

SWM Library - Little Firebug – Chapter 26-4, Endgame

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Little Firebug – Chapter 26-4

Endgame

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34...33...32

Buried within almost two feet of solid lead, the timer ticked away, accurate to a thousandth of a second, its little digital display clicking down in symbols that were not part of any Terran language.

Surrounding the timer were the paired fusion and fission power cells, the fission reaction a calm one now, gently expelling massive amounts of energy, enough to run all of south Metropolis, but not enough to trigger a chain reaction. Just next to the fission cell were several devices, all of them alien to the surrounding world. One, the one that had already been on the verge so many times of causing Metropolis to be reduced to a ruin, was a tampering detection trigger, it was tuned to identify the presence of anything attempting to get at the device itself, and was of as advanced a design as the Arions were willing to entrusted to their Terran operatives. So many times the boat had moved unexplainably, so many times the hull around the lead shield had shifted and even melted, but the sophisticated detector had found no active attempt to get at the internals, and therefore had not prematurely detonated the system. The second device was the force field generator, which made sure that the device could not be destroyed, it drained from the fission system, creating a field that could sustain the onslaught of a class 4 particle beam for long enough to detonate. The third, and least important system was the antigrav system. This kept the entire bomb hovering ever so slightly above the force field.

Alone, the fission reaction would weigh in at about thirty kilotons, nothing exceptionally impressive, only three times as powerful as the device detonated over Hiroshima, and such minor mayhem was not what this explosive was about. The fission reaction was there to drive the fusion, in effect, was simply the crucible to heat things up to the several million degrees (Fahrenheit or Celsius take your pick if it matters to you - at temperatures like these your thermometer would be subatomic plasma anyway!) necessary to launch an explosion far more massive, something that would be almost two thousand times as powerful.

The entire device was huge, a hair over 20 feet long, displacing perhaps fifteen tons, but despite its incredible mass, it was suspended in midair, hovering away from the walls of its imprisonment. The sides of the bomb were less than an inch from the walls, but there was a distinct gap, at no place did the actual metal touch the lead surrounding it.

* * *

As Monica swept around the corner she absorbed the scene instantly, already understanding the situation even before she had started to leave the room where Ramoan, the terrorist whose actions had caused the city to be driven into a state of panic and brought them all here, still lay. Only Monica knew that Ariel had changed sides, had come to her senses, was now attempting to save the city instead of assist Ramoan in destroying it, and when the girl had charged into the room, crying out, forbidding the members of Lex Luthor's Red Team from touching the wall where the explosive lay. They had assumed that she was there to stop them, which was correct, they had also assumed that she was doing so because she wanted the Arion's mission to be completed, which was completely false.

The figure closest to Monica appeared to be a metallic statue, a very well endowed, incredibly muscled, redheaded mirror-skinned statue. That would be her new friend Ariel. Fifty feet down the hall gathered a crowd of beings, mostly consisting of metallically armored Terrans, with Kal'El, the Kryptonian SuperMan, being the sole exception. As Monica rounded the corner, moving at a speed far quicker than the world's fastest Terran sprinters in top form, something struck her in the left breast.

* * *

"HALT!"

And instantly everything: Velorian sprinters, flying projectiles, even urgent questions, all froze. All but one beautiful white-haired woman, entering the corridor through a solid, undamaged wall.

Janissa fell to one knee for a moment, the power of the spell being more than she could easily handle. This spell did not actually stop time, such an incantation on any real range would be impossible even for someone with her formidable arcane knowledge and skills, but it did manage to create a very similar effect by creating a highly accelerated area of time, surrounding her. Janissa herself, and everything that existed for a few millimeters on all sides of her body were all accelerated to the point that even the incredible velocities that the beings around her were capable of paled, and in effect, the entire world around her came to a grinding halt. Her heart pounded in her chest, "Damnation, this is too soon, why couldn't this have happened last week, or even next week. I'm still drained from the gender reading I did last night!"

