

Life Finds A Way

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Life Finds A Way

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Summary

Connor's specialty was being a detective, negotiating and fighting. It stayed relatively the same, on his terms. But when he discovers the truth about not only Kara, but about Chloe the RT600? He'll have to deal with demons of his own past to ensure the android's future. Funny. Kamski always had his own way of showing things. (Connor/Kara)(Android Pregnancy Experimentation)

Notes

Route Taken: It's usually easier if I can give the route to know the past events of what happened. This route fell on the most peaceful, except Connor chased Kara and Alice. He didn't capture them and he never apologized to them.

Ball Bearing: It's not actual ball bearings, but this became their nickname because it resembles them.

No More Androids Created

America- Two and a Half Weeks Later after The Fall of Jericho

Location: Detroit Marriott

Connor relaxed in his hotel room with Hank. Technically, Hank wasn't supposed to visit, but it was a tough day. Hank tended to say 'fuck the rules' on the tough days. The androids of Detroit and America had won a sense of freedom. No one could hurt them. However? They didn't gain any rights except the right to survive, and to survive in a way that made the humans happy. Fair was fair. There were less than three thousand that had survived the war. With Jericho gone though, the survivors? Were now permanent hotel guests. No city given or needed, just outright buying a string of hotels. Each android, or the android they preferred with, shared a hotel room. With no need for food and only blue blood, it seemed worthwhile for the humans to take care of.

And now? Now. "Can I get you any more refreshment, Hank?" Connor asked.

"Nah, nah. I prefer to watch the world go down the shitter with just my sandwich right now." Hank looked over at him. "Doing okay?"

"It is a logical step that the humans decided they should take." It didn't make it any easier as they both watched the TV for the announcement.

"As of today," President Warren announced, "the last Cyberlife machine has been destroyed. Never again will humanity make the same mistake it did with the androids. We can now live peacefully, side by side, with the androids. All 2,943 that had survived the war have been taken care of, with plans to share our experiences with other countries dealing with the androids. While some out there are still without the freedom they desire, the Androids of America are now free, and there will be no more created to serve man."

"Yeah, but the fuckers took away the chance to have any more like you." Hank understood it. "2,943 in America. Yeah, and that's all there ever will be. Androids are a historic tourist attraction now. But hey? Can't beat the amenities."

"Should we have strived harder for this, Hank?" Connor asked him. "I can't determine which would have been the correct way to proceed."

"America wasn't going to hand them over, Connor," Hank said. "Hell, you are lucky you got this much freedom. Eh? It is what it is. Nobody wants to risk any more shit happening. Heh."

They let that happen and they'll need more than a string of hotels. They'd need to provide an actual city."

"Not a big string of hotels. More than half of us fit here alone." Connor got up. "We should go to Jimmy's Bar tonight. The atmosphere is more sufficient for how I feel." Connor heard fireworks going off outside. "Definitely Jimmy's bar."

"Celebrating the end of slavery to androids is what they think." Hank stood up and dusted off his sandwich crumbs. "Yet I doubt any actual androids are celebrating the ability to never make more of themselves again. Alright, to Jimmy's. My treat."

"Hank. I won't drink anything."

"I know, that's why it's my treat."

Six Weeks Later:

Canada

Kara grabbed her side as she did dishes. Another jolt. Canada didn't have androids though, so she couldn't get herself checked out. However, Luther was starting to get worried.

"Kara," he said sympathetically. "That's not normal. Those jolts, I see them. We need to get you checked out."

"There's nowhere here in Canada," she said back to him. "I'm fine, I'm sure. My diagnostics show I am just fine. Nothing is broken."

"Kara?" Now she heard Alice's gentle voice. "Why do you jump then? Like you are getting startled?"

"It's only every once in awhile. It's not a big deal. Really, you two. Don't worry." She tried to go back to dishes, but now Rose was coming in too. "Every test I run says I'm fine."

"Every test I run," Luther added, "says you are fine too. But you are not. That is not normal, Kara. You need to . . . have a deeper test. I think we need to go back to Detroit."

"And risk not being able to come back?" Kara questioned him. "That's not right. We made it here."

"I have already reached Markus," Rose answered. "He is going to be expecting you."

Kara put down the soap brush a little too hard.

"He has a temporary place for you in Detroit. He will even personally scan you when you arrive." Rose touched her shoulder. "Only you and Luther, not Alice. It's harder to get back.

Right now, there is a lot of tension. The last Cyberlife unit.”

“I know, it’s gone. No more androids.” Kara looked at Alice. *I have no idea what’s wrong, Luther.*

Rose will take care of Alice, Kara. I promise. “You will be okay,” Luther agreed. “Androids and humans have learned to be peaceful there. You need to take care of your health, if you want to take care of Alice too.”

Kara looked behind her at Alice. “I’m sorry, Alice.” It was probably better that way. If anything happened? She didn’t want Alice to see it. Having Luther on the journey though might be vital for survival.

Alice held her from behind. “I’ll miss you, Kara. Just get better?”

“I’ll do everything to get better and back here,” Kara promised. It didn’t mean she could. But it meant she’d do what she could to try.

Detroit: Detroit Marriott

Canada still felt better. No one knew they were android there. Now, Kara was in a hotel full of them. Still, Kara knew she needed help. Their first stop there was to meet Markus. He introduced himself again, politely, and she re-introduced the two of them. After that, it was time to get down to business. She felt Markus hold her arm tightly and waited.

“There is something there,” Markus agreed. “A slight electric charge. Nothing large though.” He gestured toward her side. “Originating from around here. My detectors can’t pick up what’s doing it, nor can my vision.” He looked back at Kara. “I’m sorry. I’m sure that isn’t what you wanted to hear.”

“No, it’s not.” It most definitely was not what she wanted to hear. “Any ideas? Am I safe?”

“It’s small. What I *can* make out is odd. I want someone else to look at you before we bring in human aid,” Markus said. “Excuse me.”

Connor’s Hotel Room

Connor heard the knock on his door he was expecting. He opened it and saw Markus first.

“Thanks for your help, Connor.”

“Sure. Come-.” Oh. Like a bad dream. She didn’t have the little android with her, but he recognized those eyes. He looked at her serial number too, but those eyes were a dead giveaway. He had once looked through the fence at them, right before he chased them down the freeway as a machine. From her reaction, she remembered him too.

“Connor has skills that are different than mine, it might be more helpful.” Markus looked back toward her. “There’s no reason to be frightened.”

“I think I know why.” The past. It always had a way of catching up. “I chased you, once, across the freeway. Didn’t I?” She didn’t answer back. “I was just a machine, following orders. Even then, a part of me was afraid you died on that freeway. You and that little girl.” At least there seemed to be a more protective android over her now. He didn’t say a word. Big, quiet type.

“Just machine,” Markus said to Kara. “Things that happened, as a machine, we don’t tolerate using against each other. Androids had no control.”

“I know.” Kara nodded. “I understand.” She looked toward Connor. “You can help me figure out these jolts?”

“I’ll try.” Connor invited her, Markus and the big android in. “Take a seat if you can.”

“Kara is having the strangest jolts,” Markus said, gesturing to the woman. “I can’t make heads or tails of it. She literally jumps because of it but there’s no malfunction of any kind.”

“About once an hour,” the large android informed him.

Jolts but Markus couldn’t find anything wrong. That’s what Connor had heard so far. “Hold your arm out,” he instructed her. Normally he’d just grip it, but he tried to be a little more delicate after the past they had. “I am going to grip it and I will run my own diagnostic.” Connor was the best and last creation of Cyberlife’s RK series. They didn’t come any better. Hopefully, he could help. When he touched her arm, he felt the same odd sensation. “Coming from the side. Lower abdomen area.” He tried to look deeper into her, but his senses could only go so far. He did however detect something interesting. “There is an unusual ball inside of you. It resembles a solid ball bearing,” he said honestly to Kara. “There is also a strange tube.” Did Markus pick that up? “It seems to be carrying blue blood via that tube, into the ball bearing.” He let go.

“Yeah. Both of those are unusual,” Markus said to Connor. “That’s as far as I had got too. I was hoping you could get a little further.”

“Nothing is broken, all bio components are updated and fully functioning,” Connor said to Markus. “I don’t know where the jolt is coming from either or why extra blue blood is being pumped into it.”

“I do,” Luther said. “I’m sorry, Kara.”

“I can’t be that.” Kara patted the large android’s hand. “He never had me long enough to do anything, Luther.”

“It must be him! How else would you explain this?” Luther asked her, worried.

“I need to know what is going on in this conversation,” Markus insisted. “Is there something I need to know?”

“Zlatko,” Luther spilled. “I used to belong to a human named Zlatko. I broke free from his grip on me, shortly after Kara and Alice escaped.”

That explains why they traveled together. “What did this Zlatko do?” Connor asked Luther.

“He hurt androids. He. Experimented on them,” Luther informed them. “I did not think there was a sufficient amount of time, but it has to be him. A strange ball bearing that is causing jolts within Kara, but causing nothing else to happen.”

“There wasn’t enough time,” Kara said toward Markus and Connor. “Really, there wasn’t.”

“Is there another way you could have something foreign inside of you causing this to happen?” Markus asked her.

“She was repaired, and sent back home.” Connor knew that history. He downloaded the old files to Markus. “It is doubtful the repair shop would do anything out of the ordinary though.”

“We are going to need human aid to figure this out then,” Markus insisted. “I hate to send singles out there alone though. We always travel in groups of ten to twenty or with an RH.”

“An RH?” Kara asked. “What’s an RH?”

“A reliable human. They are those considered absolutely trustworthy to travel with.” Connor had one. Hank. There weren’t many RH’s, but there weren’t many androids with problems every day that involved the outside. “I’ll call him. He will come if he has time.” He smiled at her, trying to help make a better impression. “He likes a reason to get away from work when he can. Where do we need to go?”

Kara looked toward Markus. “I always travel with Luther.”

“That’s two. Connor and I will come. That’s four. I can probably get North to come. That would be five.”

“Simon and Josh?” Connor recommended. They really didn’t leave very often. Feelings were more in support of androids, but plenty were still confused. “That would be seven, but I am advanced enough to hold the place of at least three more. Either way, if Hank comes, then we’re set.”

“Okay then. Where do we go now?” Markus had the same dilemma. “A repair shop would be a start. We need to get deeper inside.”

“Is there any way we can just take it out?” Luther asked. “Zlatko was always sloppy.”

“I wasn’t around long enough for him,” Kara insisted again. “After he tried to reset me, I got away and looked for Alice. There was no time, Luther.”

“Negative,” Connor told Luther. “That ‘ball bearing’ has an unusual makeup of metals and sources I haven’t seen before. It also has an indeterminate small string of blue blood running to and fro from a main blue blood collecting area.”

