

Kara stared at Dexter, her body frozen in place just as she was about to enter the room.

Dexter stared at Kara, his body frozen in place, a single paw lifted mid-step, and a golden meteorite in his mouth.

Kara's heart skipped a beat, and she nearly threw herself back, her muscles tensing painfully before the entire situation registered in her mind and she relaxed.

Rao damnit, she had forgotten to erase Dexter's access when she coded the locking mechanism.

Yeah, she had been a little distracted and the box wasn't supposed to be a permanent thing, but still... She had to be more careful with that. Putting a mechanical lock as well would have prevented the problem. —always put redundancies, Kara, always overdesign!

Glaring from the cat to the open box he had dropped on the floor, she tapped the controls on her phone and activated her radiation shield before stepping into the room.

For his part, Dexter dropped the kryptonite, sat down, and started licking his paw, waving it over his head while pretending he had done nothing wrong.

Her heart hammered in her chest, the scare leaving her slightly breathless. Kara threw herself at her armchair and gave a few more commands through her phone, activating one of her Karabots. A second later, the cat jumped on her lap, his paw lifting and hooking small claws around her hand, trying to drag it closer to his head.

Unconsciously running a hand through his fur, she watched as the robot gently picked up the kryptonite before depositing it inside the box, locking the container, and putting it on top of her desk.

From her previous memories, Kara had already known the gold variety probably deactivated kryptonian powers, but could also cause amnesia or, well, who knows what else?

Thankfully, Kara had been experimenting with kryptonite for a month now and she could more or less analyze any new variation by their radiation, using the computers to simulate its effects on a kryptonian body with a 92% accuracy before daring to employ the meteorite on Im-El

Gold Kryptonite was simultaneously one of the most and least dangerous varieties she had managed to recreate.

On one hand, the radiation permanently destroyed a kryptonian's ability to absorb sunlight, completely neutralizing all of their devastating powers. If that wasn't bad enough, fixing the depowering was nearly impossible.

On the other hand, contrary to most forms of kryptonite, the radiation didn't spread very far, requiring someone to be much closer to the rock to even feel its effects, the damage took a long time to become permanent and caused no physical pain.

Also, as she had just told Im-El, losing her powers wouldn't be the end of the world. It would suck, sure, but her armor could already replicate most of her abilities... if at a slightly lower level.

"Come on, time to leave," she said, grabbing both the container and the cat before walking back up the mountain.

Kal was waiting for her at the top of the stairs, a smile on his face as he watched Dexter squirming in her arms. Together, they turned back toward where the others were waiting and started walking slowly.

"You know, I used to have a cat too."

"What?" Kara looked up at him, surprise in her face.

"Yeah, Fuzzball was great," he said, a hint of nostalgia in his voice. Extending his hand, he ignored Dexter's swipe and let him sniff his skin before actually managing to scratch him behind the ears. "Found her when she was just a kitten trying to fend off some coyotes. I was afraid Ma wouldn't let me keep her, so I hid her in the barn for a little over a week."

"But... you lived on a farm?" Kara asked an amused smile on her face. "Did you really think they'd make you kick her out?"

"Well, I know that now," he said, actually managing to take Dexter from her, the cat hanging bonelessly from his arm that way only cats can do. "In my defense, I must have been six at the time and Pa had refused to let me keep the Bison and Eagle I had taken home before."

Kara paused, her mind picturing a young Kal dragging a huge Bison over his head into the farm, the creature utterly baffled at its situation.

That's... Martha had to have pictures!

Putting the box inside one of her own pockets, Kara shook her head in amusement. "What happened to her?"

"At the time I thought she'd be with me forever, and she did have a long life," he said, finally dropping Dexter to the floor when the cat couldn't bear the indignity of being in his arms anymore. "One day she just came into the bed and... passed away looking at me. It was so unexpected I didn't even register that her heart had stopped. She was the first living being I cared about that died."

"Fuzzball had always loved the Moon, so, after she passed, I flew her up there and buried her in a place I knew she'd enjoy. Where I could always look at her and she could always see me."