She enumerated in her head the spells she had cast in the last couple minutes. One teleportation for herself only, no frills, no objects with her, inanimate matter being much more difficult to teleport than flesh. Next was a flight spell allowing her to approach the hull of the ship directly rather than spending valuable time by running up a gangplank. Third she had cast a phasing spell, allowing her to pass directly through the hull, having no idea how long she had remaining before the warhead detonated, she had taken the shortest route, a straight line. Now, and most draining by far, she had essentially accelerated herself infinitely, allowing herself to get a good gauge on the goings ons, and from what her first glance showed, it was a blessing that she had done so.

She was just to one side of a crowd of Ultratech Powerarmors; she did not recognize them from anywhere, but most of them seemed intent on Monica, or perhaps the metallic figure behind her, three of them where studying displays on devices attached to the wall, probably where the explosive was located. Then she noticed something, Monica was shifting, or at least her breast was, it was indenting, as if something was pressing into it, slowly, but visibly. A line of fire trailed back from whatever it was to the wrist of one of the armors, obviously a projectile fired from his device. Janissa was appalled, to be visibly moving while she was in this state, an object would have to be moving at a very high portion of the speed of light! Looking closer, she now could see two more lines of smoke in the air, apparently from other such projectiles, though Monica showed no damage, so they must not have hurt her. The mirrored girl behind her... her skin was not perfect, it was horribly marred, by what looked to be...bullet wounds?!! But that was impossible! The mirrored skin was a trait of the Velorian race and its relatives, and no Terran power, or even the power of the peoples of those worlds to her knowledge, as of yet had proven able to actually penetrate the skin of one. Janissa intoned yet another spell, knowing that no spells would take effect until after she came out of the acceleration, but that did not stop her from casting them. "Now... what is happening here... if that display is right, we have less than half a minute before the gates of Hades open. Kal is standing with the robotech wannabes, and Monica is intercepting a shot intended for the um... hmmm... red hair... that would be a Kryptonian woman. This makes no sense. Monica wouldn't be helping an enemy, but neither would Kal, and they appear to be on opposite sides of this exchange. What is going on here?"

Janissa shook her head, a timer counting down in her own head, the world would soon be returning to real time, and she would seem to appear out of nowhere, naked. And if anybody was trigger-happy around here, she might draw some near-light-speed small-arms fire of her own! "30 seconds isn't enough to get rid of anything, if this bomb is large enough to be dangerous, then it is too large for me to teleport on such short notice, it would take a massive prep. Maybe if I could drain energy from Monica that would be a start, but there's not enough time to do that either, I'm just not powerful enough to just fix this. I can't even see the bomb, I'd be 'porting blind. A gremlin won't work either, not enough is left to error, so it would take a barrage of gremlins to make enough remotely possible accidents happen to trip up the redundancies of a nuke. These boys on the scene don't seem to be having much luck disarming it either. That is a bad sign. Hmmm, what is that thing that Monica is holding, looks like a transmitter or something... there is far too much complexity to this situation, I can't tell what's going on."

Janissa took the only safe steps she knew how to, the just-in-cases. She planted an energy sucking daemon near the wall, a very simple spell that simply absorbed any energy directed at it, "I've never seen one of these hit max, but that doesn't mean it won't." She then set up a chalk perimeter around the group near her.

That was when she noticed another pair coming down the hallway towards them, frozen like all the others, but obviously intent on this location. "Those are the same powerarmors that I saw outside, they seem to move at quite a good clip."

"Well, safeties on, trapdoor ready, sponge set, that's about all I can do for the moment."

"Just in..." time restarted.

The projectile drove right through Monica's breast, past her ribs, and out through her back.

Commander Trask was appalled when SuperWoman seemed to materialize in front of his shot, taking the blast right in the chest, and the wall behind her formed a hole through it, the armor piercing round having gone directly through her.

Monica felt the skin on her breast press inwards, like it always did when she was shot there, she saw the line of flame traveling from the armor's forearm to where she had been struck, and she grasped her breast spasmodically.

