we’d give you your fifteenth birthday present early as a thank you.

**LORI:** (puzzled) My birthday party is tomorrow night, guys.

**LENA:** We know. But it’s past midnight. And I was already thinking I’d give this to you before the big, loud party anyway.

*Lena opens the box and pulls out a watch.[]*

“That’s—” Lena looks down at her wrist and then Lori’s. “Is this when I gave it to you?”

Lori nods.

[[**LORI:** That’s— Mom, that’s your watch.]

**LENA:** Well, it’s yours now. I refitted it so that you can signal one of us whenever you need to.

*Lori stares in wonder as Lena gently fits it around her wrist.***

**LENA:** Tomorrow’s your big day— you’re finally an adult by Kryptonian standards. It’s going to be a huge party with everyone— and it’s going to be amazing. *(She smiles as she finishes tucking the strap in)* But I thought I’d give you a little Luthor heirloom early. You can press it whenever you miss us, and I can signal you back. It’s not much— but I wanted you to have a reminder. That wherever you go, no matter how far, we are always with you.

*Lena clasps her hands around Lori’s wrist, looking at her daughter fondly. Lori looks at the watch in wonder, and then back up at Lena, and cracks into the grimace that comes right before a sob as*
she launches herself into Lena’s arms. Lena grunts a little at the impact before laughs, tightening her arms around Lori as well and patting her back.

LENA: Threvzeht :jevia, eh Lorelai. Ukiemiv-odh. ]]

Lena swallows thickly.

“Did I—?” She looks over to Kara, and finds her staring in wonder.

“Yeah,” she murmurs. “You just— you told her happy birthday and that you love her.”

[[ The two start to snifflie into each other’s shoulders, and Kara chuckles lightly off-screen.

KARA: And here you see the Luthor Waterworks in action. (zooms in) I love my girls.

Lena wipes at her eyes before looking up at the camera and waving her hand impatiently.

LENA: Oh, shut up and get over here.

KARA: (laughs) Okay, okay.

The camera shakes a little before the video cuts off. ]]

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Far off, beyond the outskirts of National City into the Mojave desert, the air just above a jagged cliff shimmers and warps. With a thrumming sound, it suddenly explodes into a bright flash of light and spits out a figure at incredible speed, sending the figure hurtling down the cliffside into the sand below.

The figure— the young man in dark clothes lands in a huge cloud of sand and rubble. He lies motionless for a moment before groaning and flipping over onto his back.

“Jesus— motherfuck —” he hisses, grabbing at his rib before he slowly props himself up. “Holy balls, that hurts…”

He stands shakily and takes a deep breath, dusting himself off. He adjusts his mask and pats off his shirt with the crest emblazoned across his chest once more before jumping into the air and soaring over to National City.

He hovers well above the cloudline, closing his eyes and frowning. Wind rustles through his jet black hair as he mutters to himself.

“Where are you, Lori…?”

Chapter End Notes

EDIT: I totally forgot to mention! There will be no update next weekend, as I'll be studying my ass off for my final exam. Sorry guys! chapter 16 will be up on the 14th of July.
Hey guys! sorry about the delayed update; and for this being a particularly shorter update, but I was writing it and realized I wasn't prepared to write Lori's goodbye yet. And so, my update schedule is fucked! but now that I'm out of school I'll be updating the last two chapters consistently.

“Hey James!”

James jumps a little as Kara skips past him, coffee in hand and ginormous grin on her face. He laughs when she pushes his favourite order into his hands.

“Someone’s having a good morning,” he says, pleasantly confused.

Waking up to your future wife and kid and nephew in a brightly lit penthouse will do that, Kara thinks to herself, but she smiles and shrugs instead.

“It’s a beautiful day!” she says simply as she waves and makes her way to her office.

And it has been a beautiful few days, honestly. Lori is her wonderful, snarky, affectionate, sunny self, Conner is the cutest and most well-behaved infant in the history of humanity, and Lena—

Well, Lena is Lena. The woman who makes Kara feel most like herself.

She gives Snapper a bright wave through the glass walls of the main journalism office to get her customary greeting scowl as she skips down the hall to her hallway, only to be stopped by the sight of a tall man waiting by her doorway. And by tall, she means *tall*; he’s easily over six feet. His back is turned to her, but she can see broad shoulders filling out a black leather jacket and black hair that’s cropped short and shaved on the sides and back.

She squints and approaches hesitantly. Did she have a meeting or interview that she forgot? She mentally goes through her schedule for the day, trying to think of any occasion that’d warrant someone waiting at her office as she walks forward when the man turns around and she sees *Clark*.

Well, not quite— this *not-Clark* is notably taller, with a leaner face and stronger brows, but the shade of his hair and the way his black-rimmed glasses sit over blue eyes is uncannily reminiscent of her cousin.

He smiles brightly, and Rao, where has she seen those dimples before?

“Miss Danvers!” He greets amicably, pulling his hands out of the pockets of his slacks and straightening up. “I’m Carl Krummet, from the Jump City Gazette.”

Kara glances at the hand that’s being offered to her, and hesitantly goes to shake it.

“Nice to meet you, Mr. Krummet,” she says, genuinely pleased despite her confusion and when she shakes his hand a jolt of familiarity goes through her— she’s held this hand before.
His handshake is firm and friendly, and she finds herself liking him immediately and immensely.

“I’m terribly sorry to show up out of the blue, I know you must be busy. I was just hoping to have a few minutes of your time…?”

She blinks at him a few times, studying his hopeful little smile, trying to place where she’s seen it before because it’s sort of reminding her of this morning when Lori begged her for the last pancake —

It’s when she remembers that Lex Luthor is a whopping 6’5” that everything clicks into place.

“Conner…?”

His face goes on a journey from surprise to relief to sheepishness.

“Hi, Aunt Kara,” he says, almost bashfully and for a moment Kara sees every inch of baby Conner’s gentleness in this grown up Conner.

“You—you’re here,” she breathes, taking in the sight of him, white button-up clashing with his worn leather jacket and the stubborn curls in his hair.

“Yeah,” he says, pocketing his hands. “I’m here?”

She laughs. “Sorry, sorry, I’m just— it’s so amazing to see you all grown up.”

He grimaces. “Oh no, did she show you kid pictures of me?”

“Not quite,” she smiles nervously as she looks around at the rest of the floor. “Come on, let’s talk inside,” she says, opening her office door and ushering him in.

“Rao, you’re really here,” she says again, closing the door behind them. “Why did you— who’s Carl Krummet?”

He chuckles and scratches the back of his head shyly.

“Just a name I use for undercover ops. I wasn’t sure how much Lori had told you, so I figured it was safer to take precautions.”

“Well. That’s. A lot more careful than Lori’s been,” Kara laughs, and he rolls his eyes.

“I don’t know what I was expecting from her,” he deadpans despite his smile. “I assume that means she’s with you?”

Kara nods. “Yeah, she’s at home with Lena right now. I guess you’re—” she swallows. “I guess you’re here to bring her back?”

“Yeah, finally,” he laughs. “I hope she hasn’t been bothering you for too long. It was a little hard to pinpoint her temporal location.”