Despite everything, Kal had a bittersweet smile on his face, the memories clearly bringing him joy instead of sadness. Kara shook her head and smiled back at him. "You know, one day one of those NASA robots is gonna run into her grave and be very confused."

"Heh, I think she'd like that, she had always been mischievous," Kal laughed, making his amusement clear.

For a moment, they let the silence stretch between them, only their steps echoing through the hallway but, before long, Kal paused and turned fully toward her. "Kara, what's wrong? You've been preoccupied for the entire day. I thought it was just about Im-El but..."

Stopping, Kara watched as Dexter glanced back at them, but continued walking, eager to get back to Kori. Her first instinct was to just say '*nothing*' or '*it's fine*', avoid the talk entirely, leave it for later. But this was important, she couldn't just backtrack.

Releasing a long sigh, she spoke. "... Do you have time after this? I need to talk with you."

"I was going to accompany Im back to the farm, and get him settled, but Connor can do it if this is urgent?"

"No, it's... kinda urgent, but one or two hours aren't going to change anything," she said, feeling a weight leaving her chest. "Anyways, I also have to put the kryptonite away so, can you meet me at the Fortress in an hour or two?"

"Yeah, I can do that. I'll see you in two hours then," Kal nodded to her, enveloping her shoulders with one arm and squeezing. "And, Kara, thanks for being here, for helping out, I really appreciate it."

Feeling warm inside, Kara started walking again, soon reaching the main room to see Im-El tasting one of Kori's snacks, his face turning purple as he desperately tried to keep the abomination down and not disappoint the smiling Tamaranean.

"Alright, are we ready to leave?" Kal said, getting everyone's attention.

Kon and Im traded a look, the latter hesitated, but Kon wrapped an arm over his shoulder. "Come on, they're going to like you."

Kara stared at the duo, a mixture of pride and amusement on her face. Ever since he started living with the Kents, Kon had really grown up. It had only been a few months since he was the confused one, not knowing how to react to her actions.

"Don't worry," Kara said to the uncertain boy. "The Kents have my respect, I am certain you'll like them. I will visit you tomorrow."

"...Thank you," Im-El nodded his head.

Approaching the duo, Kal patted the boy's shoulder. "Let's go, bye Kara, Starfire."

Kara watched the three of them leave through the Zeta-Tube more than glad to see Kal taking care of the kids. Turning towards Kori, she tapped the box in her pocket and spoke. "Can you bring Dexter home? I have to drop this in a secure location."

"Of course," the Tamaranean beauty floated closer, wrapping her arms around Kara and giving her a quick kiss. "Do not stay in the room of testing for too long."

"I won't. See you."

The cat released a long, suffering 'meow', his tail held high as he pawed the Zeta-Tube and glanced back at them, Kori didn't even have to pick him up, just open the reinforced glass door and step inside.

Kara stared at the empty spot they had just been in for a few seconds before using her teleport platform to go directly to her moon base. She could have left the kryptonite in the Fortress, but she actually wanted to dispose of the stone, not just store it for later.

Also, she needed something to do until her cousin arrived else her anxiety would start acting up again.

Really, keeping a stock of green kryptonite was only smart. Yes, it was extremely rare and valuable, but almost any powerful enough villain could get it if they wanted and, if some clone or enemy kryptonian suddenly appeared, it was best to have it available.

Golden kryptonite was MUCH rarer and, since she could easily create more if necessary, destroying any she found was really for the best.

Kara hurried inside her workshop, with a quick command, she had one of her bots take the stone out of the box and put it on a metal platform before activating the machine. With a loud 'thump' that seemed to shake the entire moon base, the hammer pulverized the stone and then dropped the remains into a chemical bath, slowly dissolving the remaining dust.

She watched until the small particles were completely gone before grabbing the box and leaving the workshop to enter the base's storage. There, lining up the walls, several of her devices floated within dimensionally locked fields.

It had been a pain to get those things working. At first, they had remained locked in place regardless of the Moon's movement, almost tearing her base apart before she deactivated them and spent hours adjusting their configuration.