Kal was amazed when Janissa simply seemed to teleport into place in front of him, she looked tired, her normally beautiful white hair now seemed simply tired and greyish. She looked like she had run a marathon and lost. Her breathing was ragged, "SuperMan, tell... me what's going on, NOW!"

Kal thought for a moment, gathering everything into a summation, "The warhead has thirty seconds, and we don't know how to stop it."

Trask was in shock, he had never missed a shot, not since his very first day of sidearm training, back in the complex where he had grown up. Never had he hit a civilian, an innocent, or a comrade, until now. He had shown no patience for "friendly fire" in the past, cases of misidentification, cases where the friendly had 'just jumped out in front of us'. Now he himself was guilty of shooting one of their most powerful allies, right in the chest, which she was clutching, blinking without understanding, and his heart sank with foreboding. From many experiences in combat, he knew that look very well.

'Ronbo' and Felicia 'Kitty' drew close to the rest of the team, knowing that even if they could not help with the final disarming, they might be of use in the endgame. At least in the remote possibility that the bomb didn't explode and there remained anything for anybody to do. Or anybody to do it!

Ariel stood back up, already the hole in her shoulder was shutting, it would be an ugly scar for perhaps another hour, but anything short of broken bones was easily healed, it no longer even really hurt, only felt numb.

Her heart throbbed in her chest, at the last moment she could swear that she had seen the man's arm tense, had seen her death explode out of the tube. She did not know that the projectile could not penetrate bone, and would only have hurt, but could not have crippled or killed her. And then Monica, dear Monica had lunged bravely in front of the projectile, taking it in the chest, pressing Ariel down towards the floor, into the floor, melting it beneath her. She had just caught a sight which made her blood run cold, a flame trail like the ones that followed the projectiles... and it was coming from Monica's back!. "Oh no....no no no no....it can't be, no please, not Monica, please not my only friend!"

Monica was in shock, it didn't hurt, it didn't even sting like most large arms fire did, whatever they had fired at her, it was puny, nothing like what she would expect. It had startled her though, that in her state of accelerated senses, with her full Super awareness functioning, she still had not seen the damnable thing coming.

Ariel looked closer, "No hole? How could it have gone through her without leaving a hole?" The how was standing near Kal'El.

Janissa had cast a true armor piercing spell on the projectile, something incredibly dangerous to use on firearms, it allowed the projectile simply to ignore a single layer of armor, which a Velorian's entire body would count as. The projectile had simply phased through Monica, and re-solidified on the other side, continuing onwards unimpeded to tear through the side of the ship.

Trask sucked in his gut, the world depended on him, he could not worry about SuperWoman, not now, he would mourn and atone for his actions another day, even though it ripped gashes in his soul to turn away now. She just stood there, looking confused, and then stumbled forward a bit, then again.

He yelled into his mike, "Update, NOW!"

"Sir...there is nothing we can do, nothing at all, I'm sorry"

"Don't fucking give me that soldier, make something happen!"

"Sir, the only thing left to try is to overwhelm its defenses with a massive assault including the aliens and try to melt the entire thing down before it can go up, it will probably detonate the fission reaction, but the fusion device might be ruptured."

"So we might contain this thing yet?"

"If you call thirty kilotons contained, yes Sir."

Monica blinked, coming to her senses, "STOP! I can disarm it!"

For the second time in perhaps ten seconds, it seemed as if the world had halted, everyone froze, but this time the only spell was Monica herself. Everyone turned to look at her as she easily sprinted the fifty feet to where they stood. Ariel was left dumbfounded, halfway imbedded in the floor where it had melted around her, still bemoaning the loss of the only woman to ever show her unselfish kindness, who suddenly appeared far from injured! Trask's jaw nearly hit the floor as he also stared at SuperWoman's impossible recovery!

The control pad had suffered from being close to Ariel, even for so brief a time, the soft plastic components running into each other, the quartz display warped. But it served its function perfectly, it accepted the deactivation code, and sent it to the internals of the warhead for verification.