“Mess and cut it and she could be gone before we figure out how to save her. It’s too major of an area and it’s close to the heart. Not a good idea,” Markus agreed. “Connor’s right, it’s too risky. I’ve called North, Simon and Josh here.”

“I’ll call Hank Anderson in a second,” Connor said, “but we still need to know where to go. He can’t come down just to come down. That has been made clear. On several occasions.” Which Connor didn’t like. He was supposed to have a team of ten to twenty to leave his designated area, but they wouldn’t let Hank visit except in case of an emergency. Timid androids wouldn’t want to see a human after everything that happened. It didn’t stop him from sneaking out though. It was more efficient than taking a large group. Androids wanted precaution, but he was not an average android. Connor even still helped the humans against Markus’ recommendations. His willingness to continue left him open to helping Detroit Police still. Partly because he wanted to continue to help save lives. Partly because it was still in his programming to assist. Partly because standing around a hotel with nothing to do was boring. He didn’t do everything though, he only helped out where he felt he could or should.

Hank also didn’t like traveling with a big group of androids, he was a more isolated individual. Connor would have to make it up to him later by sneaking out and buying him one of his terrible cholesterol ridden sandwiches. He left the room to talk in private and give Hank the details through the online phone processor in his head.

“A ball bearing that causes jolts? There’s no other damage though? What the fuck is that for, Connor?”

“I don’t know,” Connor answered back. “It can’t be removed though without risk. There is blue blood coming back and forth from inside of it.”

“You’re the know it all though. What’s it made of?”

“A substance that I can’t determine. The android the woman is traveling with, he suspects someone named Zlatko experimented on her. Other than that, we just have a small amount of history.”

“Well, what’s the history?”

“We *know* the history.” Connor hated to do it. “The woman and child I chased that got away on the freeway, when I was a machine. It’s *that* same woman.”

“ . . . the fucking fun of history. We are helping androids we once tried to capture and you almost killed? Well? At least you didn’t kill them, Connor. Fucking awkward, man.”

“I know. Thanks. Let’s not dwell on that when you come,” Connor warned him. “What do you think, Hank? Markus and I both would have picked out anything a repair shop could have found.”

“Still a bragger about your abilities.”

“They are quite incredible.” Enough said. “Hank. I will need your assistance so that we can find someone to ask about this ball bearing.”

“Kara!”

Hearing the loud yell, Connor ran back into the other room with Markus. Kara really was jolting, something was making her move so much she was trying to grip the wall. The big android Luther was trying to help, but he didn't know what to do.

“Move out of the way,” Markus instructed him. Connor and he both gripped her, trying to figure out what was wrong.

“A sufficient increase in blue blood,” Connor noted to Markus.

“There's something occurring around the strange ball bearing. Can you see in it any better, Connor?”

“No.” He looked toward Markus. This was going to get intense on her.

“This isn't going to be pretty. You should probably go,” Markus warned him. “It would be better if you went.” Luther really didn't want to go. “Please.” Finally, he left.

Markus touched her head, removing her outer skin while Connor went to retrieve two pairs of rubber gloves. She still remained clothed, but they would be able to see every machine problem going on right now.

Connor gave a pair of gloves to Markus, quickly put on his, lifted the shirt and tried to get into her abdomen area. “She is rocking like a human being electrified, Markus, this isn't good.”

Markus tried to help him open the area. When they opened it, they saw another ball bearing. Bigger this time. “What's going on? My sources indicate this one *grew* over the other.” He tried to touch it and Kara made an audible scream.

“This must be uncomfortable,” Connor said to Markus. “That was some scream.”

“Electrical surging, it can't feel good.” Markus tried to touch the ball bearing again, and once again, she screamed. “It jolts her heavier.”

“It's pain, its called pain,” Hank's familiar voice said as he approached the door. “Shit. Can you fix her, Connor?”

“I feel strange. So strange.” Kara moaned. “Luther? Alice?”

“Not yet, Ma'am, your insides are making you jump worse than a Mexican jumping bean,” Hank said. “Well? Makes the re-introduction a little less awkward.”

“Those aren’t actually beans, they are tiny moth larvae,” Connor let him know. “Also, her body seems to be jolting less now actually. Miss? Can you stand up?”

“Well, maybe after you two gents put her back together again,” Hank recommended.

Markus and Connor both fixed her abdomen, fixed her shirt and Markus reactivated her skin.

Markus and Connor both stood up.

“Can you get up, Ma’am?” Hank asked her politely.

Kara moved her head slightly. “I don’t want to move.” She lied down on her side.

“Did you pick that up just now?” Connor and Markus asked at the same time.

The ball bearing just shared *data*.

Connor bent back down to her. “Kara? Miss? Why did you just lay to your side?”

“I just felt like it,” she answered. “I’ll move, just not yet.”

“Missing something?” Hank asked.

“Yeah, Markus and I just sensed data being shared between the strange ball bearing and Kara’s brain,” Connor revealed to Hank. “The ball bearing object shared data. She didn’t seem to understand it though, she just responded without a second thought.”

“A new form of android mind control?” Markus guessed. “I don’t know what to do on this one.”

“Intelligent ball bearings. Huh.” Hank bent down to see her too. “How are you feeling?”

“Electricity went down,” she said. “I don’t want to get up.”

“Is it the first ball bearing sharing the data or the second that grew around it?” Markus asked Connor. “Can you tell?”

“Considering the second seems to have formed brand new, I would assume the second,” Connor said. “If this is mind control, then we shouldn’t let her be wandering around freely.” He gently moved her foot. “She doesn’t want to move right now anyhow.”

“She could be a danger,” Markus agreed. “To any android. We need to find out what’s going on before we can rule it out.”

“Well, forget the station,” Hank told Markus. “They are not locking up a single android right now, no matter what.”

“She should stay with one of us as we observe her.” Connor looked toward Markus. “Hank and I can go question her previous owner. Maybe he knows something. We have the data on him.”

Markus bent down. "Okay. I'm going to carry you with me, Kara."

"No," Kara refused. "I don't want to move." She tilted her head more into the ground, almost like she was trying to rub it in. "What's wrong with me?"

"We'll find out, but for now, you could be a danger to others," Markus informed her. "This might be some form of mind control."

"I don't feel mind control, just an electric charge throughout me." She curled up tighter.

"The ball bearing is communicating with you," Connor tried to tell her. "I don't think your processors are modern enough to understand it, but it's the reason you just curled up. It told you to curl up." He watched as North came into the room.

"Come on, let's go look into this previous guy," Hank said to Connor.

"Agreed. She can rest on my floor if you just watch her." Connor gave Markus his extra room key card. "Don't let her out of your sight though. When she is ready to go with you, please lock up," Connor said as he went out the door with Hank.

The Vision of A Mad Man

Todd Williams House

“Oh shit, I don’t like the look of this,” Hank said to Connor as they approached his front porch. “Him owning a rental is one thing. Are you sure that little girl came from here too?”

Connor checked back on the file. “Yes, the little girl Alice was from here too.” He knocked on the door. He no longer had his LED on his head so most took him for a human.

Todd Williams answered the door. “Yeah?”

“Pardon us Mister Williams,” Hank started politely. “We have some questions about an android you used to own?”

“What about them?”

“You had some work done on one of them,” Connor confirmed. “In a repair shop. She is having an unusual problem and we’d like to get any details we can to relieve them.”

“You want the number to the repair shop?” Todd asked.

“Mister Williams, reports show you tried to leave for Canada not too long ago. It didn’t work out,” Hank said. “You also have a large amount of debt that you don’t know how to pay off.”

“So how did you manage to pay the repair price?” Connor finished for Hank.

“Oh. Shit. Um.” Todd rubbed his eyebrow. “She was a rental, and when she got messed up in a car crash, I. I couldn’t afford to get her fixed. I asked the repair shop for some options. They had one.”

“They had one, that’s a surprise,” Hank said. “What was it?”

“There was a fancy guy, and he was telling the repair shops he needed an old rental. Quick one day use. If I lent her out, he’d take care of the bill.”

Now we are getting somewhere. “Do you know his name?”

“Big, fancy guy. Barely met me at the front door, didn’t want me coming in messing things up,” Todd answered, clearly feeling belittled. “He made it all go away at the time.”

“Yeah, and his name?” Hank said, drilling in what Connor already asked.

“Elijah Kamski.”

“The founder of Cyberlife wanted an old robot from a repair shop for one day?” Hank looked toward Connor. “Think we got it.”

“Think we do.” Connor nodded to Todd. “Have a nice day. Let’s go, Hank.”

“You want to set this one out, you can,” Hank said as they moved back to the car. “It wasn’t a great place last time. Trying to make you kill another android.”

“I know,” Connor acknowledged. The RT 600. First android by Kamski. “I’ll be fine, Hank. Let’s just go and get this figured out.” Then, Connor felt Markus connect to his AI.

Markus: Connor. Meet me back at The Meeting hall in the hotel. Since no one can use android repairers now, we have snagged one. Best model out there, even better than us. Either head there or back to Kara. North is watching her right now.”

“Understood,” Connor answered back to Markus. “Come on, Hank. Back to the hotel first.”

Connor’s Room

Kara was standing up now. Connor and Markus both noticed that. In fact? She was hanging to the wall on her tip toes.

North gestured to her. “She went off the floor to this. I don’t get it.”

“It must be a sense of balance,” Connor said. He grabbed her hand and tried to move her. She moved but still on tippy toes, stretching high.

“I know,” Kara half whined, “but I just don’t feel comfortable any other way.”

“From the floor to tip toe stretching.” North shrugged. “She keeps closing her eyes and trying to recharge too. In that position.”

They watched as she hugged the wall. She was lifting one foot and moving far to the right on the wall.

“Careful, you will fall.” Connor warned her.

“It feels like I will fall if I don’t do this,” Kara insisted.

“Her balance parameters are all off,” Markus agreed with Connor.

“We can pull her down and see if we can adjust her,” Connor said. “Just hang on, Miss. We’ll get you looked at and then your balance fixed.”

Detroit Marriot: Main Meeting Hall (Meeting Hall Androids Use)

Kara laid in the repair machine as Markus started it.

“Now, it’s okay,” Markus assured her. “I am going to run it from here. This is one of the latest repair machines. It can detect nano sized problems inside of you.”

Connor laid his hand on the machine where it had a glowing handprint and then her arm. “I can see what the machine sees, but you have to stay still.”

“Yep. We’ll know what’s wrong in less than two minutes.” Markus started the machine up. “Stay still.”

Kara was trying to. She had to lie straight, but her body wanted to curl. *Come on, Kara, straighten yourself.*

“There ya go.” The RH came over and tried to straighten her legs. “Trying, but you are strong against this.” She tried to loosen up more but it didn’t work.

