

# Kara Returns, Part Four

By Shadar

(Caution: Images are **not** work safe!)

## Chapter 23

A brilliant shaft of morning sunlight woke Matt. Turning away from the window as he blinked away the dazzle, he stared back into darkly brooding bedroom; the wood walls accented with brightly colored Southwestern Indian rugs and rare Navajo totems. Kara claimed she'd collected these items more than twenty years ago. Creepily, she discovered that her old bedroom had been maintained by Bruce Wayne Sr as a memorial to a dead lover. Matt wasn't sure what was worse - Wayne keeping this shrine for a dead teenage girl, or the fact that such a young girl and that old fart had been lovers in the first place.

Rolling on his back, he stared up at the wood beamed ceiling and smiled. Who cared what she'd done with that geriatric billionaire. He'd been younger then anyway. As unbelievable as it seemed, he was the one who'd spent the last night dancing with and then making love to this fabulous woman from a distant star. The girl who'd enslaved his imagination during his teenage years, only to return as a grown woman.

When he was younger, he'd been realistic enough to know that never in a million years would he meet her in person. But like many a young teenage boy, he'd had many vivid dreams that featured Supergirl. She was his first sexual fantasy, and he'd measured all the girls he'd met since then by the gold standard of Kara Zor-El.

Then she'd been killed in that fight with the AntiMonitor, and his dreams died. Still, he remained fascinated by her life and her exploits, especially each year during the anniversary of her death when the networks showed various memorials and retrospectives. When he was sixteen, he'd joined in by collecting everything ever written or recorded about her.

Now that she was back, he wasn't sure he wanted to show her that collection. She'd think he was a fanatic. Which he was.

Looking around the room now, he marveled that the single, narrow beam of sunlight always shone on the head of the bed. Looking up to study the

array of windows overhead, he realized they'd been designed to always allow the morning sun in, no matter what the season. Obviously Wayne's doing. A perfect gift for a teenage girl who lived off sunshine.

Looking down again as he let his eyes adjust, he saw the torn sheets and the Indian rugs that were scattered haphazardly across the floor, most of them rumbled up and folded over each other. There was hole in the solid oak wall that she'd kicked during a moment of passion, and the bed was tilted to the side, its frame bent. The hardwood floor was further covered in deep grooves that she'd torn with her fingernails.

If anyone else saw this, they'd assume a desperate battle had been fought here. Which wasn't far from the truth. In reality, he had no idea why he was alive, let alone feeling as good as he did. Which added credence to that voice in the back of his head that kept telling him that this was some kind of dream. People didn't rise from the dead, Kryptonian or otherwise, and twenty-one year old sexual fantasies about Kryptonian girls didn't come true like this.

Yet none of his dreams had been a tenth as detailed as the memories that filled his mind this morning, nor as exotically sexy. His imagination had never dared go this far.

She'd indeed called herself Kara, and she flew naked in the sky, making love as they floated in and out of the fluffy clouds of a warm summer night. She proved to him that her superhuman abilities weren't limited to duking it out with supercriminals or protecting the planet from dangerous aliens. Everything Kara Zor-El did was super, most of all, her lovemaking.

Rolling over to hang his legs over the side of the broken bed, he knew he should be exhausted after the long night of constant lovemaking. But instead, he couldn't remember feeling better.

They'd started by having dinner with Bruce Wayne Jr and his girlfriend, Linda. A strange pair of ducks, what with that five-year mismatch in ages, and her being pre-med and he a business major who was about to inherit billions. Linda didn't look a gold-digger. In fact, if anything, Bruce Jr was the one who seemed to walk in her shadow. Like he'd said - odd ducks.

Their pleasant dinner had led to that salsa dance contest, only to have raven-haired Linda return as a blonde and calling herself Asha. Kara shocked him by saying she was her niece, which of course meant she was Kryptonian

too. Who her parents were, he had no idea. Some people named Kent. Probably a fake name, like Smith.

The night of dancing had ended when Kara flew the two of them back to this old mansion, and they giggled and laughed outrageously as they stumbled down a dark hallway, trying to undress each other. Then they'd made such wild love that this room had nearly been destroyed. Then, in the middle of the night, and after wrecking the room, she'd decided to carry him upward over sleeping Metropolis, and there she'd taught him what truly unfettered loving was, the two of them using a fluffy cloud as a bed while they made love until the wondrous glow of sunrise colored the cloudscape around them.

Matt picked up the clock that had been knocked from its table, its glass cracked but still running, only to find that a mere two hours had passed since sunrise. That made no sense given how rested he felt. Dropping to the floor, he ripped off a hundred pushups, his body feeling so weightless that he suspected he could have done a thousand. On his last rep, he pushed up so hard that he rotated straight up to stand on his feet.

He'd always been superbly fit, but this was exhilarating. He chalked it up to his euphoria from last night, along with the endorphins and adrenaline that must still in his bloodstream. All he knew for sure was that he'd never felt this alive, nor this tuned into every nuance of the very air around him.

Walking toward the doorway, he saw a man's pair of sweat pants and a t-shirt on the one dresser that hadn't been toppled during their athletics. He quickly dressed and began searching the huge mansion for the woman of his dreams.

He was soon lost in the immensity of the brooding house. Wayne Manor had been the home of the richest and most reclusive man on Earth. Yet it was an empty house now. No one had seen Bruce Wayne Sr for over two years. Dead or alive - no one knew. The only thing that was clear was that he wasn't living here anymore.

Matt ended his search in a basement that was no neat it suggested there must be levels below it. But he saw no doors. He was still searching when he suddenly remembered the windows in the bedroom that brought sunrays to the bed. Kryptonians loved the sun - in fact it was the yellow rays that gave them their power. He turned and raced up the steps toward the roof, knowing that's where he'd find the woman of his dreams.

True to form, he found Kara lying on her stomach on a red Navajo blanket, sunbathing on the roof. She was dressed only in an Indian bead necklace. Her blonde hair and tight, fit body and tanned skin looked right, not to mention her six foot height. Yet she looked much leaner this morning, with an amazing array of tight muscles shaping her back. He sighed and smiled as he studied perfection itself. She really looked like the Superman's cousin now.

He walked slowly across the hot tar of the roof to kneel on the blanket beside her. She smiled as she sensed his presence, but didn't open her eyes. "Mornin', cowboy. You walking straight?"

He said nothing as he gently straddled her narrow waist and began to massage the sun-warmed contours back. Her tanned skin was as silky soft as he remembered, but instead of her body yielding sensually beneath his hands as it had last night; her muscles were now hard-edged as pumped up as if she'd been working out. He thrilled to the warm steel curves of her incredible musculature, working his fingers along the edges of her spine, using all his strength, her soft skin yielding only the tiniest bit before his fingers were stopped by the steel beneath.

He finally leaned closer to whisper in her ear: "So, you truly are the Maid of Steel."

"No," she said dreamily, "that's my niece. I'm just Kara."

## **Chapter 24**

I'd lain in the sun half-awake while listening to Matt's footsteps as he walked around the house searching for me. The fact that he headed downward as opposed to upward said he wasn't thinking clearly. But then, he was a doctor, not a detective.

He finally headed my way, and the ragged skip of his heart told me the exact moment he emerged from the doorway to see me laying in the sun. His heart raced faster as he walked closer, the characteristic swish of blood moving lower across his body, then changing to a deeper, pressurized kind of tone as he became aroused. I smiled to myself, realizing I was probably the only woman in the universe who could hear a male erection.

He slowly knelt over me, his cool hands kneading my skin, his thumbs tracing down my spine, his touch respectful, almost religious. I smiled, glad

that he wasn't put off by my physique this morning. My muscle tone and build were both distinctly Kryptonian now, yet his fingers felt strong. My aura had obviously done its job and protected him, also invigorating him, giving him several times his normal strength. Strength that had manifested itself in his sexual fortitude.

I thought again of the name he'd called me, the Maid of Steel, an archaic name that I hadn't heard since I was seventeen. "Well, you're definitely a Man of Steel yourself this morning," I replied with a smile.

"Whatever you did to me, I've never felt this good," he replied, sounding a bit amazed.

"Feelings mutual. I've been seriously in need of being laid for a long time."

"Yet you're different this morning, Kara," he said as he put more strength into his fingers. "Last night, you were fit but soft, yielding and very slender. Today you feel like I had expected last night. Soft yet steely, with some serious muscle, if that makes sense, "

I just smiled as he continued to work my back.

"What I don't understand is how it's humanly possible to be so delicate last night, and so hard now that..." He paused as he realized in mid-sentence as he realized how stupid it sounded to apply the words 'humanly possible' to me.

Smiling, I lifted us both a few inches off the roof to rotate by body around and settle back on my back, reaching up to guide his fingers to my breasts. "Perhaps your strength will be better applied here. Not all of me is made of steel."