“No, it’s been—” She runs a hand through her hair. “It’s been wonderful to have her around, don’t worry.”

She looks up at him with an odd amalgam of elation and anxiety in her gut.

“Sorry, I’m just—” she laughs. “I’m sad that you’re here to take her away, but it’s— it’s really good to see you, Conner.”
He’s somehow everything she pictured and nothing like she thought— he’s got Clark’s shy smile and gentle tone, the trademark Luthor charisma that shone when he introduced himself, and of course, the family eyes. She feels a rush of affection, of curiosity, of wanting to fly with him and see him as Superboy and what he does as a day job and just, everything.

He smiles, the little lopsided grin that she’s seen on Lucy and Lois a million times.

“It’s good to see you too, Aunt Kara.”

- “Why don’t you want to join the Titans after graduation?”

Lori rolls her eyes as she takes one of Lena’s pawns with her bishop. “And go live at the tower all the way over in Jump City? After three years away from you guys?” she grumbles. “I want to catch a break, please. Can’t I spend my first year as Supergirl in my hometown?”

Lena laughs as she moves her rook. “Of course you can. I was just worried for you. Learning how to work with a team of superheroes your age seems like it’d be great training.”

Lori shrugs. “Maybe. I’ll probably end up caving anyway, Jon’s been bothering me about it nonstop. Now that Conner’s gone solo, he’s the only alien on the team.”

The front door clicks. The two of them turn with smiles already half-forming on their faces, ready to greet Kara.

“You’re home early,” Lena comments with a puzzled laugh.

“Yeah, well, I, um,” Kara stutters for a moment, then simply pushes the door wider open and steps to the side as an explanation.

And for a moment, standing there, is Lex.

Her heart attack catches in her chest as her brain tries to process the image; his hair is black, not light brown, he’s wearing glasses and much younger and his jaw is stronger— and Lex doesn’t wear glasses, but Clark Kent does, and oh.

Conner steps into the apartment and smiles, the edge of his eyes crinkling (the way she’s seen Lex’s do so many times before, when he smiled for genuine joy and not self-satisfaction). He’s as tall as Lex and Lionel were, with broader shoulders that Lena’s sure is from the Kryptonian side of the family.

“Hi, Aunt Lena,” he says, “Lori.”

And god, the way he says their names— with a relieved little sigh, it’s so obvious that he loves them, and Lena’s hit with a pang of— something. The fact that he’s there, he’s happy, and he loves them while one of his fathers is trying to kill her still is, just, so much. She loved and loved and loved Lex, and it’s like— the ghost of the life she wanted to have with him—the happy, crime-free version where he’s CEO and she’s the CTO and everything is fine—is standing there in the doorway.

Except it’s not a ghost. It’s a boy, her nephew, it’s the future, and it’s real.

He starts walking towards them, arms half-up for a hug, and Lori jolts backward— when Lena looks over, she’s pale, eyes wide, lower lip trembling and her arms thrown up defensively.
Conner stops at Lori’s reaction, tilting his head to the side in concern.

“Lori?”

And with that, Lori breaks from her trance to make a run for the veranda door and flee.

“Lori, wait—” Lena steps after her inefectually, hand outstretched as the wind billows in from the open door.

“Oh, no,” Conner mumbles, taking a step forward as well, but Kara stands in his way, a wary scowl on her face.

(And that— that’s another kind of conflict for Lena, because she can understand Kara’s defensiveness over Lori, hell, even she’s feeling wary that her daughter ran away at the sight of Conner, but there’s also this need for her to protect him and it’s just a mess.)

“What’s going on?” Kara asks in a hard tone. Conner holds his hands up in surrender, taking a step back with a resigned sigh.

“I’m not here to hurt her,” he promises, as if he’s used to being in that position. “I thought this might happen.”

Kara opens her mouth to question him further when Conner, the infant, starts whimpering from his basket on the couch and everyone stops. Lena rushes to cradle him in her arms, murmuring to him softly as she shoots worried glances at Kara and... grown up Conner.

“Is that—” Conner starts, looking stricken. “Who is that?”

Lena looks to Kara, unsure what to say, only to find Kara looking back at her with the same uncertainty to the wry twist of her mouth.

So she just bundles the baby a little closer to her chest and walks towards Conner. He inhales sharply and takes a step back, and she figures that somehow, he already knows exactly who it is.

“How?” he asks, looking between Lena and Kara.

Kara takes in a breath. “Lori, she...”

She trails off, pushing up her glasses, trying to find the words, but it’s enough of an explanation.

Conner runs a hand through his hair, laughing a little breathlessly.

“Of course she did,” he says. “It wouldn’t even matter anyway, but of course she did.”

He says it a little shakily, like he’s trying not to cry, and Lena realizes that he would never have seen himself as an infant because he was born already five years old. He doesn’t have any baby pictures, no stories, and then she realizes why Lori was so intent on getting her phone fixed.

“Okay, so,” Conner sighs, putting his hands on his hips. “It’s a long story. You guys might want to sit down for this.”

He gestures at the couches and Kara looks to Lena.

“I’m going to go look for Lori. You two talk.”

Conner shakes his head.
“She won’t want to be found. Not for a while.”

“Why?” Kara frowns.

“It’s…” Conner sighs. “It’s a long story. I’ll explain, I promise.”

Kara looks to Lena again; Lena nods, and they slowly make their way over.

Conner watches Lena sit down with his infant self with rapt attention, and Lena wonders if she should ask if he wants to hold… himself, basically. If that’s even spatiotemporally safe.

“Alright, so,” Conner starts, rubbing his hands together nervously as he leans forward on his elbows. “I’m not sure where to start…”

“Why did—” Kara tilts her head with a frown. “Why did she run away from you just now? I thought she was expecting someone to come get her?”

He sighs. “My best guess is that she’s feeling guilty.” He looks at the two of them remorsefully. “The last time we saw each other wasn’t very pleasant for either of us. Not her fault at all, of course, but, stubborn self-flagellation seems to be a family specialty,” he adds with a small smile and Lena smiles despite herself.

Kara lets out a small laugh before rubbing her hand over her mouth for a moment.

“Why would she think it’s her fault?”

Conner grimaces.

“Aunt Kara,” he begins tentatively. “Do you remember Red Kryptonite?”
all we need is hope, and for that we have each other

Chapter Notes

It's slowly coming to a close. Thank you all so much for staying on this ride with me.

The song for this chapter is "Rise Up" by Andra Day.

“*She was on Red Kryptonite for about two days before we realized what was happening,*” Conner says. “*And then she ran after we purged it from her system, and we... well, we weren’t sure what to do. We lost track of her. It took us a while to realize that she’d been taken.*”

“How long?”

“*About four days,*” he says. “*She can be... Hard to find when she doesn’t want to be seen.*”

Kara finds her sitting on the hilltop that they talked on after the first time flying together, watching the sunset. She watches from a distance for a moment, noting the way Lori’s hugging her knees and sniffing and all the ways that it’s breaking her heart.