But she had managed to correct her mistake and now they were just about the most secure way of keeping her treasures safe.

Kara walked by the remains of Evil Eye —the first villain/monster she had killed—, Vortigar's heart, Klarion's arm, her own supply of kryptonite and stopped in front of the small piece of green kryptonite Kal had lent her. She had only turned a quarter of the meteorite gold, leaving the remainder in storage for later use.

Deactivating the dimensional lock, Kara considered the glowing rock and wondered —did Luthor keep a pebble of the stuff in his pocket like in some universes?— lifting her control panel, she typed for a few seconds, adjusting her radiation field until the tip of her finger was excluded from the protection.

Immediately, she started feeling a slight numbness on the exposed skin, the effect growing stronger the more she approached the rock until, only a few centimeters away, she actually started feeling some pain.

Reactivating the dimensional lock, Kara stepped back, her finger immediately recovering... So, she really was from a different dimension, this world's kryptonite still affected her, but at a MUCH weaker level.

Kara remembered most versions of Superman being immune to kryptonite from different Earths, but Ultraman had been able to snort kryptonite from different universes to grow in strength.

What made it effective or not? Did the distance between dimensions relate to how effective the kryptonite was?

Sighing, she made a note to test that before growing a crystal armchair from the floor and sitting down in the middle of the room. Turning part of her outfit into a cable, she connected her computer to the box.

Only a minute later, she deleted the code that gave Dexter access to the box and just... stared at it.

What now? She still had 1 hour and 35 minutes to waste.

Kara... didn't have further use for the container, but it was still a pity to just get rid of it. Slowly, she tapped her index finger against the arm of her seat in thought, a small smile appearing on her face.

The box WAS awfully overdesigned, its defenses could only be better if she had used kryptium and, while its aesthetic design didn't look fancy, that could be easily changed.

With a smirk, she started working, attaching a few crystals, some golden details, and other doodads. In short, making the box look as important as she could.

Inside, she put a tracking device, one of her micro portals to transfer the signal and the biggest dimension-shattering bomb she could fit.

In the center of the room, she grew a crystalline pedestal, putting the box in a place of honor, protected with the same dimensional lock, but she changed the color, making its shimmering effect have a golden hue.

The security features didn't protect the container any better than the rest of the room but, Rao, it certainly looked like that was the case.

Satisfied, Kara stepped away from her trap and nodded. The arrangement wouldn't fool someone like Luthor, but plenty of villains did enjoy employing dumb muscle.

Hopefully, anyone that stole it would be unable to open the box for long enough that she could track their location but, if not, it would still be one hell of a surprise.

Eventually, she made her way toward the Fortress, arriving a few minutes later since she had killed a little too much time trying to find a way of detecting dimensional frequencies.

Kal was already there, waiting for her at the front entrance while staring up at the night sky, a steaming mug in his hand. Taking a deep breath, she approached him.

"Hot chocolate?" he said, offering her a second mug.

"Thanks."

Grabbing the mug, Kara took a quick sip of the boiling liquid and felt the heat spread through her limbs. For a minute, she just stood there beside him, looking up at the sky and trying to see if she could locate the Watchtower from down here. —she could, if she squinted just right it looked like a tiny grain of rice.

"Please, tell me you didn't find another clone," Kal spoke first, his voice only half joking. "I really think two is enough."

"Not yet. Give it time."

"God, I hope not. I mean, I like the boys, but the farm has only so many rooms."

Kara snorted, taking another sip of her chocolate, finally, she spoke. "You remember how I asked to take a look at your rocket?"

"Sure, did you find what you were looking for?" He asked, briefly blasting his mug with heat vision to keep the temperature high even in the freezing air.

"No, that's the problem. For years I worked directly on the hyper-drive, I made all the adaptations, re-designing it from the ground up. Yes, Father and Uncle made some adjustments, but the design should be mine, only... yours isn't anything like what I came up with, there are no signs of my work in it."