His white teeth and sparkling blue eyes beamed down at me as he caressed me so luxuriously, his thumbs circling my nipples excitingly, coaching them back to their full hardness. "Mmmmm... now that's nice," I murmured, closing my eyes as I let his expert hands work their magic. His stroking fingers were so perfectly attuned to turning me on.

"You've got to have the biggest nipples on the planet," he said with a sense of awe in his voice.

"Hardest for sure," I quipped, smiling brighter without opening my eyes. I reached up to grip his shoulders and pulled him closer, shifting his weight forward to my chest, my breasts flattening very slightly as my nipples bored

into his palms to prove how hard they were. Despite the pleasure of last night's delicate touches, I was filled with a stronger needfulness this morning. The kind a human man couldn't help with. The kind I'd always taken care of myself. But not now. Not in front of him.

Mostly I was just happy that I hadn't woken up looking like Matt. That thing about my taking on Lois' form for a few hours after we made love had freaked me out. Fortunately, my gender and sexuality are securely feminine, and my body shape as well - all the more reason to focus my lovemaking on men.

And despite Lois' request to warp Kal's mind out by approaching him as a super version of her, I wasn't going to play that game. Although the look in Kal's eyes as he discovered his 'wife' was nearly as strong as him would have been priceless.

"So," Matt offered, breaking my train of thought, "I guess we disproved a long-standing myth last night.

"Like what, pray tell?"

"Well, for starters, the inviolate Girl of Steel speculation."

I shrugged. "I was totally unfuckable when I was young. My sexual encounters back then, not that I had a lot of them, were a bit more... serial. But I've gained some unique abilities recently."

"I'd say. We must have made it twenty times last night." He sat down beside me. "The real question is why I'm even alive, let alone still horny?"

"A secret - supposed to be one anyway."

He laughed. "You don't have any secrets from me now, Miss Zor-El. For I know the truth about you - that you're really the most sexually passionate woman on Earth."

I smiled... it was nice to be appreciated again after all this time, and not just as a girl who could punch out the bad guys. "So let me guess. You feel energetic and refreshed this morning, and without a bruise on your body, despite our athleticism."

"And horny again. Don't forget horny."

"I have no intention of forgetting that," I smiled as I reached out to run my fingers down the front of his sweat pants, tracing the excitingly hard outline beneath. "But you might be wondering why."

"I figure its gotta be some mix of hormones plus adrenaline, maybe endorphins."

I shook my head. "You know that's medically impossible. Those are transitory effects."

"Then how about being out of my mind with enthusiasm? What with you being the most exotic lover on Earth. Probably in the universe."

"Actually, it's not that either," I laughed, "but I like the sound of it."

Matt just beamed down at me.

"But truth be told, there's this aura that surrounds me. All Krypts have it, I think. A bit of my vitality rubs off on you."

His right eyebrow lifted. "That explains my indefatigable stamina. And this extra strength too, I guess. I could do pushups this morning like I was weightless."

"And don't forget that steely erection of yours that just won't die," I giggled, reaching out to rest my hand in his lap, finding he was so hard again. "Thank Rao for that part!"

He placed his hand on mine, holding it there. "Now I know I'm in heaven - your body actually gives off radiation that makes me hard?"

"Just a gentle side-effect, love," I winked. In reality, it just increased a human's vitality and strength. Matt's enthusiasm had turned that vitality into improved sexual performance.

"They never warned me about these kind of side-effects in med school."

"Unfortunately, it doesn't last after we're apart. A week or so at most. When it does fade, your body will be exhausted, trying to catch up I guess." I didn't tell him that with frequent enough contact, like between Lois and Kal, the aura could confer permanent changes.

"Then we definitely have to keep in touch."

"That's the rub," I said softly, thinking as much about getting together with Jarod as anything else. "I'm not sure I can. There are some things going on with my niece. Also with this rogue Kryptonian that nearly did my cousin in. I'm about to get very busy."

Matt took the hint and shifted himself to the side to sit down beside me. "Then I better not get too addicted to you," he said a bit sourly.

I floated a few feet away to prop my feet against the far side of the rooftop opening, staring idly at the wrought iron railing, I felt a bit sad too. Matt was right in holding back, which was good, telling me he had a sense of balance in his life, but I didn't want to think about the next days. I'd love nothing more than to repeat last night each coming night for the next month.

"A penny for your thoughts?" he eventually asked. "You seem tense this morning."

I closed my eyes, wondering how much I should say. Matt seemed pretty stable. Maybe he could handle the truth. If not, he wasn't going to be much use to me. "Some serious shit is coming down on Earth, Matt. Fight for survival of the race and all that."

"But, you and your cousin and your niece can handle it, right? Plus you've got the Amazons to help."

"We're going to be facing Krypts from the dark side." Which was a literal description of anyone who worked for the man named for the black side of humanity. "So no, we can't just 'handle it'."

"Ouch..." he offered, his voice trailing off. Like most humans, he didn't have a clue how to respond to this challenge.

Lost in my increasingly worried thoughts, I stared off into space, my eyes unfocused, I suddenly heard Matt gasp. Refocusing my eyes, I saw a plume of smoke rising from the center of the yard below. A small tree was burning brightly.

"Your heat vision... I saw the beams," he said, clearly both impressed and a little worried. "You sometimes lose control?"

Damn it, I hadn't done that in a long time. "Didn't use to. But a lot of things are different now."

"But can you do what you used to do? Melt things and so forth."

I answered him by focusing my eyes on the wrought iron fence in front of me, and tuned my eyes into the high infrared. The steel immediately began to glow red hot, the iron bars melting and sagging a few seconds later.





"Jesus, that's fucking amazing," Matt gasped.

I quickly blinked my eyes closed, feeling embarrassed that I was showing off.

"No, keep going. That is so cool."

Amused by his fascination, I opened my eyes and stared back and forth between two of the bars, amusing myself the way I often did when I was alone. As Linda, I hadn't ever been demonstrative of my abilities, and my Supergirl role had been deadly serious. Kal had insisted that using Kryptonian powers for fun was wrong.

Definitely past tense. Everything was going to be different now.

Unafraid, Matt moved closer, reaching out to run his hand along my legs, his fingers tracing the harder curves of muscle that shaped my body this morning. "You're wickedly fit today."

"Muscles are what Krypts are good at."

"And here I thought your real talent was sex."

"Well, there is that too..." I smiled as I heard his heart beating ever faster. He was getting wickedly turned on from touching me.

He returned the favor by tracing his hand gently higher, tracing his fingers around my right nipple again. I shivered as tingles of pleasure traced across my shoulders and down my back. Thrilling to his touch, I arched my back slightly to press my breasts firmer into his hands, then closed my eyes as his delicate touch sent more waves of enticing warmth racing through me. Rao, I liked the way this man touched me.

On the other hand, I feared how hard I must feel to him now. I debated explaining that to him, even telling him about the shapechanging. But not about my dream - the one where I meet this Kryptonian man who is so strong that I feel helpless in his arms. In my dream, he takes me to new heights of ecstasy with his super strength and an erection that was definitely more than merely human. That dream was the reason I was more muscular and built this morning - the usual aftereffect of my supersex dream. That would definitely intimidate him.

They say that dreams always talk about things we can't have but which we desperately seek. I'm not sure I buy that - I don't think I ever want to feel helpless in a man's arms. But to be with a man who is my equal in strength... now that would be very interesting. Especially if he was as cute as Matt.

"Our problem now is that I'm unfuckable at the moment, Matt. My body goes through these changes. Sometimes like this, other times like last night."

"I thought we were fantastic together last night. But I kind of like the way you look this morning. Very super and very sexy."

"Last night was definitely incredible. The best sex ever. For me anyway."

"Yeah," he smiled. "Now I know what heaven is all about, and I even have an angel to guide me there."

"If I'm an angel, I haven't figured out what kind yet."

He looked at me funny. "Pray tell?"

"It means I could be an angel of mercy. Or the angel of death."

His heart froze for a brief moment before starting to beat faster. "Is that what your dreams are about?"

"They're... kind of private."

"Oh, so making love to you a dozen times doesn't entitle me to a private thought or two? Especially given this light and dark analogy."

I just looked at him, wondering what I should share. It would be interesting to have a friend who I didn't have to hide anything from. On the other hand, I couldn't afford for Kal or Asha to know about my time with Darkseid. Not yet, anyway. While something about Jarod encouraged me to be open with him, but I wasn't sure about Matt.

He reached out to gently stroke my nipple again, filling me with more warm tingles, his touch making me want to pick up where we left off last night. I closed my eyes instead and wondered how I should try to explain the changes in my body - he was a doctor, and he knew people's bodies didn't change like mine. Could he be a *Gentler*, what I called men who appealed to my softer side? He certainly had been last night.