The cooling rods of the fission cells were removed, within twenty seconds, if they were not replaced, the fission would overload and explode, powering the death of a city.

"This should deactivate it! I got it from Ramoan himself, this was how He was going to deactivate it!" Monica explained hastily. She looked at the display, fuzzy, but it read "Negotiating with host." A little watch-like display whirled, seemingly forever.

Ariel's body cooled quickly, the energy being sucked internally to assist her body in healing itself, she felt pure energy being drained from her, reforming the damaged tissues of her leg and shoulder. She flew over to Monica, noticing that Janissa backed away from her quickly, the temperatures of her body still far more than the mere Terran could endure.

Everyone watched Monica tensely, the Team Red disarming team had disconnected its sensors, there was nothing more they could do.

Kal'El felt jittery for the second time in his life, his first time being not one of the many times he had opposed Lex Luthor or encountered Green Kryptonite, but when he had married Lois.

Monica stopped everyone quickly when weapons began whipping towards Ariel again, when they saw her skin returning to its normal tone, and both wounds already shut.

"Don't hurt that woman! She's had a change of heart."

The reactor sent back, "Password proper, stage two engaged"

The remote control displayed, "Deactivation Password accepted."

Monica cheered, "It worked!"

Everyone seemed to for a moment not understand what she meant, all the tension having been let out so very anticlimatically. Then everyone began to cry out with joy!

One member of the defusing squad reported, "With 10 seconds to spare!" 10...9...8

Monica and Ariel rushed to each other and hugged each other tightly, with all their hearts, their star-born muscles tensing to a staggering display of female power. Unseen, the remote control displayed, "ID detected."

'Kitty' felt like she was going to wet herself, she was so relieved, they had won, despite the worst that the Arions and the terrorists and even the Kryptonian woman had thrown at the "forces of good", they had won! She and 'Ronbo' embraced as best as two powerarmors, or in this case, 'poweramours', could.

Kal'El's joy was so great that for a moment he forgot about Nikki, but then he came to his senses, casting about for her desperately, hoping she was OK. Janissa hung from his neck though, preventing him from going off to search for his wayward and apparently insane love.

Janissa smiled, "This probably took a year off my life, but by gods it all worked out!" She knew that she had saved the situation, which would likely have deteriorated into a mindless supermuscled energy blast battle, waiting out the end of the world while the team had fought against Monica and Ariel, the twosome very likely having the advantage

in such a combat, but to no avail as the nuclear holocaust erupted throughout the city.

Monica felt the Kryptonian flesh she held close molding against her, not the debilitating grasp of an angered Ariel, but the overjoyed and ecstatic enthusiasm of someone finally feeling herself to be a part of something good, something Right.

The forces of Team Red just grinned happily at each other, for the moment not even reporting back to base, but knowing that the current crisis had been averted. Knowing that without a timer they would be able to find a way, with the Velorians' and Kryptonians' and all of LexCorp's resources available, they would find a way to get rid of this device.

"System reports Velorian ID deactivated device using proper code", traveled through the reactor's very simple CPU. "Conclusion, mission failure, Velorian has captured agent and retrieved password." The shifting of rods around the interiors of the explosives, making final operations to orient the power flows, and the normal system overhead all slowing down the reactions.

* * *

Lex Luthor closed his eyes, counting down the last seconds "8....7.....6". Team Red had not messaged back, and the transmitters from the helmet displays were not functioning, and if they had been, he would not be watching them. In the last moments, the oddest memories began to flood back to him, pieces of plays, sections of commercials, old fights with SuperMan, his first time with a woman, his parents. His life literally did flash before his eyes, but not in the ways he had assumed it might should such an event as this occur, he had always assumed that it would be one long string, from beginning to end, of his every experience. What he saw now could not even be considered the highlights of his life, he remembered the odd woman at the supermarket when he was eight, he remembered that he had not used a wooden pencil in almost a year, he remembered that his old secretary's husband's name had been Sal, he remembered the taste of cold pizza on one rainy night in Hamburg. Senseless details came to him in flashes, the last thoughts of a mind so great that it had fought against a man so nearly invulnerable that the difference was moot, a mind so great that it had fought on even ground with a man of steel, that accursed SuperMan. A mind that now could do nothing, the entirety of its existence ironically depending on the actions of others.