“*Hello, Little One,*” she says amicably, landing a fair distance away on the sandy gravel. Lori flinches and curls in on herself, turning her head away from Kara. Kara sighs and walks towards her slowly, giving her every opportunity to up and fly away if she’s not ready yet.

She doesn’t, for now. Kara carefully sits down on the sand next to her, slinging one arm over her knee and looking out at the city.

“I love watching the sun set over the city,” she begins softly. “*It reminds me of mornings in Argos City. Sometimes I’d stay up all night reading and then fall asleep while watching the sun rise.*” She chuckles softly. “*Your grandmother would get so cross with me whenever I did that, especially on school nights.*”

“Please don’t,” Lori whispers, fingers digging into her knees.

Kara looks to her, sad. “Don’t what, is’kah?”

“Don’t pretend like nothing’s wrong,” Lori says, louder this time, with a crack in her voice. “*Conner told you, didn’t he*?”

Kara idly runs a hand over the sand. “It wasn’t your fault.”

Lori shakes her head, her cheek knocking against her knee as she still refuses to look at Kara.

“It was.”

“You can’t help what happens with Red Kryptonite, Lori. You can’t hold yourself accountable—”

“But I was, Yeyu, you don’t understand!” Lori scrambles onto her feet and angrily paces away, back still turned to Kara, hands clawing into her hair. “God, I should have known he wouldn’t tell you everything,” she hisses with a harsh laugh. “He didn’t tell you that I made it, did he?” She crosses
her arms. “I brought it all on myself. It was all my fault.”

Kara stands as well, feeling helpless as she watches her daughter start to tremble.

“You couldn’t have known what would happen.”

“I should have been more careful!” She shouts hoarsely. “I should have used protective gear, I should have followed protocol, but no, I was so full of myself, so sure that I’d finally come up with a safe form of Kryptonite, I just went for it—” She shakes her head, her frame shuddering with held in sobs. “It was all my fault.”

“Is’kah,” Kara says, taking a step closer. “You never meant for it to happen.”

“But it did, Yeyu, it doesn’t matter because it did happen!”

She turns to face Kara, then, her eyes red with tears, face crumpled in anguish— Kara’s never seen her like this before, not even when she had first seen Lori cry. She was sad, back then, and hurt, but not angry, not in agony. She wasn’t so mired in despair as she is now.

“And then I ran,” Lori continues, “I ran away because I couldn’t face what happened, I was so happy when I found you two in the past, when I hadn’t done all those things, I was so relieved to get away.” Her shoulders slump in defeat. “I couldn’t face up to the fact that I’m a horrible stain on this universe—”

“You are not,” Kara insists, stepping closer. “Lori, you made mistakes—”

“You don’t understand,” Lori says again, shaking her head. “The things I said to Conner— and I tried to kill Jon. I almost did,” she says in shaky breaths, glasses smearing with tears now. “And I ran because— because it wasn’t just the Red K,” she says in a cracked whisper. “All of it— it came from things that I never wanted to admit that I felt.” Her hands fall to her sides, her head tilting to the side as she looks at her feets, as if she doesn’t have the energy to hold herself up anymore. “I ran because I couldn’t deal with the fact that under all the pretenses, the truth is that I’m just— arrogant and evil.”

She looks as if she might collapse to her knees. The red sunlight casts long shadows across her face, glinting in the auburn highlights of her dark hair.

(For a moment, Kara mourns that they aren’t mother and daughter under the skies of Argos City. There they are, the last daughters of Krypton, and Lori has never seen her homeland.)

She steps forward to gather Lori into her arms. Lori makes no effort to resist, simply falling into Kara’s arms like a ragdoll, her face slumping into the crook of her neck as Kara smooths a hand over her back.

“The Red Kryptonite might have… dug up parts of you that you didn’t want to admit to, is’kah, but that doesn’t encompass the truth of who you are.”

“You don’t understand what it was like,” Lori keens, muffled by Kara’s cape. “I tried to kill Jon. I wanted to kill him. I remember what happened and I—”

She’s cut off by her own broken breath, and Kara presses a kiss to her hair, pulling back to cup her cheeks and coax her into finally looking her in the eyes.

“I do understand what it’s like,” Kara says sadly. “Did I never tell you that I had a run in with Red K?”
Lori looks up at her with wide eyes. “You…?”

Kara nods. “Last year. Maxwell Lord tried to make synthetic Kryptonite and ended up infecting me instead.”

Lori looks down, and Kara watches her process the information.

“It must not have been—” she shakes her head. “You wouldn’t have done anything like I did.”

Kara lets her hands drop to Lori’s shoulders, looking her over sadly.

“I broke Alex’s arm,” she says with a wry twist of her mouth, “and I nearly killed Cat Grant.”

Lori’s eyes snap up again, and Kara can’t help a sudden self-deprecating laugh.

“Yeah,” she says, sighing as she squeezes Lori’s shoulders. “It was bad. I struggled for a really long time after that, too. I was afraid of who I really was.”

Lori sniffles. “How… How did you…?”

Kara runs her fingers through Lori’s hair with a small smile. “It took me a while, but, eventually, I forgave myself for being angry. Because I had every right to be, but more than that, because, that anger isn’t everything that I am.” She grins ruefully as she lets her hand fall to Lori’s shoulder again. “Red K doesn’t show us our true selves, Lori. It shows the angry, resentful parts of us. But we—all people have many parts to them. Who we truly are is who we choose to be, after coming to terms with it all.”

Lori looks to her with fragile blue eyes and Kara wonders if she looked like this to Alex, to Astra, to her mother, in the days when she was unsure of herself.

“There’s something that Astra told me, when I was young,” Kara says. “Our lives change beyond our control, but we always decide who we are. The true measure of fate lies in the caliber of our hearts and the choices that we make.” She smiles. “Pain is hard. Anger is hard, and sometimes it feels like it can change you beyond hope. But you have to forgive yourself for that. Because it’s never too late to choose to be better, Lori. Whether that means being kinder, or braver, in the end, it’s up to you to decide who you are proud to be, and to strive to be.”

Lori’s tears have started up again now, dropping thick against her glasses and falling down her freckled cheeks. Kara pulls her into her arms again, holding her firmly when Lori bunches her fists into her cape.

“And know, is’kah, that whatever you choose,” she murmurs into dark hair, “I will always love you.”

Lena learns that Conner, like Lori, is frighteningly easy to get along with. She watches, fascinated as he sets up the portal frame in the middle of the sitting room, muttering to himself and hardly fumbling even one bit with technology more advanced than Lena’s imagined so far—he answers all her questions easily, charmingly.

(Lena sees a little bit of Lex in his charm. It’s strange, she thinks, to come across that again and to have it be a good thing.)

“Do you know why she was making a diluted form of kryptonite in the first place?”
Conner looks up from his work of setting up the time portal, laughing when he registers her question.

“So, a few months ago, she was out for lunch with a few classmates,” he begins with a smile. “And apparently, someone put a hit on her for being the next in line for L-Corp. The way she tells it, she just hears this— clink— and suddenly a bullet bounces off her chest and right into her pasta.”

“Oh no,” Lena laughs despite her concern. “What happened?”