I decided to take the risk and test him. If he showed fear or was intimidated, then I'd wait until I met Jarod to talk about myself. Turning, I looked directly into his eyes. "What do you think would happen to you, Matt, if I stared at you for a few seconds with my heat vision?"

"I'd be in deep shit?"

"You'd be a bleached skeleton crumpling to the floor in two seconds, your flesh completely vaporized. Give me a few seconds more, and your bleached bones would burn to ash. Barely a wisp of smoke would escape. It would be as if you never existed."

He swallowed hard, but his eyes didn't leave mine. "Have you ever killed anyone like that? Some kind of super-criminal?"

I quickly looked down, but said nothing.

"OK. Now I'm officially worried."

I reached out to take his hand and placed it back on my thigh. "And how much stronger do you think I am than you?"

"A hell of a lot."

"Guess."

"Hundreds of times? Maybe a thousand?"

"Not even close. To enter Kal's Fortress, I had to do a deep knee bend with ten million pounds held over my head. Strength is the real key to getting inside."

"I guess I could do that with three hundred pounds. I'm pretty strong." His eyes glanced down where his hand rested on my thigh as he did the math. His eyebrow raised as he looked back up at me. "That would make you, what, about 30,000 times stronger than I am?"

"More than that. Kal's key is heavy, but I could lift quite a bit more."

His hand gripped my thigh tighter, but he found no give in the hard muscles now. "Well, all I know is that you've got the cutest legs on the planet. Kind of neat that they're also so strong."

"Kal's stronger than me, and he's got great legs too."

"As a gay friend of mine keeps reminding me," Matt laughed. "He's got pictures of your cousin all over his room."

"And this doesn't scare you?"

"That my friend is in lust with Superman?"

"No, silly, the idea of having these legs wrapped around you when I'm this strong?"

"You were the most sensuous and feminine lover I've ever known, Kara. You were gentle and wild and feminine and athletic and most of all, loving. So no. You obviously know how to control your strength."

"And you weren't worried at any point?"

Matt shrugged. "Well, right before your first orgasm, maybe a little. Your body was almost as hard as it is now... especially when you were arching yourself backward and losing it and all that."

"That was a dangerous moment," I nodded. "If you hadn't have escaped over the side of the bed, it could have gone badly."

"Except I expected that to happen. I guess you could say I've imagined that moment a few thousand times since I was thirteen.

I wasn't sure what to say to that.

"But what I didn't expect was that you would be relaxed enough afterward that I could make love to you the way I did. You're wickedly tight, I'll give you that, but by God, you are the most incredible lover on the planet!"

"I... I can change myself, Matt. Make myself more relaxed at times." I'd actually reduced my strength tremendously when we made love.

"I figured something was going on when I was able to slip inside after that first bit of insanity passed."

"Nobody knows this, Matt, not even my cousin, but my shape changes sometimes. It didn't before I died, but it does now. And since I wanted you to make it with me so badly, my vaginal muscles weakened enough to allow it. At least that's my theory."

"A theory? You don't know?" Matt replied, looking puzzled.

"This is all new to me."

"But your body changes? In both shape and in strength?"

I nodded.

"I've never heard of such a thing."

"Neither had I until I woke up after being dead all those years. I'm told they blended some weird alien DNA into the mix to revive me. A shape-changer gene from some alien race. Apparently that's why I was able to regenerate half my organs in the first place."

"So that lower part of you... really was all... fried?"

I smiled. "Including the vagina you like so much."

"No shit?"

"That too. It was all very sanitary."

He looked at me weirdly. So much for my dry sense of humor. "There are weapons out there that are as lethal to me as one of those new military laser-augmented rifles are to you."

"But you can control this... this changeling thing?"

"Not consciously. It responds to my dreams and my wishes during emotional moments. But if I try to do it consciously, nothing happens."

"Is that why you're so lean and hard this morning? A dream?"

I hesitated for a moment, and then nodded.

"Let me guess. A dream that involved... another man." He swallowed hard. "A Kryptonian man?"

"Jesus, do you read minds too?"

"You made yourself softer, also more delicate and sensuous for me. I'd assume you'd be the opposite for a man who was stronger than you."

"Now I know why you're a doctor. You're a good diagnostician."

"So, how much can you change?"

"Imagine a hundred and ten pound cat with two-inch long claws. Or a lizard woman, scales and all."

Matt winced. "Do I have to?"

"I can also mimic people I've touched... intimately. But so far, only other women."

"That's a relief. Intimate, huh?"

I stared at him, listening to his heartbeat and his blood pressure changes as he talked. My hearing was the ultimate lie detector. "You're taking this amazingly well in stride, Matt."

"After working as an intern and then resident at Metropolis General, I've seen that humans are capable of far more than most people expect. They can be better than you imagine, but also uglier than you thought possible. I simply presume you Krypts have a far wider range. Although I hadn't quite expected this."

There was something in his voice that bothered me. He was acting too casual. Almost like I hadn't told him very much that surprised him. Had he seen so much as a doctor that nothing would throw him off-balance?

"One thing you don't know, Kara," he offered, "is that I took a couple of courses in hypnosis. It's kind of a hobby of mine. I wonder if I hypnotized you, then maybe I could find a way to help you control those shape changes."

I sat up and stared at him. "I have these blackouts sometimes too. Sometimes for days. Could you help me remember what happens during them?"

He shrugged. "No guarantee. I'm not even sure if it's possible to hypnotize a Kryptonian. But I have seen hypnosis help people recover repressed memories."

I kneeled in front of him to hold his hands. "It is possible. Some crooks did it to me back when I was sixteen. They used hypnosis to plant subconscious triggers... paranoia's that triggered when I saw certain things." I didn't want to even guess what Darkseid had done to me. But whatever it was, it probably had involved deep hypnosis.

"This isn't a science, Kara. But if it works, you need to be aware that I will be tapping into your subconscious. We might both find and see things that you might not wish to see."

I smiled. "Well, given we're just starting to have fun together, I figure you'll be gentle." I cringed inside as I said that. He was obviously infatuated with me, and my words were tantamount to trying to buy his loyalty with promises of sex.

"Well, I guess I can try a couple of things... one is to help you overcome the blind spot that keeps you from consciously changing shape. The other is to try and understand the blackouts."

"OK." It really wasn't, but I had to know.

"Then we need to go to the Psych clinic at General. They've got the equipment I need."

I flew him to the clinic, which was fortunately deserted given it was a Sunday morning, Matt tried several types of the hypnotic inducement equipment on me, but nothing seemed to work.

"I'm visually endowed, Matt, and very sensitive to colors. Those crooks used a strange rotating disk with vivid colors that disoriented me. Threw me completely off balance in fact."

"Worth a try..." He wheeled an experimental device into the room that he claimed used lasers to both dazzle and confuse the visual cortex, which led to establishing a visual conduit into the patient's core brain functions. Or so the inventor claimed - nobody here had tried it yet.

"Maybe guinea pig is one of my forms," I quipped.

He smiled grimly as he turned the machine on. "Don't worry about..."

I turned and looked into the rotating lasers, opening my eyes wide. Before I could take a single breath, it felt as if the machine was sucking me in, the floor falling out from under me as I fell headlong into the abyss of swirling color.

Just as it had so long ago.

Matt was impressed despite himself as he saw Kara staring fixedly into it. The EEG probes on her scalp showed only alpha waves. She was deeply asleep. He'd never seen anyone transition from wakefulness to pure alpha state that fast.

"Can you hear me, Kara," he asked, his voice projecting through the noise-canceling headphones she wore.

"Yes," she said leadenly.

"Now Kara," he said in the monotone voice he reserved for hypnosis. "I want you to tell me how you trigger a shapechange."

"I don't know," she replied just as leadenly.

"I want you to remember how you felt in your dream last night. I want you to tell me what you see."

She squirmed in her chair, and Matt was startled to see her nipples suddenly engorge, pressing so hard against her blouse that they threatened to tear through it. She licked her lips, and he detected a faint hint of musk in the air. Her face took on a slight sheen, and her hands moved inward along her thighs. He was startled to realize that she was sexually full aroused.

"So strong, too big," she gasped. "Hurting me, taking me. Monster. Have to stop... can't..." She was panting as her fingers gripped her skirt so hard that the fabric tore as she forced her legs together as if she was fighting someone off.



"Who is with you, Kara. Who's hurting you?"

"Darkseid. Evil seed. Don't want his child."

"He's raping you?"

"Yes," she cried out, her face a mask of fear now. "Have to escape. Stop him. To survive I have to become... stronger."

"But surely no one can overpower you."

"Yes. Danger. Darkseid. Out there."