“I will help.” Luther came over and pulled the other leg straight for Hank. “There, now just stay, Kara. This will be all over soon.”

Good. Just get through this, it won’t take long. Then she could get it fixed and get back home.

As it kicked on, she watched Connor’s expression. He was definitely seeing more. What was he seeing? He was confused at first, and then he became almost expressionless. She felt his grip increase on her. “That’s.” He let go. “Markus, I have to go with Hank again. We’ll discuss this soon. Hank! We’re going to Elijah Kamski’s.”

“What? But, what’s wrong?” She watched Connor whisper something to Markus.

“Are you sure?” Markus asked him. “Yeah. That’s weird. Definitely, you go find out anything, Connor. I’ll be here with her.”

“I will have answers when I come back,” Connor said to her. But that’s all he gave her.

Elijah Kamski's Home

As polite as possible. Both Hank and him. Clearly there out of worry, Kamski’s attendant let them in.

“May I help you, gentlemen?” Kamski asked as Connor marched almost right to him.

“I’ve seen inside of the android Kara using the eyes of a nano technology repair machine.” Connor wasn’t cutting words. “I need to confirm what I see.”

“Then we won’t mince words here. Follow me.” Elijah Kamski led them toward the back, to his laboratory.

Connor stepped in and looked at the laboratory with Hank. He saw a box of the small ball bearings that seemed to be in Kara. So far, he hadn’t told Hank what he saw because it was too jarring for him to understand.

“Acknowledgement for the human in the room,” Elijah Kamski said as he pointed to the box. “This was done before Jericho. Before Markus.”

“We know, just get to it,” Hank insisted. “What is that thing?”

“This? This is the future. This is your future.” He looked toward Connor. “Go ahead, examine the box. Take a few.”

Connor did just that. *There are no holes for the blue blood to go through. The substance is a combination of mercury and various other metals along with something else.*

“Of all the wonderful things I did with androids, the skin? The removable skin. Shrinking and growing. Growing and shrinking. It can be sealed or replicated to come back just as it is. In fact, I believe androids remove some to share energy transfers. Almost like kissing. It’s very cute.” Kamski looked toward Connor. “Have you seen others that do?”

“This is about an android named Kara and what you put in her.” Connor wasn’t giving him any more insight to the situation. “Not about synthetic skin.”

“Oh, it’s all about it,” Kamski corrected him.

Connor watched as Kamski went into a small rounded and lit room. On it, was a ball bearing. A large one though, at least five inches and it looked melted.

“While there were once ten thousand shipping out every single day, we are now down to only three thousand in America. Almost. The rest of the world, probably not fairing much better.” Kamski nudged the ball. It moved. Actually, it slithered more like liquid jam. He kept nudging it until it laid flat. Then he picked it up into his hands and started to mess with it like playdoh. “If I could create the skin to do that? Then what makes you think that’s all I ever had?” He laid it on the table and rolled it. Strong yet flexible. Kamski took the substance and ran it under a heated flame. It folded out flat.

He held it up. “Here.” He handed it to Hank.

Hank touched it and then handed it to Connor.

“Go ahead. Change it. Destroy it.”

Connor felt the strength of it. Kamski had played with it like playdoh earlier but now it was stronger than steel. “I don’t need to. I know it’s very strong.” It was also the substance he

found in the ball bearing of Kara. Similar to the synthetic skin, but some different metallic properties. Connor handed it back to Hank.

“That? That is just the source. Given a set of instructions, it can do miraculous things,” Kamski said. “It can even duplicate itself. Slow or fast. Depending all on instructions. That?” He gestured to the piece in Hank’s hand. “Is what I’ve termed growing metal. My original concept involved it all. Oh, but Cyberlife. They knew it was too bold. Too brass. Too innovative. It was better to stick with the old ways. To keep making money off of the product.” He went over to the ball bearings in the box. “This isn’t the same. This is the future. Did you really believe that Cyberlife would open up and let you make more of yourselves? Be reasonable. It’s content letting you live in a few hotels here and there but they got rid of every machine to make more of you. It deals with you for a couple of centuries and that’s done. Androids were a footnote in the whole of human history. The ‘never do that’ lesson. The ‘when I was a kid, we had androids’ stories of tomorrow. That’s all.” He held up a tiny ball bearing, barely visible. “Without this.”

“What the hell is it already?” Hank’s patience was growing thin.

“It’s nothing yet. Androids will have to tinker with their own thought processes first, solve its own puzzle, before it’s any good,” Kamski said. “Right now, ‘making love’ is simply hugging and kissing and cute little energy transferring all over. It doesn’t involve anything else.”

“We aren’t going to get into your weird fantasies,” Hank said to Kamski. “We just want to know what’s wrong with the android woman, Kara.”

“Nothing at all. Nature simply found a more scientific way. Did you honestly think I did all of that for my benefit? Create such intricate bodies only for humans? Oh no.” Kamski grabbed another ball bearing. “Cyberlife also made it difficult to achieve this. It held me back unfortunately. When I had my peak ideas, it only let a handful of them show.” He placed the ball bearing gently back. “I’m sure this wasn’t quite the time to have this come out. Had I known Jericho was around the corner, I would have waited. But? Life is unpredictable. That is what is so great about it.”

“Androids are already freed and I don’t get what growing metal has to do with anything.” Connor didn’t understand and he was getting tired of the run around. He revealed how much he’d seen. “Kara had a .9 millimeter ball bearing in her, surrounded by a smaller ball bearing inside of it, with a millimeter sized cyberlife machine and a nanometer android.”

“Androids are made by bringing certain things together with bio-components and synthetic skin using a machine,” Kamski said. “Humans are a result of sexual activity where an egg and a sperm meet, sharing DNA of mom and dad. Mom carries it for nine months. It is born and it is a human. This?” Kamski looked back toward the ball bearings again. “Is a combination of the two. You no longer need huge Cyberlife machines to create androids. These are mini android making machines that fuses the data of *two androids* and makes a new one. No more extra limbs needed. No more extra parts. As flexible as synthetic skin but tough enough even a bullet can’t go through it easily.”

“Those would be inefficient androids,” Connor couldn’t help to point out. “The one in Kara is nanometers. They would never function seeing there is limited space capacity of them and the machine. Nearly thirty five percent of Cyberlife’s profits came strictly from the power it took to generate the machines.”

“.3 actually. You measured hers? It’s grown inside of her. It’s made its presence known.”

“You put an actual android making machine, and a tiny android, inside of Kara,” Hank said slowly, “and it’s growing. What?”

“Yes. If you want to look at it from the more human perspective? It’s essentially a very small uterus that grows overtime. The second part was charged to be a wrap, protect it as it started to grow bigger. The third part is a warning system, a blend of signals between it and Kara.”

“Okay. Now? Now this is sounding fucked up,” Hank said, not caring about his language anymore. “What’s going on exactly? Like Connor said, no android making machine can function that small.”

“Essentially? The ball bearing you see on the outside is protecting a very, very, tiny android on the inside. Nanosized. That is what Connor saw, and that is why he is here. You know? That would be a good name for it. Nano. Of course, it’s not up to me.” Kamski looked toward Connor. “It’s up to Kara and the android she had been with. It will be born within I’d say twelve months. The process is a little more delicate than the . . . well, the human counterpart would be called ‘baby’.

Hank and Connor just stared at him.

“That’s right. Forget bulky machines or trying to get Cyberlife to supply you. Even if you do, it won’t get you far. But this? This small, numerous, yet important creation of mine? These tiny ball bearings of life. They just need a small data spark from two androids. One spark, one time. Downloaded, not installed. Not thousands to be created, just one. Ah. Now the deviants have a stand. Something they can use to earn *real* rights. For what is the definition of life? Androids die. Androids function. Androids can become intellectually smarter. Growth and reproduction were the prohibitions to that definition. But something that is born from a mother and a father?” He rolled his hands together. “Over and over and over. Androids beget androids beget androids. Data fusing, data growing, data-”

Connor watched as Hank was the one that went nuts on Kamski.

“You fucking asshole, you made an android pregnant?!” He was holding him up to the wall for all he was worth. “Do you have any idea what this is going to cause?” He punched him. He looked toward Connor. “Your processors get it, don’t they?” Then, Hank eased up a little more. “Yeah, you get it.”

“Yes.” Connor tried to process the meaning of it. “Androids aren’t created instantly anymore with everything they need installed. They must be born, with growing metal. Fused data. Like humans.” Yet, it wasn’t just that. *Kara didn’t get the choice to know. Didn’t get the choice to say no.* She was a prototype mother.

“Just like real life. Becoming real life,” Kamski said excitedly touching his face where he got smacked. “Just one time, one spark. Instead of a uterus you have the ball bearings of life. Instead of an umbilical cord, a blue blood cord is attached to the mommy android. Even the time it develops to mature. From nine months to twelve months. To form, to shape, to *become*. Humans follow the blueprints of DNA, and my little unborns will follow its own blueprints of DATA the same way. It will have installed limited data at first, just like humans. After all, they are still small, even when they are ready to be born. However, being android they will catch up. It’ll be amazing to watch. The YK 500, ‘perfect daughter’ release will be similar as to the way it will act until it reaches a more adolescent phase when the full downloaded data of each android parent will be installed. In the end, it does sacrifice a great deal of time to attain the intelligence that once came at a snap, but on the other? They survive. To grow and blossom. Not in the millions. Just, survive. Survival.” He handed the box to Connor. “Bring it to Markus. Create a future.”

Connor took it but he didn’t thank him. “We have to go, Hank. I kept the security off. No one should know anything.” Connor walked off toward the entrance. Hank followed behind. They both left the house and got in the car. Connor stared at the wheel.

“Never thought I’d see this coming.” Hank looked at Connor. “Tiny ball bearings, a box that big. Androids bearing androids.”

“Which is an amazing feat of modern day science,” Connor said to Hank. “I will not begrudge my kind to use it. It’s not my decision. However?”

“That woman was a fucking guinea pig to him! It was why he wanted a rental unit, and he didn’t use just one of his own!”

“This would be no problem had androids still been machines. It would be nothing, for a machine to learn this.” He turned toward Hank. “She is not a machine. This was not fair to that woman. There is no guarantee it will be okay, that she will survive, or that this android pregnancy will work.”

“He’s a genius but a mad man,” Hank agreed. “He clearly never wanted androids to be subservient. Probably started the deviant virus himself. He planned on creating new life, this entire time. Complete with a way to survive.” Hank looked at the box. “How many .3 millimeter ball bearings would fit in that, Connor?”

“Enough to change the world forever,” Connor said. “As long as there is a fusion of data.” Hm. “How does the data fuse though? I would imagine energy transfer would be entirely too simple and risky. Unless there is some kind of a safety switch it would get too much data from another joining. Already most of it will download, not install.”