“She panicked,” he snorts. “Instead of pocketing the bullet and excusing herself, she got so worried her classmates were going to notice, she just—” he stops to stifle his laugh. “She ate the bullet.”

“You’re kidding.”

He shakes his head. “I wish. She just, put it in a forkful and munched down on it.” He shortles. “She’s been trying to make a non-harmful form of kryptonite ever since then. Something that will slow our regenerative abilities down just enough to survive normally lethal injuries, while making it still convincing when we’re targeted in a public place.”

Lena laughs into her hands. “I guess that’s one way to solve a problem.”

“That’s Lori,” Conner says softly. “She’ll come up with the worst or best plans for everything.”

They lapse into silence once more, the device humming lightly as Conner tests the circuits— Lena catches him casting sidelong looks at his infant self’s cradle with a pensive look that borders on frustration.

“It must be strange to see your younger self.”

He jumps a little, before coughing and getting back to the portal.

“No, I just—” he sighs. “Lori’s told you about how I was born, right?” he pauses to see Lena nod. “I was never… I’ve never been an infant.” He laughs a little. “Strange is a bit of an understatement, I guess.”

He gives her this lopsided smile that’s warm with just a bit of an edge, and she can’t help but think that he reminds her of herself; shrugging off sadness with a bit of self-deprecation, a bit of sarcasm.

“Lori was really insistent on getting you out,” Lena says softly.

Conner scoffs. “Of course she was. She’s always going on crusades that are more of a mess than they’re worth.” He sighs. “I hope she wasn’t too much trouble.”

“Oh, she caused plenty of trouble,” Lena laughs, “but, we loved having her.” She wrings her hands and smiles at him. “I’m a little sad to see her go.”

He smiles at her warmly. “You’ll see her soon.” He wires in one of the small panels. “Before you know it, five years will pass and she’ll pop into your lives to get into all kinds of trouble.”

They share a wry look, laughing. He shakes his head.

“It’s kind of funny, you know, she’s always been the most protective out of the three of us even though she’s the youngest,” he says pensively. “She’s always diving headfirst into danger to defend someone. It’s kind of stressful.”

Lena sighs. “I can imagine. I’m not looking forward to hearing that she’s gone off to duel someone for her friend.”
“Oh god, that,” Conner snorts. “I shouldn’t be laughing. That wasn’t funny. She stole a ship from the DEO and nearly started a war with the Tamaraneans. But, that’s just the kind of stuff she does, you know?” He trails off a chagrined laugh. “She’s been a hero to the core, ever since she came out of her pod.”

Lena smiles at him, her heart full.

“I’m glad,” she starts softly, “that you have each other.”

He looks up at her, confused.

“She’s said a fair bit about you,” she continues. “You… believe in each other so much. It’s just wonderful to see.”

He frowns for a moment before smiling a bit lopsidedly. “I… guess so. Thank you.”

There’s a soft sound outside, and both of them turn to see Kara gently ushering Lori in through the veranda door. Conner stands to his full height, watching silently as Lori steps towards him slowly with her eyes downcast.

He seems to struggle to find what to say for a few moments, before laughing and running a hand through his hair.

“You know, the whole point of them sending me back was because I didn’t exist outside yet and didn’t pose the risk of causing a contact paradox, but you just had to go and screw that over, huh?”

“Shut up,” Lori whines petulantly, scowling up at him before hugging him fiercely. Conner stumbles a bit before he puts his arms around Lori’s shoulders, sighing.

“I’m sorry,” Lori says, muffled in his shirt. “I’m so sorry for everything.”

“You should be,” Conner laughs with no bite in his tone. “You gave us all a heart attack by running away.”

Lori sniffs and pulls away, wiping her eyes.

“I’m just gonna say goodbye to him,” she murmurs, padding over to the infant. Lena watches as she picks the boy up and cradles him close to her chest, murmuring softly.

“Hey, buddy, I gotta go now,” she says, rocking him gently. “But you’re gonna see me again soon, okay? And, it’s gonna be really hard for a few years, I know— but Lois is gonna love you, and so is Jon, and my moms, and—Clark’s gonna be a dick but he’ll come around eventually,” she adds with a laugh. “And it’ll feel hopeless, but — but just hang on. It will get better. You will be loved, always. Remember that, okay?”

She murmurs a few more soft words that Lena doesn’t catch, and Conner discreetly turns away to sniffle quietly and pretend that he’s fiddling with the portal more. Lena feels her chest warm as she looks at them, and catches Kara’s eye— they smile at each other, and Lena knows that Kara sees the same thing in them as she does. A mirror image of what Kara and Clark could have been, what Lena and Lex should have been— the what ifs and maybes of old mistakes and lost family and distant daydreams.

But they’re not just mirages of ideal futures long past. They’re real, they’re here, they are their own people with their own stories and their own adventures to weather together, and it fills Lena with hope. Universe willing, they won’t fail each other the way Lex has, the way Clark has. Lena won’t
fail them the way Lillian has, Lena will be allowed to watch them grow together. The world rolls on, better, brighter, made by their own hands.

Lori plants a small kiss to the top of baby Conner’s head and puts him back down, heading back over to them. Conner looks up at her with a small smirk.

“Done with your soliloquy?”

She punches him on the shoulder. “Shut up,” she says with a half-scowl, half-laugh. She sores as she turns to Lena and Kara, her bottom lip starting to tremble again.

Lena steps forward, first. “You’ll stay safe, right?”

Lori laughs. “I can try.”

Lena chuckles as she pats a hand over Lori’s hair, feeling tears burning in her throat as well, trying to swallow them back.

“You guys’ll be fine, right?”

Kara places a hand on her shoulder, smiling. “You tell us, is’kah. You’re the one going back to the future.”

Lori groans. “Please don’t make old movie references. We’re supposed to be having a moment,” she quips despite the slight waver in her voice. “I’m— this was—”

Lena saves her from her stumbling. “I know that it’ll never have happened once you go through that portal,” she says, somber, “but it means so much to me that I got to spend this time with you, Monkey. It’s been wonderful. You’ve been wonderful.”

She sniffs and tries to smile, gazing at this stranger turned family who’s shown her the kind of strength that she’s capable of, the kind of person she could be.

“You’ve shown us a future we could only ever hope for. You are everything that I could have ever asked for in a daughter and more.”

Lori crumples at that, pulling them both into a tight hug that nearly crushes them, but Lena throws herself into it anyway, trying to burn into her memory the feeling of Lori and Kara’s strong arms around her.

“I love you both so much,” Lori says fiercely. “You’ve been through so much, and I can’t—” she sniffs hard. “I couldn’t be prouder. Just hang in there, okay?” She pulls back and looks at both of them tearfully, her hair mussed and her expression drawn into a tight, barely restrained sob. “You still have so much to get through, but— you’re going to be okay, it’s all going to work out, okay? You’re going to figure it out. You’re going to make things better. I promise.”

Kara gives a bit of a wet laugh as she strokes Lori’s hair.

“We know, is’kah.” She smiles, full of love. “Have a safe journey home.”