"But he's not on Earth?"

"Coming. Soon." Matt saw her body flexing hard now, profoundly strong muscles shaping her arms and shoulders, deeply clefted and seemingly carved from steel. She was fighting herself in her dream, using all her strength.

"You need to escape him. You know how. I want you to remember that when you wake, Kara. So you can change whenever you wish."

"Yes. Whenever I wish," Kara whispered through clenched teeth, every muscle in her body fighting another.

"I want you to make him go away now, Kara. I want you to relax. There is no danger. He's gone."

She did as he commanded, sagging in her chair, her breathing slowing, her body softening.

"That's good, Kara. Now I want you to think back. Back to the last time you blacked out."

"I can't... it's just... black."

"No it isn't. That's just a curtain your mind has raised. You can open that curtain; you can see what's on the other side."

She started to twist in her chair again, her breathing coming faster again.

"I don't want to see..."

"Yes you do... just open your inner eye and look through the curtain. It's bright and it's..."

"No, I can't." She was gripping the chair so tightly now that the metal was bending. "That's the... other. Evil."

"Other what?"

The arms of the chair gave off a groan as she twisted them off the frame, her body again drenched in sweat, her heart racing even faster now as she gasped for air. "NO. I cannot. Death." He could smell the fear about her.

Matt paused, afraid to move further. If he didn't know better, he'd guess she'd been carefully conditioned, her personality split into two, one in the left side of her brain, the other in the right, the two halves convinced she would die if they touched each other. He'd read about this in a book that described KGB conditioning programs in the 70's. She was behaving in textbook fashion.

"Just open the curtain between yourselves a tiny bit. Just look with one eye. Just a peak." He had no idea what he was doing now, but she'd been adamant that she wanted to know about the blackouts.

"NO," she suddenly screamed, her shout so loud that the windows shattered and Matt dove to the floor, holding his hands over his ears.

When he regained his feet, he saw her face twisted into a mask of anger. "You can't make me look at that. I am not that. I am... I am not like that!" She suddenly collapsed back in the chair, her head rolling to the side, unconscious.

"What the hell..." Matt breathed, shocked by her scream and by his sudden loss of control over her dream-state. He was definitely fighting against some stronger and more deeply buried conditioning, and that conditioning seemed to have its own built-in safeguard if someone tried to do what he was doing. That safeguard was unconsciousness. In the case of the Soviets, it had been biting down on a cyanide-filled suicide tooth.

He was definitely facing militarized mind-conditioning, even worse than the Soviets used to perform. One side of the personality was soft, kind and loving with a strongly developed superego. The other was violent and completely lacking any sense of human morality or conscience. A pure manifestation of the id. Even worse, whoever had conditioned her, he might have used technology far more advanced than Terran. Terrifyingly, with her powers, Kara would be incredibly, unbelievably dangerous in her weaponized state.

Still, as dangerous as it was, he was fascinated about her shape changing and how it was triggered by survival necessity, not by simple desire. That would make her the ultimate weapon, her appearance changing as dramatically as her emotions and motivations. And to trigger that off the most primal and powerful of emotions - self-defense, tapping into the primitive emotions of fight or flight - the survival instinct itself. Self-preservation. Whoever had done this had truly understood the human psyche. Just as importantly, it was clear that Kryptonians were human at their very core. That alone was fascinating.

He knew now that if he was going to push that button, he had to make her believe she was in mortal danger. But how was he going to threaten an invulnerable being? He looked around the room, but the most lethal thing he saw was a metal baseball bat in the corner. By itself, that would do nothing, but she was still deeply hypnotized. If could overcome what appeared to be a defensive sleep command and get some control over her thoughts again, he could suggest that the bat was lethal. Perhaps telling her it was filled with Kryptonite or something.

It took Matt an hour using the visual cortex stimulator to burrow through the powerful defensive state her mind was in, but in the end, Kara was again talking to him in monotones from her dream state. He started to work on convincing her that she was simply under the influence of Kryptonite. She squirmed weakly in her chair, but now she seemed too weak to break even the ordinary restraints he'd put on her, truly believing she was under the influence of green-K.

He grabbed the baseball bat and stood over her now, and swung it as hard as he could at her head. It hit with a clang, the metal bat denting as her head jerked to the side. She cried out in pain. He swung it again and again, each blow knocking her head to the side.

"I'm going to kill you, Kara. I'm going to kill you if you don't stop me." He knew he was playing with fire now, but he was too fascinated to stop.

She started to cry as he kept pounding on her, the bat taking all the abuse, denting against her steel-hard skull. She sobbed as she struggled frantically against the restraints, but he kept hitting her, knocking her head backward each time, only to have her slump forward again.

He was on his twentieth swing when her body suddenly went rigid. He threw everything he had into the next swing, only to see a change in her

face. Startlingly, her cheekbones grew broader, her lips thicker and fuller, her eyes larger. He stared dumfounded as the roots of her hair grew darker, and her body softened, hard muscles turning into voluptuous curves. He stared in growing horror as her skin took on a greenish and then bluish cast and her face melted, only to immediately reform into a completely different looking person. Astoundingly, her hair turned raven black as he watched, the color spreading upward from the roots like magic. Her eyes snapped open, only to reveal that they'd faded to a lighter blue. She took a deep breath, and the restraints she hadn't been able to break with her hands now stretched and popping as she expanded her chest.

His first guess, albeit a huge leap, was that she was the woman from that news broadcast from Roswell. The Kryptonian who'd claimed to be Superman's wife. Lorna or something like that. The woman who'd killed a dozen people during a nuclear test. The woman who'd seduced Kal and made love to him with such intensity that he'd been left unconscious. The woman who'd killed the elderly in that nursing home, supposedly as an example of how she could solve Earth's problems. The woman who'd disappeared.

Were she and Kara two sides of the same person?

She flopped back on the bed, seemingly wide-awake now, and turned to look at him with her pale blue eyes.

"And who exactly are you?" she asked as she ran her fingers through her hair, her eyes following him as he walked behind her, her voice thick with a foreign accent.



Matt's gut twisted with fear as this strange woman stared at him with her glowing eyes. He had to assume that this was Kara's weaponized half, and that he was dealing with an extreme variant of schizophrenia that involved physical manifestations of different selves. "I'm your... doctor. Dr. Matt Domino."

"I need a doctor? That's ridiculous. I'm a goddess."

Matt knew he needed to build some kind of dependency into whatever relationship they formed. "I woke you. From the blackout." He was guessing that if Kara had been worried about blackouts, then this other side of her must be as well.

He woman rose to walk around the room, standing 6'2" in her bare feet, her figure voluptuous to the extreme, her breasts huge yet incredibly firm.

She examined his equipment for a long moment, and then suddenly spun around to glare at him. "You know about my blackouts. You know what causes them?"

"Yes. I mean, mostly. There are two parts of you. You change. Move between them. One self doesn't know the other."

"Change? I thought we were talking about my blackouts."

"A physical change. Your... personality changes with it, I think. Some kind of deep hypnotic compulsion. A kind of schizophrenia combined with shapechanging."

"Schizophrenic? You're saying I'm crazy?"

"No. I'm saying you have two distinct sides to you. Physically and emotionally."

"Darkseid's gift," she hissed under her breath, then straightened up to stare proudly back at him. "I am an Angel, but changing my form is ridiculous. Only a Kecklavian could do..." she paused as she remembered Darkseid had said he'd used some changeling DNA to fix her devastated body. Was this a side-effect? Had he deliberately cultivated the two halves of herself, keep each secret from the other? That would be like him. The bastard. Given that she'd refused to bear his child, he'd turned her into some kind of weapon.

Matt's thoughts raced as fast as Lora's. For all the wonder of thinking he'd met Kara after all these years, he realized that he'd only been seeing half of her. Darkseid, whoever he was, had twisted her. Used her. He remembered the horror in Roswell. How this woman had killed without emotion or remorse. He wondered if the term schizophrenic even applied in the case of a shapechanger with multiple forms? All he knew for sure was that neither side of this woman knew of the other side.

But what would happen if she understood her two halves? Would they merge, or would one become dominant, destroying the other? Or would she be tortured by her dual existence, always wondering what the other half was doing, always waking up from those long blackouts, feeling completely out of control of her life? And was the Kara side truly as compassionate and kind as he'd thought - a heroine? And was this side nothing more than a simple weapon? Could she be that badly polarized?

Too many questions for which he had no answers.

"You haven't told me your name," he finally asked daringly.

"Lora-El."

"Of the same family as Superman?"

"I'm his wife."

Matt's thoughts raced even faster - that was definitely the name from the newscasts. If the reports were accurate, this woman also thought of herself as a goddess. How did one treat a goddess? Like one of those spoiled Hollywood divas he decided.