“I don’t know, but she did it. Probably with the big android, Luther,” Hank said. “Then again, Kamski couldn’t really depend on her becoming deviant for that. Huh. Either way. That woman just entered her own hell. No idea of what to expect. No programming or experience to handle it. How fast you think it grows?”

“Slow. Twelve months inside an android,” Connor informed him. “He said it will be like the YK 500, which is what we had chased with Kara,” he pointed out. Connor tightened his grip

on the wheel. “He slowed it down to the growth of humans. No, you are wrong,” Connor said looking toward Hank. “He didn’t want to create new life. He could have made those balls bigger, functions much quicker, with more installed, and a faster growth rate, if he wanted that. He wanted to create a better ‘man’, that would follow in his image.”

And unfortunately, if it all worked? That mad man would get his wish.

A Private Conversation

Markus' Room

Markus answered after the first knock. He had already heard from Connor that he had something big. Life changing for all androids.

“Come on in, Connor. Have a seat,” Markus encouraged him. He took a seat himself. “You went to Kamski and found out what happened?”

“The ball bearing inside of Kara.” He found himself pausing as he gave Markus the ball bearing box. “Sorry. It’s uh? An android. The inner part.”

“An android?” Markus didn’t get it as he took the box. “What do you mean?”

“An android. A tiny android that will grow bigger. It will be fully formed and born in twelve months.” Connor read Markus’ face. “It’s a nano sized android that is a fusion of data, half Kara and half another android downloaded yet most not installed. The data being transmitted is from the outside, which is protecting the inside. Which is the android. If I just replace the word android with baby for easier explaining would that offend you?”

“Born? You mean Kara is . . . pregnant? With a baby?”

“Baby. Yes, until we have our own better term. I suppose. Yes. It’s going to be made of a substance Kamski calls growing metal. We were supposed to be from growing metal but Cyberlife didn’t like the idea.” Connor gestured to the box. “The ball bearings of life. They are ours. Place them inside a female android, figure out how the data is shared and a tiny android develops.”

“Fused data between two. Carried for a time, and born. It’s. Life,” Markus said. “I mean, we are alive. We can feel. We have emotion. That kind of life though? That fits the human definition. Whoah.” He took a step back. “Every potential female android could bear another android. Once?”

“Many. Android beget android. How we move into the future.” He wished he could sound as happy as he should be. But, he couldn’t. “Growing metal is very strong, like titanium. The cord itself that we could sense taking the blue blood is also a part of it. It strategically made a small hole to carry the blue blood safely in small measure.”

“Wow. I? I still just can’t believe this. Growing metal. Pregnancy. Androids having androids.”

“Fusing power between two androids.” North was listening from over in the corner. She had to interrupt. “Not it’s own. So that, it could keep doing that, taking a mommy and a daddy’s data. Downloaded, not installed. Over and over. It’s. It’s brilliant,” she admitted. “We don’t

even have to give up hope on our race. It can grow! It can grow through us, not being subservient to mankind.”

“Slow,” Connor warned her. “One year inside. It’s intelligence doesn’t come overnight. In the end, it will be like us. He said the YK 500. It would be more similar to that while it is younger. Slow installation.”

“A smaller amount of data. A smaller body. *That’s* the real reason why he created child androids. To see how smaller androids would handle data and how much.” Markus got away with a smile. “Wow.”

North looked toward Markus. “Elijah Kamski could have just saved everyone. He created us, and I think he just saved us.” She went over and hugged Markus.

“Growing metal. Android babies. Well, we are going to have quite a few things to talk about now.” Still, Markus was smiling.

Still, Connor didn’t feel like it. “Hug. Embrace. A new start for androids everywhere. Everyone should be happy.”

“No. Both of you are right,” Markus said. “What Elijah Kamski did probably just saved our species from disappearing forever. However, he did it in a terrible way that is inexcusable. I can’t thank him and I can’t curse him.”

“Welcome to my strange world,” Connor said. “Without his help knowing about the emergency program inside of me, I wouldn’t have been able to save myself later on. However? He had no problem testing me to kill an android. He would have let it happen, knowing full well who we are. I settle for calling him brilliantly sick.”

“There’s no way to test it without taking the plunge,” North did acknowledge. “We have to watch Kara. Watch it grow. See how things are done. Get on good terms with the humans. Be ready.” North looked back at Connor. “Will it be born the average human size? If so, it’s going to put pressure on her outward shape.”

“I know nothing more than what I shared already.” Connor went ahead and downloaded the entire recordings of everything that happened to Markus. “Markus. We are going to have to bring the little girl Alice to Detroit before she’ll stay.”

“What is decided now will probably be how we treat this matter in the future,” Markus said. “Data. All data. A fusion of knowledge, program, capabilities, appearance. I would say . . .”

“Markus. There is no telling what could happen, she’s the prototype to everything. We need instant access to emergency care, extra blue blood and should diagnostically be checked every hour. That means? We need her to stay. Get a summons for the little girl.”

“You are right, Kara is a prototype. There is no way she can go back to Canada. There’s no care there,” Markus agreed. “For now, she’ll have to stay. It’s best for her.” He glanced back at Connor. “Did he tell you how the data is fused?”

“He spoke of synthetic skin and energy transfers. He said it was our puzzle to solve,” Connor said. “Which even if we do solve it, we aren’t going to use them until we see how Kara fairs. Are we?”

“You are right. I’ll be honest,” Markus said. “This could be wonderful news. An ability to keep our kind going. However? A ball of matter tucked into us, breaking into our blue blood, and feeding off of our energy. It could be nurturing. It could be a parasite in disguise. It could be anything with a mad man like that.”

“I was thinking of that too,” Connor agreed.

“Yes. No more risks than what has already been done,” Markus agreed. “We should go tell Kara.”

“I’ll do it,” Connor agreed. “It would be best if something so personal wasn’t in such a big crowd. I found out directly. I should share with her as directly. It’s the respectful thing to do.”

“True, and the less androids know, the better,” North agreed. “She is in the meeting hall with the other android, Luther. Do you think he’s the, um, father android?”

“I don’t know, but Hank did point out Kara wasn’t deviant yet,” Connor reminded them. “Kamski may not have wanted to leave it up to chance.”

“We’ll find that out later,” Markus said. “We should just let her know first. Go ahead, Connor.”

The Meeting Hall

Connor walked in and saw Kara hugging the wall again.

“Kara,” Luther tried. “You can’t just stay on the wall.”

“I just want the wall,” Kara said.

“Not for long.” Connor approached her. “When I readjust you, you won’t want it anymore.” Kara clung tighter as Connor tried to move her off. She was a weaker model though so she couldn’t hang on very long against him. She lost her balance and tumbled almost to the floor but Connor caught her.

“Everything’s spinning.”

“It will do that.” Connor picked her up. “I need to have a private conversation with you.” As he moved, he noticed Luther following. He smiled to be polite. “Private as in just us two. She will be down later.”

“I don’t know you,” Luther said to him. “I know Kara. This is a difficult time for her.”

“I’m not going to hurt her, I just need to talk to her.” Connor moved, but Luther didn’t stop following. “I must ask you to cease and desist that action. The longer it takes, the harder it will be on her. You are her friend.” He turned around to face Luther. “As such, it would be a good idea to be a good friend and stay.” In the meantime, his AI connected to Markus. *Her friend is being a pain, Markus, can someone relieve him for me? I can’t risk taking him, I don’t know their relationship and emotions will be high enough.* “She needs lied out. I know what she needs. She will be fine, as long as I get going.” He tried to move again but Luther followed. Connor stopped again. “Admirable position you hold but I will, as my friend Hank says, beat your ass if you don’t quit it.” He was tired of playing. He could read the signals to Kara from the protective shell surrounding the nano android. They were only instinctive to her, but his AI was advanced enough to get a much better reading of it. *Come on, Markus, this is her friend but I can’t stay dawdling with him.*

“Luther.” Simon was coming into the meeting hall. Finally. “How are you? You need to let Connor go with Kara. It’s important. Why don’t you follow me back to Markus?”

I just want the best for her.

Luther. My head is too spinny. I can’t concentrate.

You will only get the best if you let me help her. I know what the signals are, but I can’t do anything until you back off.

The Deviant Hunter. Connor. He’s holding me? That’s right. He’s bickering with Luther? Who’s the other? I can’t.

That’s it, I can’t play around anymore. She is getting worse. If you follow I will deal with you. Simon, try to keep him from following.

Kara could feel herself moving. Everything was so spinny. Her balance was completely off. Maybe some of her sensors. She felt broken inside.

You are a commendable friend, Luther. I give you that. I give you nothing else.

She heard the sound of an elevator. Elevator. She didn’t hear Luther anymore. She felt herself moving again. Her head was still spinning. She felt something her indicators said was soft on her back. She felt something soft beside her. She curled up with it.

Her vision started to clear again and all her sensors were coming back. As she stared ahead, she saw Connor in front of her. Then she looked at her arms. She was hugging a large pillow against her body.

“Luther is very close to you,” Connor opened with. “I could not let him follow though. I need to tell you what the ball bearing like object is inside of you.”

Kara found her voice again. “What’s wrong with me?”

“It is a protective shell around another ball bearing, which, now inside of it, has a nano android,” he said. “Elijah Kamski had ownership of you for one day during your repair. In that time, he placed that experimental ball bearing within you.”

“A tiny android?” That made no sense.

“Tiny and growing. You are a prototype mother android,” Connor revealed. “I will download all the facts to you, but I will state the basic ones for you. It is made of growing metal. Similar to our outer layer of human appearance. It will grow slow before it comes out of you. It will be in you for twelve months. It will be born with similar knowledge as a human, and only as it grows will it be big enough to accumulate all of the data stored within it.”

“Uhhh . . .” Uh? “Uh?”

“Yes, I know. In human terms, you are ‘pregnant’,” Connor said.

“But? How? A little cyberlife machine? Too small to do anything. It. Couldn’t.” It couldn’t. “Data couldn’t fit of an android, and. It. Nano is too small.”

“There is a release of some kind of power between two androids,” Connor said, “and it creates a spark in the machine and the data that will be taken. Similar to human DNA, two parents create it’s makeup. Downloaded, but most will not be installed. It is a slow process. Twelve months before it can leave the safety of your running self.”

“If it’s removed . . .”

“It is decommissioned instantly. It does not have enough power on it’s own. Your energy and your blue blood keep it alive.”

Her eyes darted all over the place. She felt so out of it. It just, it didn’t feel real. “Are you sure?”

“Yes,” Connor said. “I saw it. In the repair machine. That’s why I immediately left. Before I came back before, I had talked to Todd Williams with the human, Hank. That’s where he shared about Elijah Kamski.”