Lori nods, hugging them both one last time.

“I’ll see you guys in five years, okay?”

Lena nods.
“I can’t wait.”

Lori pulls away and squeezes their hands, still crying softly as she steps towards Conner. He smiles tightly and puts a hand on her shoulder.

“Ready?”

“As I’ll ever be.”

The portal powers on with a flash, swirling with white and blue light. Lori and Conner stand in front of it, linking hands. Lori looks back at them, and Lena waves her on, trying to be brave. This isn’t the end. This is only the beginning.

“Go on now. I’ll see you at home.”

Lori nods, squeezing Conner’s hand as they step through. Lena watches them go, feeling the moment pass in slow motion as she thinks about everything that’s happened—all the healing the discovering, and a bolt of trepidation lances through her despite her assurances. She’ll have to do all of that, over again. This love that she has with Kara—

She looks to their hands, where they’ve linked together without even noticing, and when she looks up she sees Kara staring back at her with the same, almost desperate apprehension.

They’ll have to earn this love, this trust with each other all over again. This is their last chance to tell each other, after all that waiting, growing, longing, before it’s all reset—

“Lena,” Kara starts, “I lo—”
a perfectly normal night - reprise

Chapter Notes

And it all winds down. Thank you all so so much for staying with me on this journey; it's been a wild bunch of months.

The songs for the final chapter are "Beam Me Up", by P!nk, and "The Middle" as covered by Jillian Edwards.

Lena Luthor was having a perfectly normal night. A perfectly normal dinner at her perfectly normal penthouse before a perfectly normal glass of wine on her perfectly normal veranda.

Well, as normal as penthouse verandas go, Lena supposes. Normality is a bit of a rarity in her life, in between the corporation she runs, the maniacally criminal family she belonged to, and her subsequent affiliations with an alien superhero. Normality is something she has a rather complicated relationship with; most days, she abhors it. She’s got that Luthor ego, after all, and despite everything she does want for her life to be extraordinary rather than ordinary.

But sometimes, on nights like these, she’d just like a quiet moment to herself, where she doesn’t have to pretend that she’s anything other than a human woman having a glass of wine.

So, when she hears a pair of boots land softly beside her chaise, she’s not particularly pleased. (Not that she’s very surprised, either.)

“What can I do for you, Supergirl?” she says, not bothering to look away from the evening cityscape as she takes a sip of her wine.

“I…” The hero takes in a deep breath. “I’m not sure.”

Now there, there’s a surprise. Supergirl only ever comes to Lena Luthor with clear purpose, a new piece of information, a mission—she’d have no reason to visit, otherwise. This, this is more Kara Danvers—sweet, hesitant, adoring Kara, Kara who comes to her office with doughnuts and no other reason than that she wanted to see Lena. Kara who shows up with flowers just because they reminded her of Lena.

Kara, who has a boyfriend.

(Sometimes Lena idly wonders if Kara knows what she’s doing, how Lena feels, and is toying with her. She’s been hurt before, after all. It wouldn’t be such a surprise.)

“I suppose I just—” Supergirl sighs. “I just wanted to talk to you tonight, for some reason.”

The hero moves into her line of view and leans against the railing in front of her, head hung. Her pretty blonde hair falls around her face, dark and flaxen in the night light.

“Rough night?” Lena finds herself asking, as if this were really Kara Danvers in front of her. As if it’s just another normal night with a normal friend.
“That’s an understatement,” Supergirl laughs, tapping her boots idly. “Had a big fight with my— my partner, I guess, and then everything else went wrong.”

Lena takes another sip of her wine and tries to remember herself.

“Perhaps you should be having this conversation with someone closer to you,” she gently reminds Supergirl. “I’m afraid I’ll make poor company for a hero.”

She means it as a little hint. Go home, call her as Kara. You’re still wearing the uniform. Supergirl turns to frown at her, concern knitting her brow.

“I trust you,” she says, shaking her head. “You’re not like your family, Lena, no matter what they say.”

Any other kind of misinterpretation may have gone over well, perhaps, but oh, Lena’s feeling fragile and angry tonight and the thought of Supergirl standing there, lying to her face every moment while saying that she trusts her is just— too much.

“Somehow I doubt that,” she scoffs. “But thank you for the sentiment, I suppose.”

Supergirl pushes off the railing and takes a few steps towards her determined.

“I mean it, Lena. You’ve done more than enough to earn everyone’s trust.”

“Spare me,” Lena snaps, glowering. “I don’t need your pleasantries and I’m not in the mood for pretenses.”

“Lena—”

“Tell me, Kara, how many people are there in your life that you supposedly ‘trust’ who don’t know your true name?”

Kara stops short, eyes wide.

“I’m not—”

“Don’t you dare,” Lena hisses. “Don’t you dare lie to my face right now.”

Kara flinches at that, and a pang of regret is smothering in Lena’s chest. Because a part of her knows this is cruel— a rational kinder part of her knows, it was never Kara’s choice. She lies to protect her life, not out of mistrust, it’s nothing personal to Lena— Lena knows, Lena knows she’s being unfair, forcing Kara to reveal herself like this, blaming her for the deception.

In a parallel universe, there’s a place and time where this conversation goes well. Where they understand each other, where they are kind. But tonight, she’s a bit tipsy, she’s a bit sad, she’s a lot tired of people who claim to love her and then abandon her to the dark.

She doesn’t fight against the rusted gears in her mind that keep the kinder words from coming out.

“Just go, Supergirl.”

Kara shakes her head.

“It was never because I didn’t trust you, Lena.”

I know, Lena doesn’t say.
“I’m sure you had the best of intentions, Kara Danvers,” she scoffs instead. “But I’m rather tired of being toyed with.”

“I was never toying with you,” Kara protests, horrified, and Lena doesn’t know if she wants to laugh or throw up.

She sets aside her glass on the side table, and leans her elbow on the armrest, the picture of disaffected scorn.

“This was—” Kara clenches her teeth, angry now, and Lena almost smiles because this—this she’s used to. “It was never about you, Lena, I never told you because you didn’t have to know, it was dangerous for you to know!”

“So be it,” Lena snorts. “So why do you keep pretending I’m important to you?”

Unfair, cruel, she knows she shouldn’t say it and she feels that she absolutely should not have said that when Kara’s eyes mist up with hurt.

“You are important to me,” she says, in a much smaller voice, and somehow that breaks through Lena’s cruel stubbornness.

She’s always hated making girls cry.

Turning her head to the side, she pushes against the weight in her chest, the indignance and stupid pride and fear of conceding—she pushes until the words form in her mouth. It’s only a matter of spitting them out, now, and pray that she’s not too late.

“I’m sorry,” she mumbles like a petulant child. “That was unfair.”

There’s a pause, and Lena wonders if Kara’s already flown away before she hears a deep sigh.

“I’m sorry too.” She laughs listlessly. “I guess we’re both having kind of a rough night, hey?”

Lena smiles, grateful at the attempt at levity. She takes her glass again and swirls it lightly, looking down.