He remained standing against the back wall of the clinic as she tore open the locked cabinets in the changing room until she found blouse that had been left by another patient. It was so small on her that she had to tie it over her breasts, leaving the lower half bare, the skirt she found so short it made her look like some kind of stripper. She returned to lean against the side of the doorway into the lab.

"I want to know all about the blackouts, Doc. I want you to make sure they don't happen anymore." She smiled, really more of a sneer. "And if they do, then you're the next person I'm going to kill."



"There is only one way," he said quickly, his thoughts and his heart racing. "I need to hypnotize you again, and to try and eliminate the compulsion to take on your other form. The blonde one."



"Blonde?" Lora asked with a pained look. "I'm a ditzy blonde sometimes?"

Matt turned on the visual cortex stimulator and preyed she'd look into it. "Trust me, I can fix this."

"If you don't... you will die. I promise you that."

Lora glanced into the machine as she sat down in front of it, opening her eyes wide as he fixed the EEG sensors over her head. He'd barely gotten her plugged in when she slumped back in the chair, the display showing nothing but alpha waves again. The pathway to her visual cortex was far more susceptible to this kind of stimulus than any human.

The first thing he did was told her to sleep, telling her not to wake up until he returned to say a specific word: Shazam.

The second thing he did was to go looking for Superman.

He knew when he was way over his head. He'd know how to handle the woman who claimed to be his wife.

What he didn't know was that the machine was on a timer. One hour. He'd just started his search, going to the old Daily Planet building, the place where Superman had been sighted so many times over the years, when back in the lab, the machine turned itself off.

Lora blinked and woke up, looking around as if she'd never the seen the place before. Her eyes landed on a poster on the wall. It described a tour of the Vatican in Rome.

She rose and flew toward the doors, blasting through them as if they were made of tissue paper.

## **Chapter 25**

Marita was certain she had things under control. She'd tracked several members of the Brotherhood to a warehouse on the south side of Paris, and all she had to do now was to break down the door, deflect the usual storm of bullets with her bracelets, and then knock them all out. She'd already made her call to Interpol and they were on their way to clean up the mess.

As always, she was forbidden to have face-to-face contact with Earth's law enforcement people. Humans were too easily seduced into worship when dealing with Amazons, and she didn't want to influence Earth's culture more than she had to. Superman and his daughter had already done enough

damage, not to mention Diana. Now was the time for subtlety. Besides, Interpol would be more than happy to take the credit for capturing several desperate criminals.

Despite the restrictions, she hadn't done badly since she came to Earth. She'd only been here for three months and she'd assisted in the arrest of a dozen violent criminals. Twenty years of training on Paradise Island made the difference, not to mention having Amazonian strength. She could block bullets with her bracelets, and even the ones that got through were barely enough to bruise her skin.

Her single contact with a human, Eric Sanders, had become a novelty all of his own, especially given that she'd grown up in a society of women. He called her Superwoman, given that she'd blown him away on their first date by hoisting his Toyota SUV over her head after it had gotten stuck in the bottom of a sandy creek. She'd carried it to solid ground, only to turn and face him as he scrambled after her, eyes wide. Standing while holding his Toyota with one hand, the resting other on her waist, her legs widely spread, she looked as sexy as Wonder Woman herself. As wild as that was, things got really exciting when she used her other hand to pull him close so she could whisper that she wanted to 'understand man sex'.

Startled and aroused and more than a bit intimidated by the three tons of steel over his head, not to mention the Amazonian strength that was supporting it, Eric tried to uphold the honor of all human men. He took her like a man possessed, only to find that she was the wettest and tightest woman he'd ever known. Even more importantly, she shocked both of them by coming hard just as he did, their orgasms joined into one cry of ecstasy. The difference in her ecstasy was that he exhausted himself, and she grew so strong that she tossed his SUV a hundred yards up into the rocks bordering the stream.

She was shocked by how good it felt to have a man inside her, finding to her surprise that she lost all control.

His satisfaction and pride at pleasing an Amazon this way was quickly tempered by the realization that he was going to have to explain to his insurance company how his SUV wound up so high up in the rocks.

Finding to their surprise that they really enjoyed being together, they continued to date, something all Amazons were forbidden to do. Sampling

the exotic pleasures of a man was one thing, but becoming emotionally bound was another.

Marita didn't care. She exhilarated in making love whenever Eric regained enough strength to pleasure her, and even learned to do it without damaging too much property, even though they found they had to focus her strength away from his body each time they made love. Lately, Marita had substituted a large boulder that was far heavier than his truck had been. For such was the Amazon way - combining a celebration of their physical strength with sex to perform the most astounding of athletic feats.

Marita felt happier than she could ever remember feeling. She both had a male lover and she was saving innocent lives, enjoying sexual relations with a man while fighting for justice and protection of the weak. This was the payoff for all her training. She prayed each day that she'd get to stay on Earth for a very long time.

Marita was too lost in those pleasant thoughts to notice how out-of-place she looked as she walked down the dirty Parisian streets at dawn, her dress cut scandalously short in the front, but long in the back, giving the impression that she was wearing a cape. It was the dress that had drawn the Arabic men close enough for her to confirm their identities.

The misty morning light cast fitful shadows on the dirty rock walls and rusted iron gates of this crime-filled 19th century industrial neighborhood - this was the dirty underside of Paris. A slum too violent for the police to enter most of the time.

Several men mistook her for a prostitute on her way home, and had demanded payment for passage down their streets. She'd broken one man's wrist and made sure the other one wasn't going to be interested in exercising his bruised balls for a while. They were idiots to try and mug an Amazon, especially while she was on the hunt.

She was now a mere fifty feet from the place the Brotherhood was holed up as she slowly worked her way along the rock wall of their driveway. She was barely on the property when she heard a loud whine coming from inside the building ahead. It rose higher and higher in frequency until it passed beyond the range of even her Amazon hearing, sounding like a gigantic version of a camera flash charging up. Puzzled, she continued forward, only to see a small window open when she was halfway down the driveway and a large tube projected from it.

Before she could move, a blinding flash lit the tube and a hot, sharp pain lanced through her body, starting at her navel and exploding from her back. She gasped in mortal pain as she bent over, her abdominal muscles spasming, her feet turning inward as her legs began to shake from the shock of the impact. She imagined this was how it felt to be stabbed with a knife!



Looking down at herself as the sharp pain gratefully turned to numbness, she was dumbfounded to see a brilliant glow across her lower abs, with a riot of sparks burning the front of her dress away. A horrifying spurt of blood suddenly shot several feet forward to splash across the wall beside her. She clamped her hand over her stomach, and was terrified to find a hole the size of her thumb. She quickly reached behind herself, only to find a similar

sized hole, her lifeblood spurting from it as well with each powerful heartbeat. Dumbfounded, she realized she'd been shot!

Far worse, a sudden calmness come over her as her instincts told her that her abdominal aorta had just been pierced - a mortal wound for human or Amazon. She was going to die - only seconds left!

Yet instead of collapsing from the horror of her pending death as a mortal would have, she proved she was descended from the gods by using her last moments well. She crouched down and poured her remaining strength into a final, powerful leap toward the building ahead, leaving left a bloody trail behind her. She knew that any number of Interpol agents would be slaughtered if they fell under the sights of that horrible weapon. She had to destroy it!

The earsplitting whine built again, and like before, it went supersonic, this time just as her leap carried her to the side of the building. Hot blood soaked the dirty bricks as she tore at them with her bare hands, only to see a small portal open directly in front of her face. Staring into it with dimming eyes, she saw the death dealing weapon, its barrel steaming from being supercooled. She never saw it fire the second time, for the slug hit her forehead, tearing its way through tough Amazon skin and bone as if it was tissue paper. Her head exploded in a spray of brain matter, mercifully and painlessly snuffing out her life.

Mercifully saving her as well from the warbling Bedouin cries of victory and joy that broke out from inside the building - the terrifying sound of 21st century terrorism. She was also saved from witnessing her ultimate degradation as the bearded men dragged her lifeless body inside the building and violated it, hurling the most ancient of male insults into her body with their sadistic rape, knowing her sisters would be demoralized when they found her body.

## **Chapter 26**

I woke up as always without a clue where I was. Or how I'd gotten here, wherever here was. If anything, my blackouts were getting worse. If not for the poster on the wall, I wouldn't have known where to go. But as always, Darkseid had left me his commands.

Not knowing about the blackouts was worrisome as hell. While I was passed out, anyone could have packed me in Kryptonite and I'd never wake up. I'd arrived in Rome without any clothing - whatever I'd been wearing had burned off during flight. I broke into a store and grabbed the first thing I could find that fit me - a very short, tight white skirt and a leather jacket and boots.