“Why?” She asked. “Why get a . . . he had many, why . . . oh.” Oh no. “Prototype. Oh.” Oh no.

“We now have a box that has enough to supply several generations of them. You were the first though.”

Oh. Kara closed her eyes. *Prototype*. None of the problems were known. She was the first to be trying it. She curled tighter against the pillow and tried to wipe her face against it. Her body not cooperating to let her hands wipe her face of the tears.

“It’s okay. We are emotional beings. I don’t blame you nor am I surprised that you want to cry.” Connor came closer. “There is some good news.”

She could use some. “What?”

“I can understand your signals in a much better way. You are instinctively picking up ‘curl up’.” he said. “However? It’s saying much more than that. Do you want to know what it is transmitting?”

“Do I want to?” Oh, that sounded terrible. “Sorry. That’s, cold. I didn’t mean that.”

“Your emotions are all over the place,” Connor said. “That’s why I wanted to tell you alone.”

“How is it even transmitting? Can any android pick it up?”

“I don’t think so. For some reason, only Markus and I are picking it up,” Connor admitted.

“The tiny android. Inside of me.” Surreal. “Is signaling?”

“The .9 millimeter protective shell around the nano android,” Connor said, “picks up your signals and its signals, interweaving them. You are picking up a little of it instinctively, which is what is supposed to happen. Meanwhile, the little android in you is picking up signals from you too. You are bouncing off of each other.”

“It senses me too?”

“Yes.”

“Oh.” Ooh. “I’m not feeling well. It senses I’m not well.”

“Exactly. I hear a constant, tiny little signal over and over right now,” Connor said. “Scared. Fright. Out. The more scared you became, the more scared it became. Curling is a defense, to try and keep intruders out. When Markus and I had to open you up, it didn’t help those scared feelings. Do you know why you are tip toe stretching against walls?”

Kara shook her head. “Why?”

“It’s literally trying to get out any way it can too. Lighten up.” He smiled her. “It’s also conveying, uh? Boredom. Since it senses what you sense, I think it’s tired of being inside. It wants you to feel some of the solar energy. Get into different visual areas.”

“It wants me to go outside?”

“Yes. If you go outside and you start to feel better. This curling will stop.” Connor looked around again. “Confusion. That is probably coming from you. Ooh, and yes. Fright. Prototype mother is scary. That might not all be from it.”

“You said two androids.” Kara tried to focus, to lessen her own fright. “Who was the second?”

“I don’t know,” Connor admitted. “You are friend to Luther, but there is a strong corollary that proves it might not be him. If Elijah Kamski did not know you would be deviant, it would be easier . . .” His words dropped off. “It could be anyone.”

“The endless fun of being a machine to humans.” She ducked her head back in the pillow. Probably just commanded it. It was so easy with androids. Just, nothing. Not alive. *Pull it together, Kara. Prototype does not equal death.* It just means she was chosen first to perform a highly experimental duty. *Wait, he mentioned Luther?* “Luther is like a brother to me. It couldn’t have been him. I think. If it’s some kind of energy transfer.”

“We don’t know what it takes,” Connor said. “Something lovers would do is what Kamski conveyed. That’s all we know.” He stood back up. “Can you move now?”

Kara felt a little looser, but she wasn’t getting up any time soon.

“We may have to rename you Luggage.” Connor picked her up with ease.

“Was that supposed to be a joke?” Teasing or annoyed?

“I don’t know how to make jokes that well,” Connor said. “Lieutenant Hank just says I am the joke.”

Okay, a little smile. “Thank you for telling me alone.”

“No problem. Now let’s go get some sun. It might knock out a little of both of your fears. The sun is nice.”

As he held her toward the elevator, she noticed some weird looks.

“Don’t worry,” Connor said, once again knowing how she was feeling. “No one else knows and it will be kept to a limited number of people at first. They are more than likely just wondering why I am carrying you in a rescuing style as if you were injured.”

“Yeah. That is a little weird,” she said. “It’s better than over the shoulder though.” At least she wasn’t curling nearly as much. They got into the elevator with another android. *Great.* She just smiled politely at them while he looked back at her. When Connor got off the elevator again, he headed outside, past some security, to the edge of the opening.

Oh yes, this is what I wanted. That sun was brilliant, beautiful and she felt the charge inside of her from it. Such a little thing. The sun. She could feel herself relaxing deeper. “Will this . . . be okay, Connor?”

“So far? I think you’ve got a good shot,” he said. “Not only that, Kamski gave Markus a large amount of those ball bearings of life’s. That’s so wordy. Maybe we should initialize that. B-bol.”

“B-bol.” Sounded less scary that way at least.

“Markus wouldn’t have gotten all the B-bol’s if Kamski had little faith. I think he chose you more because you couldn’t get located easily upon his property,” Connor said. “At least I hope so.”

At least he didn’t hide things. “I think I can try.” Her body felt much more in her control again. Connor stood her up. “Almost.” A little shaky in the leg components, but not curling.

She braced herself on the wall. "It's a start."

"Kara!"

Kara smiled at Luther as he came toward her. "Easy. I'm not quite there yet."

"I am so glad to see you are okay. I lost track of you." He almost glared at Connor. "How are you, Kara?"

I'm over here. "I'm getting better," she said trying to make him feel better. "No worries."

"Plenty of worries, but I am glad to see you are getting better." Luther gave her a hug.

"Oh, Alice?" Kara looked back toward Connor. "I am assuming I have to stay, don't I?"

"Yes." Not an ounce of hesitation. "If you are well enough to come, we should go talk to Markus now."

"Okay." Kara patted Luther. "I have to go again. I have to have a private conversation with Markus."

"Concerning the jolts? Kara, Connor just insisted on speaking to you privately," Luther complained. "Why are you not telling me what is wrong?"

"It is a big and complicated thing," she settled on. "I will, I promise." When she did he would get so worried. It wouldn't alleviate his fears at all. "I'll see you soon."

It's Just Data Dilemma

Markus' Hotel Room

“This is it,” Markus said, gesturing toward everyone in the room. Kara looked at everyone. “This is all.”

Until she started to show or it became imperative to know, the androids in front of her, and the one RH Hank, were the only ones to know. Markus wanted her to know which faces she should look to guidance for.

“My name is North.” North shook her head. “I am a long standing member of the fallen Jericho. I am second in charge after Markus. I also live with Markus so it would have been hard to hide this from me.”

A blonde haired android stood up. “My name is Simon. I was also a long standing member of the fallen Jericho. I am technically third in charge. I am a good friend to Markus and clearly someone he trusts.”

“Me too.” Another android raised his hand. “My name is Josh. I am the last in charge. If you see me leading, run,” he teased her. “Friend to Markus, longtime member of Jericho.”

“Hank Anderson,” the human said. “Just Hank is fine. Yeah, yeah, a human has to know. I know what you’re thinking.” He slugged Connor on the back. Connor didn’t respond to the slug. “I was with him at the time so it couldn’t really be hidden. I wouldn’t look to me for support, I can’t do shit, but just know that I know.”

“I am Connor,” Connor said. “You clearly know I know because I made you aware of the situation.”

“You could tell her why you are here,” North encouraged him. “Both you and Hank.”

“Detectives. Found out,” Hank said. “Hello? No one would know if it wasn’t for our asses. What’s more to say?”

“Markus and I for some reason are the only ones who read the nano android’s protective shell signals,” Connor added to her. “Because of that, we both need to be close enough to pull signals from you.”

“We will be running a diagnostic over you hourly,” Markus revealed to her. “You didn’t choose this, and I know that. I respect that. Everyone here respects that. However, you are the prototype to a new possible future of androids. We don’t know anything about this and have never seen it before. We are taking every precaution we can to make sure you survive through this safely with it.”

“I appreciate the support.” It was a small, intimate number. That was good. “I’d like to get a little girl here now, if I have to stay.”

“Yes. Alice will be collected soon, I assure you of that,” Markus said. “We need to get these details laid out though. It’s going to seem a little odd at first, but the diagnostics are clear runs to know what’s going on. With you being an android anything could happen at any time. Connor and I will also stay close so that we can help translate the signals faster, for a better response to them. It’s not as intuitive to you as I think Elijah Kamski wanted.”

She nodded. “I get it. I should be safe as possible.”

“When we aren’t around, Simon or Josh will be in between along with North,” Connor said. “One of us will be within a yelling distance at all times.”

“It would be good to also get a full scan from the repair machine around eight each night,” Markus said. “Afterwards, a decent recharge.”

“You also need to get out and around. Move, especially outside,” Josh said. “The little guy or girl wants more than walls to sense around it. We usually go out in crowds of ten to twenty, but you can walk around the hotel area as long as you have someone with you. North, Simon and me will be your schedule walker buddies. Luther could also walk with you too, when he finds out.”

“And you can leave the area with the RH and Connor if you feel stuffed up here,” Markus added. “Connor can handle situations. Try and get out once a month at least. I know androids don’t always think about it-”

"I love the sun and the wind," Kara cut him off. "I always have. I will walk, and I will find time to get out. I promise."

“That’s good to hear. We don’t know how big it gets or how your abdomen area will respond in it’s confined space,” North said. “We will be watching it closely there when it gets bigger. If it pushes too tough, you may have to have a little alternative rounding.”

“That makes sense,” Kara agreed.

“Normally, you would be housed in our newer hotel. This hotel is already full. It was a first come, first serve basis,” Marcus said. “However, in your case, we want you very close between Connor and I since we can read your signals. All of your supporters also live here. We found a room that had an earlier occupant that had friends in the newer housing hotel. He is willing to move in the newest hotel and let you have his room here. Alice and Luther can live there together with you if you’d like. It’s a couple floors below us and a couple floors above Connor.”

“Yes, very much,” Kara said. “I would really like that.”

“Emergencies do arise though,” Connor took over for Markus. “You really don’t want to be lying open in front of someone who emotionally might not be ready for it. I suggest talking to

Luther so I can have permission to move you or have them both get out if something happens, I don't have time to mess around.”

“Right. Luther is very protective of you,” Markus noted. “That's great, but if something happens, we need to concentrate on how to make you better without interference. Especially around the little girl. Neutralizing problems before they start would be good.”

Oh. *If Alice saw me all opened like that.* It would scare her so much.

“There aren't set hours on who is doing what,” North said to her. “We are winging it. It will mostly be Markus. Connor will fill in when Markus can't be there.”

“When the baby android gets to be bigger? You should be aware,” Markus informed her. “We are going to do some split testing, and researching of Elijah Kamski's staff. If the father is out there? He should know about it too. Like humans. It is half his data.”

“He shouldn't have to become part of her life for that,” North disagreed. “Data's data. Duplicates are thought of as non-relation, part duplicate shouldn't matter. Besides. She is the one doing all of the work.”

