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The distant green planet sparkled like an emerald against the black velvet of space.

Keel-ex's calculated trajectory put the rocket landing on the planet's southern hemisphere. Without conscious effort Superman shifted his balance so that the nearby yellow sun's gravity tugged him down into a parabolic arc toward the planet.

Telescopic vision showed no signs of any large cities or even any humanoid habitation, mostly jungle looking flora and several large bodies of water. No signs of any large scale settlements. A swath of plant growth, newer than what surrounded it cut a ribbon across a peninsula jutting from the southern most landmass.

"Looks like something landed there some time ago." Superman thought, as he dove down through the thick moist atmosphere.

He removed the re-breather and inhaled, filling his lungs with oxygen rich air.

He slowed his descent to avoid causing a sonic boom; taking advantage of the lower altitude he did a more thorough scan of the local flora and fauna. It looked like evolution had taken pretty much the same route here as on earth. The lush tropical climate on most of the planet provided plenty of vegetation and herbivores grew in abundance. Herds of large buffalo-like creatures roamed large open plains, their backs bristling with large spikes obviously for protection against the packs of

roaming predators that now skirted the open plains looking for an opening to pounce.

Smaller bi-pedal creatures skittered through the thick forest canopy, scaring winged creatures into the air in flocks of thousands, like a shimmering cloud of silver and green that filled the air with loud whistles and snorts that dissipated into the distance. The plants and animals were so rich and diverse that Superman could have spent days marveling at each one, maybe he could somehow transport a small representative of this jungle paradise back home to the fortress.

But for know more pressing matters diverted his attention. The new growth ended near the base of a large cliff. Superman's x-ray vision peeled back layers of rubble at the cliff's base. There, buried under tons of rock that had cascaded from the cliff face above was the outline of a small rocket.

She waited. The ones with the long teeth would pounce soon. She could hear their muscles bunched ready to spring and the calm methodical heartbeats of the grazers. Her last meal had been weeks ago, with the packs last kill. The planets yellow sun, sustained her, the ritual of eating bonded her to the planets animal life, as they did, so did she.

Another sound rose over the jungle. The trees came to life as their color took to the sky in the form of the green and silver winged creatures that had taught her to do as they do.

Something was coming.

She sniffed the air and a strange yet somehow familiar scent filled her nostrils and tickled a long buried and forgotten memory.

Krypton:

Zor-el burst into the room carrying a small girl wrapped in blankets. The ground shook and he nearly lost his balance, putting out his hand he steadied himself on a console that jutted with crystals.

“Please, Jor-el, you must save her! You must let Kara go with Kal-el!” He begged.

Jor-el did not turn from his work. He continued to make calculations and fine tune last minute trajectories. “I am sorry brother, I cannot. The rocket has been calibrated to his exact weight any deviation would surely put both their lives in jeopardy.”

Zor-el grabbed the young scientist by his shirt, forcing him to look at the face of the small child he carried in his arms. “Look at her Jor-el! I am sorry for doubting you and informing the council of your plans, but you cannot doom her to die for my transgressions!”

Jor-el looked into the face of the small child Zor-el held then back at his own son that lay swaddled in his mother’s arms. “I’m sorry Kara.” He whispered.

“NO!” Zor-el shouted! He pushed and Jor-el toppled backwards. With his now free hand Zor-el smashed his fist into Jor-el’s cheek spinning him around onto the rocket intended for his son. Jor-el spat blood from his mouth.

“Stop it!” Lara screamed as she leveled a weapon at Zor-el. “I will protect my son, Zor-el, don’t make your daughters last moments be watching her father die.”

Zor-el fell to his knees his eyes red and swollen he openly wept. “I don’t know what to do, I should have listened... we all should have listened.”

With the back of his hand Jor-el wiped the blood from his lip. “There may yet be a way.” He said.

The predators speed was amazing. They bolted from the under-brush their six long clawed legs propelling them the short distance to the grazers. The oldest grazer was their target. In an instant they were on it. Two hit the animal in the side knocking it down. A third grabbed the exposed throat in its sharp canines, ripping into the flesh. She watched as

glow of the wounded animal faded. She listened as its heartbeat faltered and stopped. There was something else. Another sound, another heartbeat, one that reminded her of her own, the sound dislodged another memory from the hidden recesses of her brain.

Krypton:

“This rocket is the last of the prototypes.” Jor-el placed his hand on a panel in the wall. It slid away revealing a smaller version of the rocket that lay on the launch pad. “Its guidance systems are untested. There is a chance that it could be lost in space forever.”

“Some chance is better than no chance at all.” Zor-el hugged his brother.

“I am sorry, Jor-el, for everything. Thank you.”

“There is another launch site, a few droogals *a kryptonian mile* to the south, you must take it there so as to not alert the council should they be monitoring.” Jor-el snapped an anti-grav unit to the rocket as he instructed a robot to take it, his brother and child to the launch site. “Once there this unit will program the launch for you. You must hurry, I fear there is not much time left.” As if to punctuate Jor-el’s statement, the ground trembled. Kara, frightened began to cry and hugged close to her father.

“Shhh, hush little one, its all-right, everything will be fine soon.” Zor-el held her close and followed the hovering robot to the transport.

Superman lifted one of the largest boulders and tossed it aside. It clattered down into the valley below.

The predators stopped eating, and jerked their heads up from the carcass of the fallen grazer. The faint echo of the sound of falling, no, moving rock, interrupted their feast.

She whirled around. Miles and jungle wisped away like fog as she focused in on the source of the sound. What is that? She thought, she had never seen any of the beasts that walk like her that were that color.

Another memory exploded into her consciousness:

Zor-el laid his daughter into the rocket. Nearby the robot twisted and inserted crystals into a control panel.