I walked back outside to scan the headlines, and could decipher just enough Italian so realize they were still yammering about my encounter with Kal down in New Mexico, and from what I could gather, he'd been working hard to play down the fact that I was his birth-wife. Fortunately, the paper said I'd disappeared from the scene as if by magic. Kal publically admitted he didn't know where I'd gone either, which frankly surprised me, giving off a sense of helplessness as he did. I obviously must have some forewarning of my unconsciousness, and had the instinct to go to ground before it hit me.

More of Darkseid's doing I'm sure. I just wish I could remember what he'd done to me or how it worked.

Smiling as I recalled the last thing I could remember, I squirmed comfortably as I felt the hot, hard fullness of Kal making wild love to me with the desperation of a man dying of thirst who'd suddenly found water. Feeling myself getting a wet just from the memory, I prayed that brief encounter with him had been enough to get me pregnant, but I knew the odds were against me. I can't control my ovulation or my period any more than a human can, and I was pretty sure our first meeting had come at a bad time. But he was legally my husband, even if he didn't believe it, so there would be other moments.

Turning my thoughts back to the business at hand as I strolled down the street, I knew I had to further weaken the confidence that Terran authorities placed in Superman. He'd been their protector for more than sixty years. He was the most trusted and admired man on Earth, as he had been for all of his adult life. I needed to break that confidence. I needed these humans to see him as being weak and unreliable - even more, ass\ incompetent. So far, based on the newspaper interview, he was helping me do just that.

I was still pondering why when I paused in front of a store window to watch a news report about a mysterious blast crater that had been discovered in Nevada. The blast had apparently happened a few months ago,

but the scientists who were studying it described it as nuclear based on the way the sand had melted to form a glass bowl a quarter mile wide, but there was no hint of radiation. Other scientists who were interviewed said it resembled the gigantic blast over Siberia nearly a hundred years before. That blast hadn't been accompanied by radiation either. They didn't know what it was, but I did - antimatter.

Given that Darkseid had collected every Amat weapon that had ever been made on Krypton, this explosion said another Angel was here! My heart raced as I found that both heartening and discouraging at the same time. I had my own ideas how to bring Earth into Darkseid's influence with carefully controlled casualties, and I had no idea what the other Angel's agenda was. Mass casualties were another technique, but that would never work with humans. But did the other Angel know that?

I shrugged. Whatever she was up to, it was time for me to send my next message. Searching my implanted memories for what I knew about Rome, I remembered that the secret headquarters of NATO's antiterrorism unit was here. They ran a bunch of agents who'd been reasonable successful at infiltrating various Arabic groups. Only a handful of ministers in the member countries knew the command center was in Rome, and none of them knew where. I struggled to recall an implanted mental image of stone steps leading up to a cathedral that was a cover for the entrance to their underground headquarters, but I had no idea where it was. A glance around told me that there were a LOT of stone steps and churches in Rome.

I took to the air, flying slowly enough to keep my clothes from fraying as I searched for some likely places. I found several that seemed to fit, although I couldn't image the ground below any of them - there was a lot of gold and lead and heavy metals in the rock and decorations in Rome.

That's when I saw a well-dressed man step out of limo to walk a few blocks to one of the locations. He sprinted up the steps and entered the church, disappearing around the back of the altar. He looked too business-like to be on his way to pray, so decided to start there. I landed a block away from the church to stroll after him.

The stone steps that led up to the cathedral were irregularly spaced, suggesting they'd been built during different time periods. Rome was a city that had built on top of itself for a hundred generations, leaving some of its ruins as monuments to older and more violent ages while building over others.

I was still wearing that leather jacket and tiny skirt as I pulled my long, raven hair over my face, disguising my eyes so I could pass for a local, despite my unusual height. An Italian cop who looked very alert was standing near the bottom of the steps. He looked way too professional to be guarding a church. I sauntered toward him, and just before I passed him, I pretended to catch a heel of my boot on the irregular stones. He reached out to steady me, and I spread my long fingers around his head and squeezed hard enough to catastrophically increase his cranial pressure, effectively blocking any sensation of pain. His body froze and then started to spasm as his eyes bulged from their sockets. I released him just before his skull collapsed, knowing he'd be unconscious for several hours. I didn't envy him the headache after.

"Arresto!" another man's commanding voice shouted in Italian. Turning, I saw a NATO military policeman step out of a doorway and point a very large rifle at me. I recognized a MAC 21 with its laser-assisted supersonic round - it was designed to combat armored infantry. I tried to look seductive as I leaned casually against the wall, my thoughts racing as I debated how to take him out non-lethally before he could send a warning. He made my mental debate a moot one by firing on me - he'd obviously watched what I'd done to his partner and had been briefed on my appearance from the Roswell incident..

His gun sizzled as they laser-beam lanced outward, a burning hot spot appearing on my chest. The rifle spat fire my way, the round cooking off with a loud bang a millisecond before it slammed home on the exact spot the laser had struck, high on my left breast. The shockingly powerful impact would have torn a mortal's body in half, and it succeeded in knocking me off balance. I quickly caught myself and straightened back up, moving so fast that I had time to turn back and watch the heavy brass casing from his gun still falling toward the ground. It hit to tinkle across the stone walkway.

The dull pain from the bullet's impact quickly faded into a radiating wave of warmth as I leaned my head back against the wall, hoping to disorient the shooter by slowly opening my jacket to show him the glowing impact site. He'd hit me high over my left breast. I hardly had to work to confuse him - he'd obviously seen first hand what these bullets could do to humans and couldn't figure out why I was still in one piece. I used his brief moment of confusion to work a brick loose from the wall, and lifted my left knee to keep my balance as I swung my right arm around to throw the brick at him.





The thousand-year-old brick arrived just before he could pull the trigger again, and both the ancient stone and his head both disappeared in an

explosion of grey and red matter, the rifle falling from his limp hands as his headless body slumped to the stone walkway and started to bleed out.

"Damn it anyway," I cursed under my breath. I hadn't wanted to kill any guards going in, knowing their survival would confuse Kal once again, especially considering what I intended to do inside. But the message I was going to leave wasn't for him this time - it was for the governments who depended on him to protect them from supercriminals and aliens. Governments that would start to panic once I proved I could attack their most secure installations whenever I wanted.

I peeled the cooling metal from my breast, studying it long enough to discover that the bullet had been made of DLC, an artificial diamond-like carbon, with a depleted uranium core for mass and Teflon coating to help it penetrate. The laser beam had provided a near-vacuum pathway for it to follow without losing speed. The concept was surprisingly advanced, and similar to one of Darkseid's weapons, except that his weapons sent a pellet of anti-matter down the laser-evacuated path. Still, this bullet had actually hurt when it hit, partially because my breasts are very sensitive, but mostly because it had incredible hitting power.

A flurry of movement and the sound of boots running at the top of the stairs told me I was going to have to weather some more hits - the guard's shot had mobilized their security forces. I pulled my holed leather jacket back on and zipped it up as I sighed, resigning myself to an ugly encounter. Hopefully my fight to penetrate their fortress, and their powerlessness to stop me, might terrify them even more.

Turning to trudge slowly up the steps, I was half blinded as a dozen lasers illuminated me, each one vaporizing a hole through my clothing. I clenched my teeth, knowing the heavy bullets were on their way.

It would be hard to explain to you how it feels to be shot with bullets like that, but perhaps the best analogy is to imagine riding a motorcycle naked through a marble-sized hailstorm. The stones stung like hell when they hit, especially sensitive places, but they still bounce off and didn't cause any injury. Other than leaving a glowing blob of metal on my skin wherever they hit a soft spot. They merely exploded into sparks when they hit bone or muscle. Unfortunately, given my large figure and the fact that I was walking up the stairs toward the shooters, a lot of them were hitting soft spots.

Oh... and each bullet transferred a thousand-foot pounds of force to my body, which made my breasts bounce around a lot. I had to use a lot of flight power to keep my footing, as each impact should have tossed me fifty feet backward. But then, I am Lora-El of Krypton - Superman's wife, and I don't die easily.

That proud thought was on my mind when I closed with the shooters at the top of the stairs, placing my hands on my hips as I puffed up my chest, my body nude now. I saw the discrete video cameras buried in the wall behind them and knew I was being watched. Good. Let them send their messages and video of this encounter to their other headquarters. Let it turn them white with fear.

The soldiers tried frantically to reload before I reached them, but they'd had their shot. Now it was my turn. Using the technique that Darkseid had told me would terrify humans, I used my long fingers and my height to grip the tops of their heads and lifted them off the ground to give their bodies a quick, twisting shake, severing their spinal cords. Then I squeezed hard enough to crush their skulls with a wet pop, red and grey matter oozing from eyes and ears. Anyone who watched would be horrified, yet I knew it was a painless death. If someone had to die for a cause, why should I cause them unnecessary pain?