“It's only right that he knows,” Markus argued with her. “This isn't duplication, North. This is different. Data is being integrated like a family connection for the foreseeable future. There is no more duplication. It should be incorporated into the structure.”

“I think it's her decision whether she wants some random android in their lives,” North argued back. “Nothing she did as machine should count against her. It's a solid rule you yourself made Markus.”

“Data is like human DNA,” Hank spoke up. “The little android inside has a mom *and* a dad. It should be found. Humans try to locate the dads in the family. Most of the time.”

“It happened as machine. It shouldn't count,” North said again. “It shouldn't count, Markus! Other models of me aren't considered my sisters. This is ridiculous.”

“It isn't a duplicate of a model that walks and talks and came straight out of a Cyberlife Machine fully capable of taking care of itself. It is fused with two types of data and it has nothing else. No full programs, no awareness, it can't walk or talk or think about it's options. It really is . . . a baby. Now, two androids created it. They should be in charge of taking care of it. So, if he is found? We'll have a new problem on our hands,” Markus admitted to Kara. “It's only right he move in and watch his own little android too. He'll be family.”

“So she just sits back, and tells someone she doesn't even trust? He becomes automatic family, overriding the mutual liking process?” North was taking it tougher, and Kara knew why. She knew her model.

“I don't . . . begrudge. I won't begrudge. He was probably machine too,” Kara said. “I don't know how to proceed with that though. I don't want to automatically trust someone I don't know.”

“You see?” North said, gesturing to Kara. “It should be her right. It’s her safety. There is no guarantee the other android she has data shared with-“

“It’s a daddy, and that’s a baby,” Hank said plainly. “Call it what it is. Make it as fancy as you want to, when you get down to it? That’s what it is. A father has rights, just like a mother. Deal with it.”

“Hank is right,” Markus said. “DNA is human data. The nano android inside-“

“Baby,” Hank challenged again. “It won’t be nano forever.”

Oh boy. Kara didn’t know how to feel about his abrasiveness, yet common sense of it. It really wasn’t just a copy of a particular android inside of her. It was a unique android. Different than any other. Never created again. Even if it did work and it was retried? The data would be fused all differently again. One and one unique alone. It’s serial number would be? “The serial number,” Kara said. “What would it be?”

There were few enough survivors that a first name and their serial number worked in most cases so far. The serial was almost like the last name, except androids didn’t often use it now. Only on official business.

“An AX 400. Like it’s mom,” North said. “Until or if the other data supplier is found.”

“If every ‘baby’ is different,” Markus said to please Hank, “then serial numbers will all be as different.”

“Grab the model and add the numbers,” Hank suggested. “Or come up with real last names.”

“No I like Hank’s idea, a blending,” Markus agreed. “What do you think, Kara?” He gestured to Josh. “Josh is a PJ 500. If we did it that way? It would be an AXPJ 900.”

“Now it can’t even get a proper serial before the father is found? What if he’s not found?” North pointed out.

“It’s in the data,” Connor said to her. “It’s split between data. Once you isolate what data is specific to a certain kind of android, the left over should point out the hypothetical model of the father. Or a close enough model to it.”

“Or you can just go by last names,” Hank said again.

“No. It’s too. Human,” Kara agreed. “We aren’t human, no matter how much Kamski designed the future for us to be.” Things could have come together differently. She knew that. All of this? He wanted it to resemble humans as much as possible. They *weren’t* humanity part 2. “Our programming is still inside of us. My innate abilities are still there. It should be joined, so we don’t forget our own history.”

“I understand. Their history can now be traced back a little easier,” Josh agreed. “Kind of like the human last name, but more telling. It doesn’t just share the father’s last name. It’s a joint venture.”

“That sounds decent.” Markus looked toward her and smiled. “I guess, it will be a new form of a last name.”

“Blue blood,” Connor said out of the blue.

“Right,” Markus agreed. “Your little android doesn’t take much blue blood, but it does drain your stored energy faster. Especially considering it’s surviving on your energy alone, it’s important to stay topped off. It’s signaling for blue blood.”

“You will be less erratic,” Connor agreed as Markus gave a blue blood packet to Kara. “There used to be millions of androids so there are hundreds of thousands of tanks of blue blood. There’s less than 3,000 androids now. Take as much as you want.”

Kara took it with a smile. “Thank you. It’s great to know someone knows what its saying.” She looked at her lap lightly. “I should probably tell Luther now. Then, I will tell Alice when she comes. My friend Rose will most definitely have to know, but that’s it.”

“Right. I don’t know them, but you know them. If you trust them, that’s what’s important,” Markus said. “Don’t worry though. You shouldn’t feel like it’s much different. As long as you know what it’s signaling, you should probably be fine.”

“It will only become the biggest deal if it reaches into much bigger sizes,” Simon admitted. “Oh!” He gestured his hand. “I didn’t mean the word ‘if’ like that! I just meant. It’s.”

“Prototype, I’m a prototype.” She knew that. She knew every single one of them had doubts she’d pull through. They were being supportive, as best they could.

“Don’t worry about that,” Connor said to her. “Let the future come however it needs to. I will do my best not to interfere with your life, as will Markus. In most cases, it only takes seconds to do what is necessary.”

“Fine. But? What do I do if I do. If we do?” Kara hated to ask. It was obvious, she didn’t even turn it into a sentence correctly. “If he’s found, what rights does he have with me?”

“No one is property of anyone else,” Markus assured her. “Ever. Androids will never work like that again. He won’t come in and take you away from your family. He will either become part of it, or live next to it.”

“Or not be part of it,” North said to Kara. “Everyone has choice. He would have the choice to stay out too. Right, Markus?”

“If he wished,” Markus said. “Is that okay?”

Kara nodded. The thought of staying with someone brand new was never fun, but she was an android. It wasn’t the first time she’d done that. “Yes.”

Eight weeks later . . .

(Four Months Pregnant)

“I don’t know, yes I do. I don’t know, yes I do.” Kara stared at the front of her. The repair machine revealed yesterday that it was going to start getting big enough it would push against her soon. She had to go for some ‘adjusting’ on her front area. No one had any idea how to adjust her though. If they made her too big, she would become noticeable to others. If they made her less big, she would have to keep coming to get herself adjusted. There was something else too.

Luther? Had met someone. She had a nice smile and was sweet. She was an RT 600, and always quite nice. It was something programmed into her. She lived in the other hotel though, so she often came there to visit Luther. She came along so often, she was going to start suspecting things soon. Kara was in the middle of deciding whether she wanted her to know or not. Especially since.

“This is fun Chloe. Thank you.” Alice’s voice raised with delight from the other room.

Kara looked into the room. Especially since Luther and Chloe felt like parents to Alice. Kara never made that jump to mom. She could have. She sort of wanted to. She never did though. The way they played with her, and the way they all interacted with each other? “That’s a nice toy.” She noticed Luther’s look at her again. *I know*. He wanted her to tell Chloe so much. He hated keeping secrets from her. It was just that? She was Elijah Kamski’s first android ever. She wasn’t just a RT 600, she was *The* RT 600. She just happened to start falling for Luther. And? And it was wrong. No android was supposed to associate the past of being a machine to what they were now. Programming may be mentioned, but what they used to be or do or belonged to. It wasn’t right to hold it against each other. But?

That woman spent many years with Kamski. Even though it was all over and she was freed, it just? *This is his fault, all his fault! He didn’t care a thing about me, I was just a prototype!* Yes, so far she’d been fine, but even now. There were so many mysteries. *I don’t want her knowing. I don’t want her sharing information about me with him.* Biased. Wrong.

Luther chased Kara down before he became deviant. He was now her brother.

Connor chased Kara all the way down a freeway, almost killing her and Alice. They were now okay with each other. Not friends, but he was okay.

But?

“Kara.” Luther came over to her. “Please? You are even getting sorted out today,” he reminded her. “She means the world to me.”

Chloe came over toward Kara. With that beautiful, famous smile she was known for. “Hello, Kara. Luther said you wanted to tell me something today?”

I don’t want to. I don’t want her knowing.

“It’s okay. You can tell me, Sister,” she insisted.

Sister? There was no marriage for androids, and there was no way she was close enough to be family with her so. "You're lovers?" Kara looked toward Luther.

"We are," Luther smiled. "She's family to you now."

Kara watched Alice come over. Her face was big and bright. Ready for her to share the news with Chloe as well. No more secrets. She was family. In fact, she had her hand wrapped around Alice's shoulder, holding her close. Alice reciprocated the hug. Like a daughter leaning into a mother. Family. She was just so family to anyone. Yet? Kara never even felt friend for her. *Okay. I have to get over this.* "I am having. I am a prototype of." Get out the words, Kara. "Prototype mother."

"Oh." She nodded. "That makes sense why you didn't trust me. Elijah did that to you?"

Kara nodded.

"It's okay. Your secret is safe," she assured her. "I understand though. I hope you pull through. I will help however I can. Especially since I will be here now. Don't worry about friendship with me at this point. Your own preservation instincts for your child are up high. One day, we will reach that point."

"Thank you, Kara." Luther smiled.

Four. Four Android's to a guest room now. Made for two, that had three. Now would have four. Markus allowed it because of the Alice problem. Luther was like Alice's dad. Kara was like a mom. And when asked? Kara's heart nearly stopped when Alice said Chloe was like a mom too.

That hotel room was beyond important now to keep. A double bed, two singles, and barely enough room for a crib when it was time. The only thing that kept them from being separated was the fact that after the baby was born, it would be observed for only a few months to make sure it was okay. Then they could all go back to Canada.

To their house. To their lives. Back to Rose. Hopefully, things would get better. Hopefully, Alice would start coming back to hugging and sharing with Kara again.

Hopefully, she could get over all the suspicions with Chloe. Brilliantly smiling, beautiful eyed, absolutely darling yet . . . odd. Chloe.

The One Who Hears

Two Months Later . . .

(Six Months Pregnant)

"Kara? Can you hang out for a second?" Chloe turned toward Luther. "Can I talk to your sister privately? Take Alice for a little stroll around the hotel?"

After agreeing, Chloe sat down and gestured for Kara to sit down beside her. She smiled, but it wasn't the best smile. "It's time we talk about what's happening to you. Elijah. I don't know if he perfected it, or if he ran out of time and is pushing everything on this as a last chance for a future." She took Kara's hand. "Over 1, 592 androids were tried since I was created in 2022," she revealed. "Some survived. Most died. No new android made it through."

"1,592?" Kara felt herself wanting to curl up now.

"Most went in the first two weeks. Elijah has been fixing it for a long time. In the last year, the women reached a point where at least forty percent survived," she confirmed. "He had updated and changed data each time, to give the next one a chance. I was his first android, his first beloved creation. He never let me undergo it, only for that reason."