"And yet, the Fortress activated for me, it has my father's configuration and recognized you as my cousin..." Kal trailed off in thought. Taking another sip of his mug, he fully turned towards her. "You think there was an accident? That, somehow, one of us ended up in the wrong universe?"

"Yes, me. I hate to say it, but Jor-El's hyper-drive is better than mine," Kara managed to stare into his eyes as she spoke. "Also, the kryptonite I got from you barely affects me. It's not from my Krypton."

"I... see," he said, his eyes staring into her own. Finally, he released a long, slow breath, wrapping an arm around her neck and pulling her head closer until Kara rested her forehead against his chest. "It's alright, this doesn't change anything between us, you're still my family."

A wave of relief washed over Kara, before she could stop herself, she wrapped her arms around his waist and squeezed, her hands bunching up his suit. "Thank you."

Resting his chin on the top of her head, Kal patted her back for a few moments, letting Kara gather herself for a minute or two before speaking again. "Alright, what do you need from me? Knowing you, you've already started trying to find our missing cousins, how can I help?"

"I-I can't really do much about my Kal at the moment, I'll need a way of opening a dimensional portal, as well as a way of locating my own original dimension, it'll take time."

"And the missing Kara?"

Kara pushed herself away from him, taking a few steps back and wiping her nose on her sleeve. Sucking in a breath, she refocused. "There are a few options. She could have never left Krypton, suffered a similar accident as my own, or even still be on her way right now."

"The Fortress expected her to raise me. Presumably, that meant she was sent away from Krypton like me, and you said Jor-El's hyper-drive is better than yours. Can you trace her path?"

"Yes but..." Kara trailed off, her mind working overtime.

Krypton, far more often than not, was an isolationist society. Be it for religious, xenophobic, or cultural reasons, leaving the Rao system is nearly always forbidden, that's the reason her father had worked on the hyper-drives in the first place.

But, in this dimension, Jor-El worked on the drives himself. What are the chances they could build and launch two rockets without interference or detection from the authorities? What if her counterpart's rocket had been unable to leave Krypton?

In her own dimension, her uncle HAD launched Kal's ship first, but she had still been able to escape shortly after. Still, it was entirely possible that the authorities had reacted faster here, especially if they were already on alert and not preoccupied with the planet exploding ahead of schedule.

Kara doubted this dimension's Zor-El would have just given up, not if he was anything like her own father so, how could he escape? Wait, didn't her version from the Arrowverse end up in the Phantom Zone?

"Fortress, I need all the information you have on the Phantom Zone Projectors. Do we have any in storage?" she asked, her voice excited.

"I apologize, Miss Zor-El," The Fortress AI materialized behind them, his head bowed. "Given your recent discoveries, I'm afraid I'm unable to provide that information unless Master Kal-El renews your access."

"I do, Kara has full access to the database and everything else," Kal said.

Kara couldn't help smiling at how fast he answered, no hesitation in his voice.

"Very well, I'll transfer the information directly to your personal computer," the hologram said while lifting his head. "Unfortunately, according to the database, only two projectors ever left Krypton before its destruction. Of the two, one was obliterated by a member of the military guild in a recovery mission and the last one's location remains unknown."

"Do you have a list of inmates?" Kara asked.

"I have public records of those sentenced to the Phantom Zone, but the true list is only stored on the projectors themselves," the AI said.

"What exactly IS the Phantom Zone and what does it have to do with our problem?" Kal asked with more than a little hope.

"It was a separate dimension where kryptonian criminals serve their sentences. The name does a good job of evoking what it's like there," Kara said. "If Kara couldn't escape Krypton, it's possible Zor-El hid her there."

Now, even with instructions, could she build one of the damn things? The projectors were one of the most advanced things Krypton had ever created. Did Jor-El even send their blueprints here?

No, she would do it, even if she had to work from just the theory.

"Good, you're smiling again," Kal said, turning to follow her back into the Fortress.

"Don't worry about tracking the path, I'll ask one of the *Green Lanterns* to investigate Krypton. And, Kara, you're the one that made me accept this new family, don't even think I'll let you off the hook just because you're not from this dimension."