Still, I refused to look into the dead men's faces as I put ten of them down this way, flinging their bodies down the stairs to pile up at the bottom. I hoped they were getting all this with their cameras and I wasn't just wasting lives.

As soon as I was the only living being at the top of the stairs, I turned my attention to the atrium in front of me. A dozen worshippers and the priest were staring white-faced at me. A quick scan behind them revealed an armored door behind the entrance to the confession booths.

Clever... the agents came here to confess their sins so they could commit more. They were fighting for what they felt was right... I don't begrudge such people their sacrifice. I actually admire them. Even if I did have to kill them to save Earth from its excesses - from its fatal pollution and overpopulation. These agents had signed up to support a higher cause - I just wished I could tell them their lives weren't being wasted.

That cause, of course, was getting Earth to sue to join Darkseid's Empire. Only then could he help them, my husband's wishes notwithstanding.

Once Kal-El focused on giving me children instead of playing god for these frailties, then he'd understand that he was meant for greater things. We had our own dying race to save, and once Earth belonged to Darkseid, I would be freed of his command, and our children would take us back to the stars where we belonged. I was surely capable of having and nursing dozen or more children, each of them endowed with Kal and my powers. Born with our supreme birthright.

A birthright that had produced the muscles I now used to punch my fist through the stone wall behind the confession booths, ripping the rock away with my fingers to reveal the thick steel door behind. A glance inside it showed that the security dogs had been fully latched. It would take an explosive big enough to bring down the entire cathedral to shatter it. Fortunately, the genes I was so eager to pass on to my children enabled me to solve this less explosively. I opened my eyes wide and focused my heat vision into the high infrared spectrum - the perfect frequency for melting steel.

While the beams were barely visible at this frequency, the blinding shower of sparks from the melting steel looked as if someone was attacking it with a cutting torch. I slowly traced my vision up and down the seam in the door, the steel bubbling and melting as it ran freely down to puddle at the floor. Once I'd burned my way through six inches of steel and filled the empty elevator shaft behind with sparks, I grabbed the glowing edges of the door and wrenched it outward, bending the cherry-red steel until I could slip through.

Falling freely for ten stories, I landed hard on the balls of my feet, and then jammed my outstretched fingers through the thinner steel of the elevator doors, then spread my arms to fold it up on either side of me like an accordion. The ping of bullets enveloped me again, these coming from lightweight weapons this time, the pinpricks barely uncomfortable. I tensed my body to make myself hard as a hundred pairs of eyes stared back at me in terror from an equal number of workstations as they bullets pinged off the steel doors and my naked body with mostly the same effect.

I was surprised to find that the NATO anti-terrorist command center was far larger than I'd expected. Not that it mattered - I had already decided I was going to handle this much like I had in New Mexico, despite my disgust at using my heat vision on humans. There were larger issues at stake than my own sensibilities. Darkseid had predicted that using the cruel

combination of raw strength and my unrestrained heat vision would demoralize the humans, leaving them feeling helpless and vulnerable. They lacked any form of defense against such raw power.

I focused on my training as I opened my eyes wide and released all of my power, my eyes tuned into the low ultraviolet this time. I must have looked like some kind of demon from hell itself as the invisible rays touched each person's body, explosively vaporizing their hair and flesh, their bone marrow expanding to crack open the bleached bones that fell into piles on the floor. I made a slow scan of the room, barely noticing the way their workstations evaporated with their bodies, and then stared for a long moment at the pile of bones and molten plastic and metal on the floor, causing the bones to burst into powder, vaporizing the plastic and melting the steel further. The bare stone walls were glowing white-hot by the time I finished turning the room into a giant crematorium.





I thanked Rao that I can't see very well while I'm using my heat vision. I quickly turned and leaped back up the long elevator shaft before I could see, emerging from the smoke that billowed from the entrance of the cathedral to land by a fountain in a square a few blocks away. Ignoring the people who were using the square, I leaned my head back under the fountain, cooling my eyes as I tried to wash away the images of death, knowing even as I did that this wasn't the last time I would have to do this. Darkseid had calculated a minimum of three encounters to convince the humans that I wasn't going to stop.

I prayed to Rao he was right as I combed my fingers through my wet hair.



Opening my hearing as I turned my thoughts outward, I heard the sound of many voices around me in the crowded square, many of them indigent and angry, others frightened. Sirens approached from the west as I heard

someone shouting that the cathedral down the street was on fire. I ignored them as I slowly washed the stink from my hair. Many of the people in the square were tourists, so they'd have cameras. I needed to make a splash on the news, just like I had in New Mexico.

The sky was Roman purple in color by the time I stood back up to wring my hair out. I was in no hurry to leave as there were still cameras snapping, but I did float a few feet into the air to complete my impression of power. I knew the video cameras would pick up my voice, so I tossed an impromptu statement their way - one that would bring even more pressure down on Kal-El. A statement that would be emphasized by my voluptuous nudity.

"Tell Superman, wherever he's hiding, that I'm not going to stop this destruction until he treats me with the respect any wife deserves. Despite his selfishness, he knows how to give me what I want - the continuance of our dying race. His loving attentions are all I desire to ensure your safety."

The twisted expressions on their faces convinced me I'd been understood, although I'm sure they were trying to resolve why I had to kill humans as part of foreplay. But they and their governments would know one thing - Superman was the only one who had the power to stop me.

Satisfied with my performance, I leaped from the ground so fast that a dozen pigeons were swept up into my wake, feathers flying. They would be the last casualties of this day.

## **Chapter 27**

"Where the hell is she?" Cassie demanded as she busted the lock Matt's apartment door and marched inside to jerk him out of his bed. He was too groggy to have a clue what was going on, given that he'd spent the entire night looking for Superman, only to have returned exhausted and empty-handed to his apartment at 5:00am.

"What... who the fuck?" he gasped as she grabbed the front of his shirt, catching some chest hair in her grip, and hoisted him painfully over her head, his feet dangling wildly. The fantastically strong blonde slammed him up against the bedroom wall and shook him until his eyes started to focus on hers. Then she dropped him.

Matt slumped to the floor, a blinding constellation of stars filling his vision as he stared cross-eyed up into the too blue eyes of the teenage girl

who stood with her hands on her waist in the middle of his bedroom. Now that he could see, he recognized her from the newscasts... she was the Amazon who'd gone vigilante. There were a dozen outstanding murder warrants out for her in half that many countries. All for killing men who deserved killing, but the law was blind that way. The buzz was that she did them in with her bare hands right in front of her billionaire clients.

Shit. First Kara turns out to be a schizophrenic shapechanging Krypt, and now this Amazon breaks in and wants to kick his butt! Was this his karma for daring to fulfill his lifelong fantasy?

He barely had the presence of mind as he woke up to notice that the Amazon had gorgeously lean legs before her eyes drew his gaze and held it - eyes that were as beautiful as Kara's.

Kryptonian eyes? Jesus, how many of them were there on Earth?





"Don't be an idiot, doctor. I'm looking for your blonde nookie mate."

"I have no idea." Matt said truthfully. The raven-haired version of Kara was sleeping in his lab, the visual cortex stimulator keeping her unconscious while he caught a few hours of sleep.

Cassie revealed the small piece of Diana's golden lasso she held in her hand. It could compel a man to tell the truth, and nothing but the truth.

Matt saw it and realized he was in trouble. If he told anyone what was really going on, Lora would kill him for sure. He closed his eyes and focused on Kara's face, hoping the Amazon didn't suspect Kara's dual identity and wouldn't ask questions in that area.

Cassie called Asha on her cellphone a half hour later. "He's completely convinced she's your aunt. But something more too."

"More?" Asha asked, sounding worried.

"He's got to be deluded, as he believes he's been having sex with her... the whole monty."

Asha laughed. "Obviously an impossibility if she's Kryptonian"

"Don't I know it," Cassie sighed.

"So, who or what is she?"

"Our good doctor claims she can change her appearance. Make herself stronger and weaker as she wishes. Guess that explains the sex."

"A shape changer? Jesus, I hope she's not a Kecklavian."

"A what?" Cassie asked.

"A race of changelings who can emulate the DNA of anyone. Including a Kryptonian. They can even synthesize improvements. Maxima is half Kecklavian, and she can kick Kal's ass when she powers up."

"A lovely thought. How do we know our Kara isn't really Maxima in disguise?"

"She wouldn't be intimate with a human," Asha said firmly. "Maxima's half Almeran as well, and they're totally paranoid about touching anyone with lesser genes than their own."

"So this is serious."

"Worse than I'd expected," Asha agreed.

"We've got to find her."

Asha was quiet for a long moment. "I know where she was this morning. Skyway bridge over Metropolis Bay."