“If I’m being honest, I wanted to see you too, tonight. I don’t know why.” She looks up to see Kara smiling at her, so achingly fondly. And Lena does ache, so much, with some unknown feeling in her chest that this moment should be happening differently; with more warm tones, with less distance between them, less masks in the way.

Kara takes a few more tentative steps towards Lena, coming to stand in front of the chaise. She cants her head to the side, and Lena follows her gaze to her darkened study that’s just barely visible through the reflection in the glass wall that faces the city.

“You have a piano?” she asks. Lena nods.

“It came with the flat and it’s been gathering dust for a while.”

Kara looks back at her with a curious half-smile.

“Really? You don’t play?”

Lena shakes her head. “I used to take lessons but I hated them. I was never much of a musician.” She glances at Kara. “Did you play any instruments?”
Kara smiles at her hands sadly. “I did. Back… home.” (and something in Lena thrills at the sudden, casual reference to Kara’s home planet). “There was this thing called the—”

She cuts off suddenly, glancing towards the door. Lena follows her gaze and frowns before looking back at her.

“Kara?”

Kara blinks and shakes her head. “Sorry. Just got a sense of deja-vu.” She laughs softly. “I remember, once, Alex took me to a fancy fundraiser that one of her classmates was organizing. They had a live piano player.”

Lena laughs. “They usually do. They always play waltzes or some such, Mother always put me up to dancing with random important people until she realized that I was an irreparably bad dancer.”

“Well?” Kara raises her brows. “That’s hard to picture.”

“Believe me, I was the harbinger of bruised toes,” Lena snorts.

“Well,” Kara starts, offering Lena her hand. “My toes are made of steel. I could help you practice.”

Lena grins. “With no music?”

Kara shrugs. “We’ll make do.”

And Lena looks up at Kara, marveling in how her blue eyes seem to smoulder navy, just like the night sky. She’s looking at Lena with this hesitant smile, her hand hovering a little farther away out of courtesy, and maybe trepidation— it’s another one of those moments with Kara that Lena so treasures, where they fall into such an easy intimacy Lena has to remind herself that Kara is not in love with her.

There are cracks in it, now. There always have been, between the identities and the secrets and the fear of trusting one another— there’s a nervousness to Kara’s smile, a whispering anxiety in Lena’s chest. There’s work to do, there’s mountains to climb before it could be anywhere near normal or alright— they’re a Luthor and Super, after all.

But Lena looks at Kara, sees a vulnerable, faltering being who who is still trying, still managing to be unfailingly good in the face of pain. She sees the woman who, despite everything, despite the awful things they’ve been through, has been there for her unconditionally. She sees the person that she wants to share this journey with.

So Lena takes her hand and feels like she’s agreeing to a strange and wonderful adventure.

- “Monkey!”

Lori’s almost tackled backwards into the portal as soon as she steps out into the DEO lab, her mother’s arms squeezing hard around her.

“God, I was so worried,” Lena says, pulling back to cup Lori’s face and look her over. “Are you alright? Did you get hurt?”

Kara hugs her next, muttering in relieved Kryptonian under her breath. “Is’kah, I’m so glad you’re back.”
Lori shakes her head, sniffling again, grimacing. God, she’s missed them, she’s missed them so much— she remembers her mother’s terrified face as she went tearing off her sunbed and all of her guilt comes back in a rush.

“I’m fine, I just—” She gnaws on her bottom lip. “I’m sorry for running off.”

“It’s okay,” Lena says, holding her hands. “What matters is that you’re safe now.”

“Is—” Lori hesitates, squeezing her eyes shut. “Is Jon okay?”

She remembers him, bloodied and broken in her hands, holding on and sadly pleading for her to come to her senses—

Lena presses her lips into a chagrined line and Lori has the answer she needs.

“He’s recovering well,” Kara says. “You might want to wait a while before visiting him.”

Lori feels a weight drop and crush her chest. Would she even have the courage to visit him? To face him after all the things she’s said and done? She doesn’t know if any of it is forgivable, but she nods gravely.

“And my professor?”

Conner sighs. “He’s quite… shaken after you left him hanging from the rafters by his coat,” he says tentatively. “You’ve been put on probation.”

“Great,” is Lori’s lackluster response. “I’m guessing I don’t have my RA position anymore?”

Conner grimaces apologetically. Kara squeezes her shoulder.

“At least they didn’t kick you out. Come on. We can fix this.”

Lori looks up at them, and really sees them now, different from their younger counterparts— she took them for granted, always, before this. She saw them, as graceful and kind and brave as they are, and she never really understood that they weren’t always like that— she never knew what it must have taken them to get to this point.

She remembers their younger selves, so sad, so lost, so insecure, so vulnerable— the mistakes they’ve made, and the stumbling steps she got to see them take towards each other, and for the first time, she truly sees her parents.

Lena stands just in front of Kara, elegant lines from her age creasing her face but with that same glint in her eyes that lets her look at the world with so much curiosity and at Lori with so much love. But now, there’s no fear in her eyes, no trembling anxiety at the thought of Lori, just an affection that is whole and grounded and unbridled.

Kara stands with one hand on Lena’s shoulder, always unconsciously reaching out for her as if they’re connected by a force even more profound than gravity— and yet, she’s still completely herself. Before, she struggled to feel at home in her own skin; now, there’s a quiet confidence in her eyes now, a steel forged only by being completely at peace with herself.

She sees them, intact, happy, sharing a journey that may not always be perfect; she sees how far they’ve come and she couldn’t be more proud to be their daughter. She couldn’t be more hopeful. Because her academic and social life may be in shambles right now— possibly irreparably, but somehow, she might be alright. Somehow, things might turn out okay. Her parents are proof of that.
“Monkey?” Lena asks, frowning. “Are you alright?”

Lori sniffs and shakes her head before smiling.

“Yeah. I’m just— it’s weird to see you guys at this age again so suddenly.”

Kara groans. “I’m sure you’ve got plenty of blackmail material.”

Lori grins. “Of course I did, who do you think I am?” she asks facetiously. “Your fashion was a disaster and it was super fun,” she says, waiting a beat before falling into a more tentative, genuine smile. “But…”

She holds her mother’s hands, smiling at her family. Her mother, her Yeyu, and her Conner— the people who will always have her back.

“It’s good to be home.”

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**Supergirl in Training, An Afterword: Why I Wrote This Story**

(alternatively: I can't believe I tricked you all into reading a Mary Sue OC kidfic)

It all started with me marathoning the TV show One Day At A Time (which is amazing, by the way) and wanting to fit a cameo of Elena into one of my stories; I thought that she and Lena would get along well. Then, as an image of a precocious teenage girl being absolutely hyped to meet Lena percolated in my head, somehow Lori was born. (For anyone wondering, Elena herself makes an appearance in my other series, Gold-Crested Ravens.)

I never intended for Supergirl in Training to become anything more than a fun thought exercise,, a self-indulgent OC kidfic au (with hints of a self-insert Mary Sue, if I’m being completely honest with you all). I didn’t even think it would get popular. But the more I wrote it and planned it and shared it with you, I realized: that self indulgence is exactly what made it so important to me.