* * *

Kar moaned loudly, Kat Grant seemed insatiable, and though it seemed hours to him since they had met, he knew that it had actually been less than 10 minutes, and this wonderful Terran was driving him nuts, her unceasing passion eating away at the little restraint he, or any Male Prime ever possessed. He could feel his orgasm rising, and suddenly it was upon him, the final rise, all his inhibitions around this woman disappeared, all he knew was that it felt good, and he was going to cum, nothing else in the universe mattered. Not that she was likely to be torn apart by his orgasm, she was showing serious signs of having overexerted her still healing flesh, and even through his red-faced passion, the slight scent of blood penetrated to meet his sensitive nostrils. The pleasure overtook him, and he was truly amazed, this... this Terran was causing him to cum! Her lack of invulnerability no longer even mattered, as long as she didn't stop moving for just that little... bit... longer!

Cat was beyond caring about anything, she could feel her insides beginning to give way, the fine healing lines from her recent series of surgeries tearing bit by bit, and she quite simply did not care, she felt Kar's incredible organ pumping within her, its breadth and length so immense. She felt each stroke pounding so deeply into her, expanding her unnaturally enhanced vagina even further, felt his Arion cock filling her with its hardness, so much harder than any steel. She could feel the pressure of an undeniable orgasm rising in her partner, and she felt a deep satisfaction that this man, even this man, this man who could have replaced SuperMan, even he could not resist the charms of her incomparable body! Clark would never know what he had so callously dropped.

* * *

In the Metropolis Sheraton, Room 1327, Mike and Laurie held each other tightly, kissing desperately, expressing their love in ways that transcended words.

* * *

"Response: Detonate."

* * *

Kar'La's eyes fluttered open, staring into concrete.

* * *

2...1...0...

* * *

A four Megaton explosion detonated in the harbor of Metropolis. The equivalent of four hundred Hiroshima explosions!

* * *

Kar'La did not suffer, she was so near the site, near so powerful a blast that her structure was simply rent apart at the atomic level. Her body instantly joining the waves of charged plasma.

* * *

Kar stroked once more... twice more... his orgasm was upon him and he erupted, his passion releasing like a cannon, and should Cat have still been intact, she would have died in that moment, but Kar's explosion was an instant too late, Cat was already no more than a fine ash. And then Kar's world too went dark.

* * *

Cat felt her orgasm pouring through her body just as she felt seams all though her sex ripping apart, felt the warm gushing of blood pouring through them, and then she felt nothing except blessed oblivion.

* * *

Mike and Laurie kissed until the very end, held in each other's warm embrace until a force like that of divine retribution tore through their bodies, leaving nothing in its wake. Neither said it, but each heard, echoing through the room just before death met them, "I love you."

* * *

Millions of the inhabitants of Metropolis died, most of them trusting in their SuperMan until the very end, a relative handful having actually fled the city, the vast majority of them staying in their homes, knowing that their Hero would never truly fail.

* * *

Ramoan was just beginning to awaken when he met oblivion, and went to join his god. And his just rewards were doled out to him forever: he got everything that he had coming to him.

* * *

Lois Lane, or the body of Lois Lane inhabited by Sharil, held the gun confidently, directing it at the guard who had wet himself several minutes ago. But then being held at gunpoint by one of the nuttiest people in the asylum was something to make most people loose their cool. He wished that SuperMan would hurry up dealing with that small-time terrorist and come save his butt here. He wished that the supervisor at the door's external controls would let her out, he wished that she would put down the gun, he wished any number of things. And then he wished no more, neither of them ever wished for anything again. Sharil no longer wished for freedom, the guard no longer wished for safety, the supervisor no longer wished that he had gone home early, the police sharpshooter no longer wished for a clean shot. They simply ceased, for a moment looking like oil paintings, their features distorted as they were swept away by a force so far past anyone's comprehension that even had they known it was coming, they still would have been just as surprised when it reached them. It was as if the finger of an angry God had erased them from the universe.