"Doing what? Sightseeing?"

"Saving a few hundred lives. Seems she got there before me."

"Shit," Cassie cursed. "She even thinks she's Supergirl."

"There's only one of me," Asha growled. "But based on her behavior, she seems mellow enough. Saving lives and all, the disappearing so I got the credit."

"Or maybe she's just fucking with everyone's head until its time to strike. Good girl one moment, gad girl the next."

"What makes you think..."

"Put on the TV, Asha. Check the news from Rome."

Asha did, both of them watching the same newscast for a few minutes. The destruction and death was staggering and incredibly cruel. "Jesus. That's the Krypt who claims to be Kal's birth-wife?"

"Obviously. And we have to assume that she and Kara are one."

"Of course. I was an idiot for not seeing that. They showed up about the same time. Dumb."

"So, how we gonna stop her? She's already kicked Kal's ass once."

"He just got tangled up with that oversized dick of his," Cassie growled.

Asha wisely said nothing. Cassie was the expert on that subject.

"It's time to get Kal back into the game, Asha."

"He's not going to be happy to see you, Cassie."

"He'll be even less happy if this pretend Kara finds him again before we do. Who knows how she'll show up... his demanding wife or his sweet, blonde cousin."

"We're not really sure they're the same person, Cassie. Could be a coincidence. This is a big leap from Matt's statements, and he was under compulsion to say something. Men sometimes fantasize about things when you have the lasso on them."

"I've always trusted my instincts, Asha. This isn't the time to stop. This shapechanger is very bad news."

"OK. I'll find Kal and get him to the Fortress, Cassie. We'll meet you there so we can figure out our next move. And wear some clothes this time." Asha clicked off, leaving Cassie frowning.

What the hell did she think she was going to do to her dad, Cassie wondered? They were over.

Matt waited until the Amazon left and the numbing tingle of that accursed golden lasso faded, and then he hurried out the door and drove toward the Psych lab, nursing his bruised ribs and hands. He came across the first of the lab doors in the middle of the parking lot. Squinting toward the building, he saw that the walls were bowed outward, and the double doors were ripped off their hinges. He didn't have to go inside to know that Lora was gone.

He slumped in his seat and held his head. What kind of horror had he released on the world? In his well-meaning attempt to help Kara, he'd unleashed a monster.

Reaching for the key to start the car, he suddenly remembered something Kara had said. She'd wondered if she was an angel of mercy or an angel of death. Lora had referred to herself as Darkseid's angel, whoever he was. Definitely the deadly side, given her boss's ominous name - a name that sent a flurry of shivers down his back. Yet Kara had been kind and loving and emotionally open to him - almost to a fault. Had her personality been completely fractured by the shapechanging, with all her good traits going one way and her dark side the other? Did the two sides have some dim awareness of each other?

He felt a ray of hope at that last thought. If this was all true, there might be hope of stabilizing her form and reintegrating the fractured sides of her personality.

He got out of his car and walked into the badly damaged lab to start making some phone calls. He needed the best psychiatrists, neurologists and behavioral scientists. This was going to be big.

## **Chapter 28**

George Fredericks was ecstatic as he saw the gorgeous blonde slowly descending from the sky, her long red and gold uniform making her look like Victoria Secret's impression of a soldier. He couldn't believe this was Zyara. She'd outdone herself with her disguise.

She landed as light as a feather five feet away, and looked curiously back at him, one bright eye covered with a wisp of blonde hair. George

couldn't pull his eyes from the way she seemed to be falling out of her deeply cut gown, her cape wrapped around herself.

"Is this what you wanted, George? SuperWoman?"



"Which you are."

"Except I don't understand why I have to be blonde."

"I like blondes."

"So," Zyara asked with a sigh, "what did you bring me here anyway?" As if she didn't know.

He hesitated. "We do have a deal, right? I help you, you help me. Whatever I want?"

"You have the word of the El family of Krypton. My bond."

"Good enough for me. Ok... the mystery Krypt you're looking for is living in the Wayne Mansion just outside Metropolis."

"And?"

"And what? You said you wanted to know where to find her."

"I expected a bit more than an address," Zyara said menacingly.

"Like what?"

"Like what she's thinking about. What she's planning. When she comes and goes."

"I only got fragments of that; and it was confusing as hell. One moment, all she's thinking about is partying with some guys she's hot for, and the next moment she's planning to terrorize the governments of Earth. Also something about a cousin and a niece."

"Niece? Cousin? What are you talking about?"

"She thinks she's Kara Zor-El, risen from the dead."

"That's fucking ridiculous."

"Yeah. What's weird is that when she's not being sweetness and spice, she's thinking pretty much the same dark thoughts as you. If I didn't know better, I'd think she was another Angel."

"So what is she... schizoid?"

"I don't sense that," George said with a shake of his head. "She's 100% in one set of thoughts, and then she's all the way into the other. Schizoids have a lot of bleed through. She doesn't."

"So she's like, what, two different people?"

"Maybe...but like I say, I'm having trouble nailing her down because of the changes. Thought there was actually two of her at first. I need more time to figure her out."



"And in the meantime, I now have a debt to pay," Zyara said sourly.

George's eyes sparkled. "Ain't quid pro quo fun?"

Zyara said nothing. She just prayed he didn't have any Kryptonite. Without it, there was no way he was going to be a problem.

"Oh, I do expect you to bring some of that green rock when it's time," he answered as he read her thoughts. "And when you do, you're gonna convince me you love it."

Zyara glared at him, hoping he'd read the revulsion she felt - hoping it would dampen his obvious arousal.

"And no, I ain't goin' to fuck you now. And no, it don't turn me off a bit that think I'm slime. I'm running this game."

"So... what game?"

He waved his hand at the rocky butte behind her. "I need a little landscaping done. I'm thinking of a lovely Japanese garden where little mountain is. With water lilies and trees and everything."

"And then we're even?" This was better than she'd expected.

"Until I figure out our girl and tell you how to kill her. Then I figure you'll owe me big time."

Zyara turned to look at the butte. It was a quarter mile long and a few hundred feet high. A billion tons or so of crummy desert rock. It was going to take some time and muscle to move. But anything was better than him doping her with green K and rooting around with that limp dick of his.

"Oh, and by the way. It's Lois Lane that I really want to fuck, not you," George added.

"Who?"

"A retired reporter from the Daily Planet. Nobody knows it, but she's Superman's real wife. He was a reporter too. Goes by Clark Kent."

"I don't understand," Zyara asked confused.

"Secret identities, stupid. He lives a double life. Got himself a human wife, although she's a bit more than that now."

"More than his wife?"

George gave her a depreciating look as he spit on the sand. "The blonde loo is definitely dumbing you down, Zyara. I meant more than a human. Hanging out with Krypts will do that."

"Forget your damn garden. Why don't I just bring her to you, George. She's the key to getting to Superman."

"Yeah, kind of figured that. Just testing you on moving the mountain with your bare hands thing. Was wondering what you'd find easier, fucking me or moving a mountain. Got my answer."

"So what about this Lois person?"

"She's about my age too... early fifties."

"So you aren't a leech after all," Zyara smiled. This was a major breakthrough. Not her getting of the hook with George, but the fact that he'd found someone the bighearted Boy Scout would do anything to save.

Still, a part of her was piqued that he preferred older women. She smiled at George while impulsively pulling the edge of her old uniform to the side, baring herself. "Just to give you a reference point. You know, when you meet your geriatric lover."

George's eyes opened wide. "Cute. But I've seen 'em before. On that poster back in what's his face's studio."

"Yeah, but you ever wonder what a Girl of Steel feels like? The part of me that isn't steel, anyway."

His hand was trembling slightly and his heart was pounding as he reached out and closed his bony fingers around her breast, lifting her ever so gently, probing softly.

She relaxed her entire body as she leaned forward to brush her lips across his, knowing she was getting to him. She wanted him horny and frustrated - and helpless. "You don't have to be gentle with me. I am your SuperWoman."

She kissed him seductively as his fingers closed tightly around her, sinking into the suppleness of her Kryptonian breast, finding to his surprise how firm and soft she was at the same time. She reminded him of that stripper he'd once known, her huge breasts filled with super-firm silicone.



He tuned in on her thoughts and found she was enjoying his touch. Amused, he kissed her back, and squeezed her nipple hard between his fingers. She gave off a soft gasp and leaned closer to him.

George smiled. She thought she could fuck with his emotions. Just like the others. Women were all sluts. Every woman. They wanted you to lust over them, and then they'd kick you in the teeth when you wanted to do the very thing they wanted you to beg for. Kryptonian, human, no difference. In the end, Zyara would get hers, just like every other woman who fucked with his head.

She'd be begging him for it.