The truth is Supergirl in Training is actually a really personal story. I would never admit that normally: somewhere along the way I’ve been taught that sharing too much of myself to the world (in self-inserts or rewritings of nonfictional events or what have you) was shameful. It was embarrassing! No one wants to hear about that, I told myself. No one cares, and seeking attention in that manner was the worst social faux-pas you could commit in a fandom community. So I learned to disguise it: writing my experiences but doing everything I could to distance the story from myself, making sure that I wasn’t putting out a thinly veiled attempt at attention or validation: tweaking details about original characters, changing the events that I’m writing about, etc.,. I could never, ever admit that anything I wrote came directly from personal experiences. I needed to write the norm, the accepted, the things that the community actually wanted.

This is why, for a long time, I was afraid to write any asian characters and am still deathly terrified of
creating any Korean protagonists. The accusation of “self-insert” seemed worse than death to me. A lot of that changed when I came to the Supergirl fandom. Of course, it could simply be that I had never had so much attention before, but the positive reactions to the stories I was writing told me that hey, maybe, putting myself out there isn’t so bad?

So here it is, Full Disclosure. The whole karamel mess came from my own experiences with abuse, and my struggle for recovery, my struggle to find who I was, before I was made into something someone else wanted. Lena’s initial fear of Lori came from my own insecurities about how deeply my parents had wounded me with simple mistakes and the fact that I, myself, have no business having such a fragile human heart in my hands. Kara’s trauma of losing Krypton is based on my own experiences of living a diasporic existence: the constant homesickness for a place that no longer exists. The Korrasami reference? It’s from how deeply the ending of LoK changed me, as a queer, asian person and writer, and the hopes I had for the future of representation.

The reason I’m telling you this is because Supergirl in Training is, in a way, an essay on representation and the self-indulgence of fanworks. It’s my ode to fanfiction and the wlw fandom; Lori and the events of her visit are a metaphor for fanfiction. It’s a little exaggerated, a little indulgent, a little too perfect, almost transparently designed to bring catharsis and comfort. It’s a little timeline that won’t have even happened in the end, the same way that fanfiction itself is made of stories that’ll never be part of the canon (unless you’re really lucky or a little psychic). In both cases, though, even if the characters (in Supergirl in Training, in fanfiction as a whole) won’t know or remember it, what matters is that it happened, it healed, it was important — and in some ways, its echoes do have the power to change the world.

That image of the self-indulgent, attention-seeking fandom writer that I so wanted to distance myself from is, in essence, why fanworks are so important. Fanfiction, the act of taking a shared story and inserting yourself into the narrative, is a claim to the world of your experiences, your life, your existence — and the dynamics of representation, in the end, boil down to existence. For the longest time, I couldn’t really explain—or even understand—the importance of representation other than that I really, I really wanted it. In a way, it seemed so silly: why should we care so much about seeing ourselves on TV? What difference does it really make beyond making us feel more important? Then I remember the first time I saw Lucy Liu in Charlie’s Angels. I was sitting on the worn rug in my Irvine, California home and I could feel the smile spread across my 6 year old face. I didn’t know that Asian girls could be on TV. I didn’t know that Asian girls could kick ass as much as white girls. I didn’t know that I was allowed to exist.

There’s a cognitive dissonance there that sounds almost ridiculous: how can someone feel like they don’t exist because they don’t see themselves on TV? You’re there. You exist. You can see yourself in the mirror, touch your finger to the glass and see the smudge your print makes. You eat, you sleep, you laugh, you live. But then, in a way, when you never see yourself in the stories being told, you don’t exist. It’s like the cultural equivalent of looking in that mirror and being unable to see your reflection, of being painfully aware of the gap between yourself and the silver aluminium on the other side of the glass. Stories are reflections of people, of what’s happening in the world. They always have been. So, when you are not part of the larger narrative, when it doesn’t even occur to you that you could be allowed to exist there, it feels like you’re on your own, it feels like you’re in a twilight zone of existence where you are the anomaly, where the only place you exist is in your own skin.

You are not allowed to be a protagonist. You are not allowed to be a hero. You are not allowed to fall in love in grandiose ways. There is no narrative for you. Others can insert themselves into the narratives easily. It’s so easy for them to pick a story and be there. It’s so comfortable for them, knowing that others experience life as they do, that their experiences can be extraordinary. They exist. You don’t. This is why stories and representation and fanworks are so important.
For the longest time, I didn't think there was any substance to my fanfiction. I could never inspire or contribute anything important to the world, all I had to offer were self-indulgent fantasies that I brought into the world in my spare time (because there was still a small comfort in making these fantasies real, to share them with others who don't exist, like me).

My revelation came in the final episode of Avatar: the Legend of Korra. I had actually been in the midst of writing a Korrasami story where I filled in the gaps of the show and tried to provide some sort of queer storyline that I didn't think would ever happen. I planned out the story, never once dreaming that it would ever happen in canon. My one driving force in writing fanfiction had always been a desire to see myself in the media I love, after all. But then it did happen, and the amazing part was that we made it happen. We the fans saw the connection, saw ourselves in Korra and Asami. We put ourselves out there, we connected to one another and formed a community, and the creators of the show saw that. They understood how important it had become to us. And they made it happen.

It still makes me tear up a little bit when I remember it: I took for granted that it wouldn't happen, I begged that Korra would end up single and at peace with herself rather than back in a hetero romance (because that's what we've been told to expect) -- but then the ending happened and I had never felt so heard in my life. I never felt so significant, so myself, so real while watching a TV show, not since the first time I saw Lucy Liu.

That's when I realized: it does matter. When I write my stories, my fantasies, my experiences and share them, I'm making a stake, a claim: I'm here. I exist. And so do you. We are here and we matter. You see yourselves in my stories because I put myself in them. Because I insisted on existing, I could touch you, too, and I could help you feel more like yourselves, like you're not alone. And then, when we all exist together, we are seen. We are heard. Our stories and our existences have the power to transform the world.

This is the importance of fanworks. We aren't just ridiculous minorities banding together on the internet to project our fantasies; we are valid people banding together on the internet to share our stories in a world that refuses to let us exist. I didn't think Supergirl in Training was important at all when I started writing it because it was a self-indulgent fantasy. Then, I realized that it's important because it's an indulgent self-fantasy, because it's one that's shared with all of you, one that claims our existence. And this doesn't just apply to art or writing; everything you do is an act of existence. Whether it's posting on your blogs or posting pictures of yourself or a myriad of other acts that claim space, every time you tell your story, every time you add your voice to the world, you are healing. You are reflecting. We see each other existing and know that we, too, exist. We see each other healing and we heal. We know that we're not alone.

So, the message of Supergirl in Training, what I wanted to tell all of you, is my sincere wish for you to live your life to the fullest. Write your stories. Post your selfies. Talk incessantly about your day. Be yourself. Do these things because you are beautiful and your existence itself is revolutionary. Your survival is an act of bravery. No matter what people say, no matter who mocks us, tries to deny us our existence, the fact is that we're here. We're here. We're not alone. And we matter.
Epilogue: This Is Your Story

[When my mother was a child, our planet, Krypton, was dying. She was sent to Earth to protect her cousin. But her pod got knocked off-course, and by the time she got here, her cousin had already grown up and become... Superman.]