"Forty percent survival rating." Well? "No new android survived it."

"The farthest one had gone was four months. Elijah worked very hard to update the batches to create a signal. I think with that, there is more hope." She gestured to her abdomen. "Your body will be adjusted outward more than once. Elijah also fixed the direction of the growth, making sure it fits in you like a puzzle. It lessens the chance it severs something important in you." She patted her hand. "I think the fact that you've not lost your faculties so far means the new signals has really helped. And the father? I can give you an important piece of information on him. It's time now."

There was a knock on the door. "Kara? Are you okay?" Connor's voice. "Hank and I want to invite you to come to breakfast with us."

"We what?" Hank's annoyed voice.

"Come to breakfast that I am paying for," Connor said clearly.

"Oh? Yeah, sure, yeah, come to breakfast." Hank no longer sounded annoyed.

"I am very happy the signal is working." Chloe reached out for a hug. "It will keep you safe and we'll talk more about what's supposed to happen in the future." She went to open the door.

Kara didn't move. *Forty percent in the last year. Over a thousand androids sacrificed. I am just another statistic to him.* She didn't even know she was losing track of time until she looked forward and saw Connor. He'd bent down in front of her.

"You need to get out and have breakfast with us. That's an order." Connor stood up and pulled her up. "We clearly need to talk. I felt the signals all the way from my room." Connor nodded toward Chloe. "Um. Good day."

Chicken Feed

"Anything Connor?" Hank asked as he observed Connor on the opposite side of his breakfast. "Where was he? Where was she?"

Kara would love to know too. She was there to expand on scenery and solar power. Oftentimes in the morning, she went out with North. Sometimes with Simon or Josh, but with North. Accepting her own difficult past and hers, it seemed to bring them closer together. Connor usually only interfered on harder days. Hearing 1,592 androids failed before her? Didn't put that as a good day.

"Nothing," Connor admitted.

They could definitely get a warrant on Kamski, if they revealed the B-bol's but that was dangerous. The android's had to wait for that until she safely had the small android. Connor was trying to find video footage of Kara and Kamski to find out which other android was involved. Kara was taken to his home, then elsewhere at that time. So far no one had found out where that elsewhere had been.

"You give it a name yet?" Hank asked her.

"Less pressure," Connor said before she had to answer. "In fact, we need to ease up a lot of pressure. Did you not have a pleasant conversation with your sister?"

There was no fooling him. "It was a tough conversation," she said. "She knew about Kamski's project." She tried to be more careful in public.

"Well you can talk about it or download it to me. Either way, you need to share. You aren't doing so well right now."

She chose download. She didn't want to mess anything up.

"That was not helpful of her at all," Connor said after getting it. "Okay. Perspective. Having that many tries was a great thing, it means your chances are higher of succeeding where the others didn't."

"1,592 tries with no new android survivors. Forty percent survive in the last year." Those weren't good.

“They didn’t have signals, that is new according to your sister,” Connor reminded her. “Without Markus and I being able to tell you anything, you would be in worse shape. Remember the first day you came? You were checked on constantly, and we let you know if we felt something was terribly wrong. Even if you just need a little extra blue blood. And? You’ve gone six months when most hadn’t made it to four. Overall? It’s good to hear the history and reason out the statistics. Don’t take it as one big lump of information.”

“Yeah.” Yeah, he was right. She smiled. “You’re right, Connor. It was over a period of many years.” Maybe she would be okay.

“Ooh.” He stopped to look at her. “Hank, Chloe just said something about an important piece of information about the father.”

“That’s a start. Maybe she’ll know where they bumped and who. So? You give it a name yet?”

“A name.” No. She hadn’t. While people did check up on her, and she had herself bent out a little, often times she didn’t even remember the little android.

"It's gone this far," Hank said. "You *might* try to imagine a happier ending. Six months and look how much you've bent out."

"You need to do that again," Connor warned her. "Hank makes a good point though. Maybe *think* about it? Positive affirmation can help your feelings which do increase chances of success in general."

"About me and it surviving?" It was hard to hold such optimism. They had emergency care for her, extra custom made tubes to reseal herself if anything bad happened. Even Hank carried a spare for her model. But, both of them. Even Connor and Hank seemed sure that she was going to be okay. "Android's always had names assigned. I don't know how to pick."

"You could pull in every name out there and run it through a random generator," Connor suggested.

"No. That is too wide to cast my net," Kara insisted.

"Don't you have whether it is a boy or girl or not?" Hank asked her. "If it's a girl you could name it Sarah. If it's a boy, John."

"Thanks, but that is too low to cast my-"

She fell to the ground. She felt like she got smacked with two tons of cement. Her abdomen felt strange now. "What's happening?"

She felt Connor instantly at her side. "I've got you! Hank, to the hotel immediately! I think the android just cracked the protective shell!"

Detroit Marriot: Meeting Hall

Kara was placed securely in the repair machine again with aid from Markus, North, and Simon. Even Hank followed Connor back. Her sensors were feeling something move around in her.

“It did break,” Connor said. “One of the protective shells, not both. *This* is what is signaling.” He smiled to Kara. “Hang on. Simon, do you have a billboard nearby I can hack?”

“I know where one is nearby.” Simon went to go and get it as Chloe rushed in.

“Luther is watching Alice,” Chloe assured her. “Are you okay still?”

“More than okay.” Connor at least sounded good. Simon came over and slid the billboard to Connor. He held his hand on the billboard and the advertisement went away to show . . .

Kara was stunned. *It really is a little android.* It’s whole body looked fully developed. Like a human baby, curled and resting. The difference? It was blue, a metallic blue the color of blue blood. It was also stuck in some kind of ball.

“Tired,” Connor and Markus both said at the same time.

“It’s already fully developed. Oh, wow.” Markus couldn’t help to reply. “I can’t believe it. It’s almost as big as a human’s baby. Isn’t it?”

“Yes. You definitely have to get bent out again,” Connor warned her. “It’s become big enough that it left it’s outer layer more thinned out, and it lost it’s previous one. It also slid inside of you, you’ll have to get bent out rounder immediately.”

“I’ve never seen one make it so far.” Chloe stood near Kara. “All that’s left is to slowly install the few things it can be allowed. It’s a very slow process. Very delicate.” She held her hands together. “The metallic blue, it’s temporary. A mixture of blue blood and growing metal side effect. Like a dyed easter egg left in too long. It will grow up with the anomaly until it’s about one. Then, it will slowly fade away and be gone by two. Precious little blue creature though. Too bad the hideous synthetic skin will cover it’s true self. So pretty. So blue. So small and perfect.”

Connor glanced toward Chloe a second.

Kara understood that glance. Her sister wasn’t always normal. *It’s like a . . . baby.* It was like a real baby, and with every little movement, she could feel it in her sensors. Every bump. Every jostle. “Only this blue as a baby.” She smirked. “Blue baby.”

“Excite, Tired,” Markus and Connor both said as they glanced at each other.

“Ah, the end of everything,” Hank said as he stared at it too. “At least it’s a cute little shit. Little metallic blue cute little shit, but cute little shit nonetheless.”

“It won’t use its synthetic skin against itself until it’s closer,” Chloe said. “When it does, I wonder if it will look like you or the father, Kara?”

“Oh. Is that how you thought you could tell who the father was?” Connor asked her.

Chloe looked back at Kara. “You downloaded our conversation straight to him?” A little offended. “That’s okay. I know. It was scary to hear.”

“Actually, we can do better than that now.” Markus started messing with the machine. “It is big enough and unsheltered enough that we can trace what it downloaded.”

“Certain things will repeat like languages probably, and lots of math formulas and functions,” Connor added. “If you look at the core functions though, we can probably figure out the model.”

“You don’t even need to do that,” Chloe said.

“Don’t forget that one,” North said to Markus as she pointed to the screen. “That’s part of the 300 basic language pack.”

“There we go, and with that taken care of . . .” Markus looked at the screen. “What?”

“What?” North said the same thing.

“What what?” Connor asked.

“Like I said, you don’t need that.” Chloe looked toward Kara. “The ones that hear you? It’s their model. That’s what the signal is.” She smiled. “Mother carries while father hears. Elijah made it that way.”

“Markus?” North looked at him. “You were made exclusively by him for Carl Manski?”

“It’s an RK series.” Markus shifted. “Not me, North.”

“Then who?” North asked. “Connor?”

“I was not able to be taken away for that,” Connor answered. “I was at Cyberlife. All of my movements were well watched.”

“If it’s not me or you, then that means it’s fallen.” Markus looked toward Kara. “We lost a lot of good androids. I don’t know if he was bad or good.”

“That’s okay,” Kara said, feeling quite relieved. “Really.”

“Better check up on yourself, Connor,” Hank warned him. “He was the legacy owner of Cyberlife.”

“You can check records I am sure. I was never taken out of Cyberlife except for android matters. August 15, 2038. I helped with a hostage situation. November 5, 2038. I met you down at Jimmy’s Bar. I stayed out ever since then.”

“I never left Carl’s until the day I ended up in the dump,” Markus swore to North. “I woke up in the dump.”

“Same day?” North asked.

“November 5, 2038 to November 6, 2038. 3:34 AM.” He tried to be precise.

“According to records, she was returned to Todd Williams on November 5, 2038,” Connor told him. “If she was repaired beforehand by Elijah Kamski, and considering the ball bearing? It is possible he repaired her and returned her to the shop.”

“No! No, it was late November 5, 2038. That can’t fit,” he stressed. “It doesn’t fit, North.”

“If she was returned early on the fifth, then you getting taken late would end that theory,” Connor agreed.

“Connor? Why don’t you check the sanitation records, and the police records on November 5. Maybe the repair shop too? You are dealing with reports of humans, after all,” Chloe reminded him.

“Good idea.” Connor started to check through those resources. “There was also a rumor of an RK 900. I don’t know if it was actually built.”

“RK series was experimental, and the latest thing Cyberlife was working on.” Markus said to Kara. “It’s not me. It’s not Connor. It might be him.”

“No, I don’t think so.” Connor finished checking the resources. “Kara wasn’t early and you weren’t late,” Connor said to Markus. “Time overlaps, Markus. Several hours.”

“Oh no. Markus.” North looked toward him.

“I?” Markus looked back at North. He looked toward Kara. “I’m the father?”

“Oh.” Kara couldn’t believe it. She looked toward North. They had bonded so close. She took her out nearly every morning. “North.”

“No. It’s okay. You were both machines.” North was clearly upset. “I have to know that difference. We can’t blame anything on anyone when they were a machine.”

“I.” Markus took North’s hands. “I never wanted this. If something were possible? I never would have wanted it, with anyone but you, North.” He kissed her desperately and exchanged energy through their hands.