* * *

Lex Luthor, aged boy Genius, could not outsmart the bomb, did not see the end coming, but faced his end with his eyes closed, still trusting in the hated Perfection of his lifelong foe to save him. Just this once he had counted on SuperMan to save him, to live up to all the worst expectations Lex had for him. And just this once, SuperMan had failed, had let him down.

* * *

Death was liberal on that day, it spared no Terrans for dozens of miles around, but oddly enough there was never any radiation, the entire area was reduced to a molten pool, and the ocean quickly rushed in to fill the crater. The topography of the United States had suddenly gained a new dent.

The why no radiation lay in the imperceptible amount of time it took for the explosion to reach the people closest to it, for the speed of light to take it perhaps a ten feet distance. The why lay in the trap door Janissa had left, the energy daemon having intercepted a tremendous amount of energy, growing stronger with every photon of power, and immediately able to absorb even more. The spell was so very simple that its power was virtually absolute, but even it had its limits, the limits for this particular incantation being encountered at roughly 55 million tons of TNT worth of energy. How many lives had been saved by Janissa's spell was unknown, how many lost because it was not perfect... that number would be discovered in the years to come, as the world outside Metropolis investigated. The instant the sponge daemon was encountered, it triggered Janissa's trapdoor, one she might not normally have set, the energy it took perhaps would have been able to help her elsewhere in the crisis. But she had now become a mother, and had a second life to care for, one that could not choose to accept or reject the risks she might place on it, and it was one she would do anything to defend.

Everything within the chalk outline teleported.

Unfortunately, that spell was not perfect either.

Half of the circle was overlapped by the destructive energies even as the dimensions were distorted to allow the crossing. The tenuous grip broke.

Janissa collapsed to the floor, surrounded by naked people. The spell had been too much, she was unprepared for a multiple person teleport. The trapdoor ensured that the spell would be cast, but did not actually contain any energy, the driving force being her own powers, and the consequences hers alone to endure. Teleporting a dozen people as many miles was not pleasant by any means, but add on half a dozen aliens, with tremendous energy stores that required special maintaining within the "Out", and one came up with the horrendous migraine that Janissa was currently experiencing.

Janissa's mind screamed out warnings to her, "Oh gods, its Coming!"

All the wards of Janissa's home came to life, the power of the initial flash sufficient to sear the paint from the modest home, revealing the glowing ingrained sigils in the crystal understructure.

Like the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, the shockwave and firestorm of a thermonuclear explosion galloped through Metropolis. Buildings seemed to have their outlines smeared, and then were blown away, people were reduced to ash, then cast out before the unstoppable wind of destruction.

The lights of Janissa's home flashed blindingly bright for a moment, and then exploded, the wall of electromagnetic energy flowing into the house, not deemed as a threat to the Terran inhabitants. All the electronics in Janissa's house suddenly came alive, and then were burned out from the power coursing through them, each and every wire throughout the systems melting down with the current suddenly pressed through them. The television made a popping noise and flashed a brilliant green, and then the tube melted, the screen cracked. Flames leapt from the place where one window had been left open, and then it shut on its own, seemingly, and literally, by magic. The huge power circle that had been formed within the very foundations for this very special home glowed up their maximum, preparing for what the outermost sniffers had detected, almost 10 miles away, a wave of annihilation approaching at an unbelievable rate.

Janissa had poured tremendous levels of power into the protections of her home during the short time she had possessed a Velorian clone's body, the near unto limitless energy of such a body allowing her to create a system that just might allow them to survive.

Janissa's husband Mike smiled at the girl suddenly sitting in his lap, she had not been there a moment before, but he was not one to knock a good thing. She was stark naked, and had a light sheen of sweat covering her body, making her glisten a bit. "Hi".