“Are you still working on your speech?” Jon says through the comms. “It’s like, fifteen minutes before you have to go on stage.”

“I know that,” Lori hisses, wringing the notepad. It rips in her hands, and she huffs as she jumps to her feet to start pacing, gnawing insistently on her lip. “I just— I can’t figure out what to say.”

She takes a look at the stage; she’s hiding out behind it, surrounded by security vans, and the clamoring sounds of a crowded audience of journalists makes her uneasy. She can see the shadow of DEO staff prepping the stage, and all her frustration bubbles up. She stamps her foot with an angry grunt and Jon laughs.

“I get that you’re a billionaire and this is your mom’s venue, but take it easy. You’re gonna crack the pavement.”

She glares up at the roof of the nearby building that Jon’s perched on to supervise the event.

“Did you buzz in to make fun of me or help me?”

“Neither, really, the mocking thing just kinda happened.”

“I hate you.”

“Play nice, both of you,” Conner chimes in, with a bit of wind static. “You’re gonna be fine, Lori. They’re gonna love you.”

Her leg starts shaking.

“Will they?”

“Of course they will.” Jon scoffs. “You’ve got the fresh new uniform. You’ve got the fresh new face.”

Lori looks down at her suit— it’s largely reminiscent of Conner’s first Superboy suit, with a red and black jacket framing the symbol on her chest. She fiddles with her gloves.

“Listen, what could go wrong?” Jon says. “You’ve got the entire Superman Team on standby— even Natasha’s here. There could be a literal invasion and you wouldn’t notice.”

“What Jon’s trying to say is,” Conner cuts in with an exasperated tone, “that the weather’s nice and you’ve got backup. It’s going to go fine.”

“Too bad, though,” Jon says. “You’ll be the only one to debut without a plane accident. I was starting to think it was gonna be a tradition, too.”

Conner snorts. “Technically, mine was a helicopter accident.”
“Same difference.”

Lori laughs, then pales when the stage speakers click on.

“Good evening, National City.” Kara’s voice comes booming through the park. Lori can see her mother’s outline through the thin banner that’s strung up the back of the stage. “And thank you for coming.”

“Look sharp, Lor,” Jon says. “You’re almost up now.”

Lori can’t even think of a witty retort.

“I know that my announcement of changing my title to Superwoman last week left a lot of questions. After having Supergirl defend National City for so long, it’s a big change— but I think that I’ll be able to give you answers today. I’d like to introduce you to someone very special—”

A large boom goes off in the distance, and a few screams come from the crowd— Lori looks up, trying to find the source of the explosion.

“Conner, what the hell was that?”

“You’re fucking kidding me,” he hisses.

“What, Conner?”

“Plane just blew an engine, it’s spiralling over the city now,” he deadpans. “I can’t believe this.”

Lori quickly shoots up to the roof of the convention building, scowl-squinting at the sunset to get a better look at the plane.

Jon starts laughing raucously. “Holy shit,” he says, not sounding sorry at all, “I fucking jinxed it—”

“Language, children,” Kara buzzes in, sounding a little amused. “Valor, Superboy, would you please fly backup to Lori’s first rescue operation?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Conner says.

Lori gapes. “Me?”

“Yes, you,” Kara laughs. “There’s no point in denying tradition.”

“In position,” Jon says, now with the same wind static. “Waiting on you, Lori.”

Lori gulps, feeling paralyzed.

“Go, Lorelai.” Lena comes on the line. “This is your moment.”

“You’re ready, is’kah,” Kara adds. “No matter what happens, we’re proud of you.”

Lori takes in a deep breath and crouches for a moment, gathering her courage, before she shoots into the air.

[So, she hid her powers until an accident forced her to reveal herself. Ever since then, she and Superman have worked tirelessly to defend this planet.]

“About time!” Jon teases as Lori falls into formation between them.
“Be serious,” Conner admonishes as the two of them fall away. “Lori, grab it from the underside and aim for the river.”

“Roger,” Lori says, and feels a rush— this is really it. Her first operation. Her debut.

[They created a Legacy of what it means to be a Super; to defend the people of Earth, human or otherwise.]

She grabs the plane, and reels for a moment as it resists her more than she anticipated— her hands dig into the steel and she grits her teeth. Momentum, force, velocity— doing all these calculations in the moment is a lot harder than she thought—

“You got this!” Jon yells.

“Three hundred meters to impact,” Conner says. “You can do it!”

Lori shouts in effort, gripping the plane tighter.

[I’ve trained all my life to take up this legacy with pride.]

“It’s still going too fast!”

“No, she’s got it—"

Lori screams as the plane approaches the river, kicking her feet out against the surface of the water. She panics for a moment, bending the metal in her hands—

It’s only in the split second before she’s submerged that she knows she did it.

[To most people, I’m Lorelai L. Danvers, daughter of Lena Luthor and intern at L-Corp’s Jump City branch.]

She can hear her cousins whooping and laughing in her earpiece when she drags herself out of the water and onto the wing, gasping for breath.

“HQ,” she says, switching to the DEO channel as she pulls herself to her feet with a grin. “Requesting civilian evacuation at sector seven.”

God, that sounds so cool.

“Squad en route,” is J’onn’s reply. “Good job, agent.”

She only just resists throwing a triumphant fist pump— instead she makes her way over to the emergency exit and tugs the door open, stepping in.

“Is everybody alright?”

The passengers stare at her in wonder, whispering amongst themselves. Lori’s about to feel a little awkward in the gaping silence when a stewardess finally speaks up.

“No one’s injured,” she says, hesitantly.

Lori nods. “That’s good. People will be here to help you evacuate in a short moment. You’re all safe now.”

Another beat of silent staring, and then slowly, claps start throughout the cabin— soon, Lori’s getting
a standing ovation, and she feels her chest filling with pride.

[But in secret, I work with my family to protect my world from hostile alien life and anyone else that means to cause it harm.]

“Who are you?” the stewardess asks with an awed grin, half-shouting over the clamour.

[I am…] Lori grins and rests her hands on her hips. “Supergirl.”

Chapter End Notes

And that’s that. If I had my way and SiT was a movie/series, the end credits would roll with Imagine Dragon’s ‘On Top of the World’ set to a montage of Lori as Supergirl, training with the Teen Titans and Batkids and etc.

This was a long time coming; I was gunning to finish all the projects I started in 2017 before the new year started, but still hopefully I will have the ending of GCR to you soon.

In the meantime, have the fully formatted PDF of Supergirl in Training, featuring some amazing cover art by plasticpipes:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/15U941gxIjJEMV83h8yNVYPn9eB_22Xus/view?usp=sharing

it’s all shiny with translation footnotes and everything! it was an awful amount of work but it ended up being good practice for book-making/formatting in the future. I hope you enjoy!

End Notes

check me out on twitter @wtfoctagon!

and hey! want updates on my new projects? WIPs and behind the scenes stuff? check me out on my blog for more info:

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