"May Rao, bless and guide you little Kara."

Kara looked up at him, puzzlement in her eyes. The big shiny thing scared her a little.

"Dadda" she reached for him as the canopy slid over the opening and sealed with a hiss.

Why was Dadda leaving her? She wondered. It was dark, she was scared. She began to cry.

Krypton:

Krypton breathed its last breath, the planet's crust swelled and with a sigh it contracted.

Jor-el's lab shook as its foundation began to crumble. This was Krypton's last moment. The contents inside the lab came crashing down. Several experiments crashed to the floor peppering the lab with explosions. Jor-el and Lara held each other as the rocket carrying Kal-el lifted from its base and the lab came crashing down around them.

Across the plain Zor-el watched the tiny ship as the engines fired and it struggled to lift from its base. The engines spit and died. "NO" Zor-el screamed, as he started toward the tiny rocket the fuel ignited, throwing him across the small bunker. The ship lifted from its launch pad as the bunker collapsed.

The ship broke Krypton's upper troposphere as the planet lurched and spewed itself out into the cosmos. Kara's ship caught in the expanding energy wave was tossed outward into the darkness.

The red and blue thing clawed at the rock. She could not let it take her

nest. She burst forward from the dense jungle intent on tearing the life from the creature's throat.

Superman stumbled backward as Kara leapt for his throat.

He fell backward as she pounced upon him. He held up his arm blocking Kara from reaching his throat. Her other arm ending in a steel hard fist, came rushing toward his head. He turned and her blow glanced his ear, smacking into the hard rock creating a small crater. He rolled out from under her and up to his knees. His ear rang.

"No, wait you don't understand I'm here looking for you."

The red and blue nest robber growled at her. She made the burning from her eyes.

Kara's heat-vision burned into Superman's insignia, through the fabric of his uniform and into the flesh of his chest.

"YYEAAARRRRGGGGHHHH" ! The pain was intense and unexpected. He almost blacked out. He inhaled deeply, the taste of charred flesh almost made him gag. He pushed the air from his lungs directing it at the wild girl in front of him. The sudden rush of air pushed her back into the cliff. Superman touched the clasp on his belt. A tiny compartment sprang open. He took a small device from it and threw it at the already advancing Kara.

A shimmering portal opened up in front of her. She ran headlong into it and it closed with a boom.

The scars across Superman's chest had already begun to heal. He would have to remember to thank Bruce for either his foresight or paranoia. He was never quite sure which it was with him. No one but Bruce would have thought of a one-time-use, mini boom tube.

Funny how everyone called him a boy scout, Superman thought. But it was Bruce that was always prepared.

The mini-boom tube threw Kara out onto the cold hard floor. Her insides tumbled over and over, her body had never experienced the gravity defying tug of a boom tube, she wretched onto the floor. A blinding white light emanated from everywhere. Still dizzy she managed to stand and screamed, trying to get her bearings, listening to hear the echo bounce back. There was nothing, the sound absorbed by the whiteness. She strained to look, to see beyond the white light, she couldn't. She walked forward and was stopped by something that wasn't there. Her mind overloaded with things she didn't understand it shut down and she fell, unconscious, to the floor.

Superman adjusted the mask on his re-breather, in the outer orbit of the planets gravity he flew, gaining speed, one more last trip around the planet and one last push against the planets gravity flung him into outer space, his momentum carrying toward the distant blue speck of earth and another survivor of the planet Krypton.

"Kara. Kara. Kara. Kara." She could hear her Dad's voice calling to her.

Kara shuddered, she could see her Dad but only for a moment as a thick film slid over her vision, she was scared, crying.

"Kara. Kara. Kara. Kara." His voice, again, something was wrong.

Suddenly she was moving, as her Dad slipped further and further away, till she could no longer see him.

"Kara Zor-el, Kara Zor-el" It sounded faint, distant, and hollow.

Her body trembled and a sudden white flash obscured everything she had ever known.

Her eyes blinked open, the white light was gone. A small metallic gold thing floated above her.

"Kara Zor-el, of Krypton, Welcome to the Fortress of Solitude." It said.

The yellow light swathed Luthor's underground lab, making all the colors an odd hue.

Lex adjusted dials and made last minute computations. It was almost done. The clone was almost done. It was time to upload the clone with Luthor's handmade physiological imprint to insure it's obedience to him. Physically it resembled the kryptonian, though it had slightly different features, something Luthor had not expected, but no matter. Its mind was a blank slate ready for Luthor's unique brand of brainwashing.

Luthor's fingers ran over the control console as he linked directly to neural pathways connecting by the wires that ran from the clones head up through the viscous liquid in the chamber. The clone opened its eyes and spasmed.

"What the hell was that?!" Luthor said. He checked and rechecked monitors and readouts. There was feedback along the neuro-pathways. How is that possible? Luthor wondered.

The clone gulped inhaling the thick liquid. He was drowning. Instinctively he lashed out striking the thick glass of the tube; it splintered as white cracks radiated out from the impact.

Luthor scrambled to regain control and began pumping a sedative into the tubes and wires connecting to the clone's body.

The clone struck the glass again and it burst outward splattering the lab in the birthing fluid. Delicate machinery sparked, unholy connections being made from circuit to circuit by the wet fluid.

A small explosion sent a small beaker flying into Luthor's head knocking him to the floor at the foot of the clone chamber.

The clone, breathing heavy, stepped from the shattered chamber as the sedatives that Luthor managed to administer were slowly taking effect

"I am Jor-el of Krypton, where am I?" He said, as he passed out on top of the astonished Luthor.

To Be Continued... !

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Food for the mind