Felicia smiled back at the man for a moment, then blinked, then stood up, looking around the room, the rest of Red Team was here, and all in the all together, and also the odd lady with the white hair who had mysteriously shown up in the last moments at the freighter. "Where are we?"

Commander Trask was asking the same thing of Janissa on the other side of the room at that moment, but she was beyond listening, she had things to say, and not an instant to waste!

Factly and crisply she notified everyone. "The device went off, we are 12 miles from ground zero, the light flash just passed us, and the shockwave is going to hit in seconds. Kal, Ariel, Monica, I need your help."

Everyone looked around, there was no sign of the threesome of aliens, and as they counted, they realized that 3 members of their own team were also missing. "Where did Ronbo, Blade, and Executor go?" someone asked.

Mike jumped up, "It went off?"

Janissa nodded, "Yes, I left a sponge daemon, but if the flash is any indication, it failed."

"But... She deactivated it, SuperWoman deactivated it, we saw her."

"I guess we didn't see what we thought we saw."

"Nissa....will the house hold up?"

Janissa looked over at her husband, "Depends on how much energy it took to override a spell that up till now has proved virtually infinite."

A wall of force struck the house, knocking everyone over, collapsing them into a huge pile of naked and frightened bodies, only Janissa hovering slightly above the chaos, floating just above the ground, the movements of the floor and ground beneath not reaching her.

The firestorm rolled over the house, crystal melted and flaked, sigils one by one overloaded and failed, pouring all of the excess energies into the others, strengthening the whole even as they faded.

Inside the house, the temperature rose violently, everyone's bodies first becoming hot, then dry, then blistering horribly, and finally, fleeing from agony into unconsciousness. Again, all except for Janissa, hovering above it all, her spells protecting her with yet another layer of safety beyond the ones that the house allowed. And then everything around her went dark.

As the final destructive breeze crossed Janissa's home, it looked undefended, no signs of glowing sigils, the mystic crystal melted until one could see through it, to the thickness of a bubble film. And then, faintly, an ever so dim glow glimmered coldly, the very last of its power going out to cancel the effects of one last tidal wave of energy. And it succeeded, the structure held, the people inside were not exposed to the thousand degree temperatures of the outside, they were not flooded with liquid glass from the nearby sandpit melting and pouring down to settle around the base of the house, half a foot deep, they were not exposed to the toxins and heavy metals permeating the air. And to a one, they continued to breathe, they might not like it, but they were sentenced to continue living.

In the hours to follow, with Janissa's and Mike's help, the remaining members of Red Team would have their burned and blistered skin, bumps, breaks, and contusions all repaired, the Albany hospitals being the nearest ones still functioning and suddenly having their work cut out for them anyway. Word would get back to Arion command that, although they had lost a team of terrorists, and more importantly one of the precious few survivors of project "Flare", the other side had been dealt a vicious blow as well, losing SuperGirl, SuperWoman, and SuperMan, along with the legendary Metropolis being reduced to a cinder.

LexCorp would never be the same again, nearly all of its research and development sites being in Metropolis, and now reduced to an unidentifiable grouping of molten plastic and metals.

The day went down in history as the most horrible events to occur in the United States since the Kennedy assassination. Everyone across the globe would remember where they had been when SuperMan had died, where they had been when earth's future got just a bit darker, when the single beacon of salvation, their protector, their indestructible symbol of peace and trust, had perished. When The Man of Steel had failed them.

* * *

Epilogue

Location: unknown

His eyes opened. Someone looked down at him, "Welcome home, cousin."

Location: unknown

She awoke with a start, someone near her side said, "Ahh good, you are awake, its not often we get Kryptonians here, but welcome, welcome to Daxxan"

* * *

Location: unknown

She remembered falling, then remembered being picked up by someone, she remembered being confused, and now she could sense several people moving around about her.

* * *

Location: Etherial plane

56 Megatons of light energy hovered in space, all contained by a very simple daemon. And then it thought!

The Beginning