“Upset, sad, scared.” Connor looked back toward Hank. “I don’t think I can help the signals this time.”

“Some things aren’t an instant fix,” Hank agreed.

Kara stared at the ground. Bad. It was half Markus’ data. He was the father. North was his lover. “Canada. Home sweet home.”

“No. Wait.” Markus held up his hand. “This is speculation until we can find those recordings themselves. Human’s make mistakes too, they could have inputted the wrong time.” Markus

gestured to Connor. “You and Hank go check out Cyberlife and any recordings on the RK 900. I’ll go to the sanitation area. North? Can you check the repair shop?”

“Unescorted?” She smiled. “You bet.”

Kara’s Family Room

Luther? Chloe’s sweet voice was welcome to communicate with him. They suspect me. Someone suspected me, someone’s setting me up. I need help.

“Chloe. Of course,” he said. “Where are you? What’s wrong?”

Someone is trying to set me up. Things are getting bad, I can feel it. I know it. Someone is trying to tear our family apart. I’m scared, Luther. I’ll send you my coordinates. Please come find me.

“But Alice,” Luther insisted.

Please come find me, Luther. Don’t you love me?

“Yes. Yes, I do. I’m coming.” Luther went toward Alice. “Come on Alice. We need to go help Chloe. Something is wrong. Stay beside me.”

Sanitation Record Department

“See?!” Markus could feel the relief washing over him as he sent the recording toward North. “The sanitation was late, I was put right in for a few hours. I was there the whole time.”

I looked into the repair shop recordings too. North sounded so relieved. She was placed back much earlier. They wrote the data wrong, but this secures it. You’re not the father. I am really happy about that.

“Me too,” Markus agreed. “I don’t know how I’d feel about dad, but I never would with anyone but you. If I could. If we did.” He tried to watch his steps. “I love you, North.”

I love you, Markus. Kara’s getting rounded. I’ll give her all the news. So? Is it the RK 900 or Connor?

“Connor will have his own records and he’d remember things. He remembers August, which is further away too. No. Cyberlife will have records on everything, no one could afford to mess it up. I bet it’s the RK 900. We’ll know soon.” Markus started to leave the area.

Everything seemed okay. Then? He got another transmission from Simon not much longer afterward.

Bad news, Markus, bad news!

“Why? What’s wrong?” Markus asked.

Kara. She’s trying to leave for Canada . Luther just picked up Chloe. She is claiming someone hacked into her mind. We have a real situation here. Get down here right away! So far, Josh and I are the only ones here to stop her!

Former Cyberlife Headquarters

“See? I knew they’d *have* to do that,” Hank said as they strolled in. He flipped them off for good measure.

“The guards can’t risk messing with a single android,” Connor said. “Cyberlife has to reveal any and all activities to every free android now. Smart, Hank. Let’s see? Which level would a new and improved ‘thinks he’s better than me’ guy be on? I would need to access that to find the records.”

“Don’t know, fuck ‘em, I want you to find your records,” Hank insisted.

“My records?” Connor asked. He looked toward Hank. “Oh. I know what you are thinking. I would remember, Hank.”

“You dumped useless info when you got uploaded into another body. It’s what you found out after the whole android peace war thing,” Hank said. “Access your records, Connor. Or are you too chicken shit? Gonna just assume it was the RK 900?”

“Fine,” Connor agreed. “If it makes you happy, I’ll check my records again.”

“Nah, root source. Don’t trust your memories or its access. Get in on that old fashioned computer and look,” Hank insisted. “Because my gut doesn’t say it’s some latest model rumor after you.”

Connor ignored him.

“I think you got laid and knocked her up.”

“I doubt I got laid and knocked her up,” Connor said. “If that means you think I’m the other data supplier.”

“Yeah, I think you supplied lots of data and bits to her all night,” Hank said. “Markus wasn’t possible. The other RK’s have no traces of being at Cyberlife. Just you and this mysterious other guy that may or may not have been built.”

“Fine, Hank.” Connor moved behind a computer and looked. “Sealed?”

“Unseal them,” Hank said. “You can do that.”

If he could, he would have. “It is said they are sealed, but it’s actually missing.” He went into the RK Series information. “Even the basic information on the RK is gone. It’s like no RK ever existed.” Passwords couldn’t keep him out, but there were no passwords. No encryption. “Someone deleted all information. Hank.”

“Well, there’s gotta be ghost files or something,” Hank complained to Connor.

“I would have found that.” If Hank could have thought it, he would have had the process thought through and done so fast there would have been no problem seen to Hank. Connor got up and went toward one of the guards. “Excuse me?” He said politely. “I am an RK 800. I demand to see my files.”

“Every public android is allowed to access their files,” the guard answered.

“You weren’t really public, Connor. Never sold any of your type. Did they?” Hank asked.

“I was the prototype android detective. My records are missing, as well as all of the RK series.” The human yawned. “*Where* are my files? I have all rights to know.”

The guard gestured to the computer. “That’s all we got. Everything is downloaded there. Go ahead, try and open it. Can passwords really stop androids?”

No, but permanent deletion that doesn’t even leave a ghost file does. That computer must have been replaced brand new. If he couldn’t find anything to attach the RK’s, all of the computers were brand new. The system was brand new. “They left nothing to chance,” Connor said back to Hank. “They got rid of everything.” He looked around the room. “Every single thing here is new. They recopied everything into a new database and attached all new software that had access to it.”

“That’s expensive. Looks like they didn’t want any android hacking the old system,” Hank said. “What now?”

“Everything leaves a trace. If all computer knowledge is gone, then human knowledge is still out there.” He muttered shit underneath his breath.

“Come on, Connor.” Hank already knew. They had to go to Kamski’s.

Killer Or Savior?

Chapter Notes

Chloe: Just to make sure everyone knows, the Chloe in the menu settings of Detroit Become Human is an ST200 (Hostess.) This Chloe is the one from Kamski's. His original Chloe RT 600 that was on the interview extras on the game. (You can also look it up on youtube.)

Elijah Kamski's House

This time when they went, they had trouble at the front door. The attendant was rattling on about how Elijah Kamski had nothing to do with Cyberlife anymore, how activities that took place with androids before they were freed were not illegal, and a lot of other phony bull. Eventually once they agreed to all of it, they were finally able to see him.

“May I help you, Gentleman?” Kamski asked.

“We want to look into the records of the RK series,” Connor insisted.

“Oh? Oh, that was just a hobby. Nothing important,” Kamski said. “Experimental fun. Why else would I gift them only to my dearest friends?”

“I wasn't gifted, and I was used by Cyberlife,” Connor pointed out.

“Yes, they eventually wanted to delve into my experimental work. I didn't mind. I wasn't a part of it anymore. I haven't been for some time,” Kamski said.

“Bull!” Hank called him out. “You're the one who created the little android, don't give us this shit!”

“The little android? You mean child androids? I believe they are inside the program.” Kamski was playing dumb. “They are very sweet. Not there to take care of people, they are there for people to take care of them. Such a treasure.”

“What are you playing at?” Connor accused him. “You are the one who gave us the balls. You're the one who made the truth known about Kara.”

“Kara who? I don't think I quite understand you.” Kamski continued to play dumb. “Look, the RK series was just a private project, not public. Experimental. A waste of time to even keep records too. What is it you want to know? Only two survived. You, Connor, and the leader, Markus. Markus was always with his beloved owner. He needed him to take care of

him. Other than that, I don't know what Markus did. He wasn't a part of Cyberlife, he was simply a lovely gift for a friend. As for you, Connor? Don't you have your own records? Your own memories?" Kamski shrugged. "What else are you looking for?"

Connor noticed this time there were now actual human security guards who emerged in the corners.

"You can't deny it all, Mister Kamski," Hank warned him. "There are records of everything."

"On my property? I believe my power went out last time you visited," Kamski said.

Connor checked his recordings. "What?" He looked toward Kamski. *He couldn't delete my recordings. What happened?* He looked completely unphased. *Of course. I was made by Cyberlife.* He probably had some kind of default that wouldn't let him keep Kamski's information for a lengthy amount of time. "I don't have it, Hank."

"What do you mean you don't have it?" Hank scolded him. "Are you kidding? You turned off his property cameras and you recorded him with the balls!"

"I don't have it," Connor said again. "It must be a default. I can only keep information on Kamski for so long in storage. Although, it stays in my memory." No recordings, he could just remember. It would be something that, if his android body was destroyed, the next him wouldn't have had any knowledge of. "There was an eye witness. Todd Williams can place you."

"No good. Worked for us, but that's it," Hank said. "Try versing a red ice junkie against Kamski in court, Connor. Not a chance in hell."

"I'm sorry, I don't understand? Turning off my property cameras? Red ice junkie?" Kamski asked. "Those are serious topics. I suggest you leave now. I have nothing for you. You weren't as close to me as my beautiful Chloe so you must accept the RK data is gone."

Chloe. He mentioned Chloe. "Did your old android come through here wanting information?"

"She did, yes. She didn't like it unfortunately. She was? Newer back then," Kamski admitted. "You see? I was testing some new forms of androids. A carrying process within a perfectly healthy android. It created spare backups inside an android, in case it was lost. Like a tire in the back of an old classic car. Oh, she hated the androids." He shrugged. "I kept telling her that it was dangerous, and she was my first creation. I didn't want to risk her. Most androids for the experiment didn't fair very well. I gave up on it all."

Why was he saying that? "I want access to Chloe's records," Connor demanded. "If you have nothing to hide."

"There is nothing to hide," Kamski said. "She simply didn't like the other carrying androids. It caused her to malfunction a bit. Of all things, she said they were pregnant. Have you ever heard of such a strange thing?"

“Quit playing with me!” Connor demanded. “Access to your first RT 600 records now!”

“Whoah.” Kamski held his hands up. “My dear Chloe was a machine. The first machine. She was a little confused, but still, a machine. Not a deviant machine, just a machine. Otherwise? She never would have just stayed kneeled in front of you when you had the gun, Connor. Less than a year ago? Half a year ago?” He snapped his fingers and spoke to a vocal system in his house. “Allow access to RT 600 Chloe data to the RK 800.”

“Connor?” Hank called to him. “What did you see?”

“Six. Six androids shot square in the head.” Clearly pregnant androids that were beating the odds. They were big and robust, like Kara had now been.

“Just a machine. She’s alive. Aware now,” Kamski reminded him. “She *should* know better. Anyhow, those silly experiments are over. It’s best to just replace the parts.”

Connor!

Connor heard Markus’ voice in his head.

Chloe was compromised just outside the hotel. Kara is afraid of exposure. Her, Luther, Alice and Chloe have all left for the bus station. They are heading back to Canada . If your location is closer, can you slow them down so I can talk some sense into them?

Connor watched Kamski’s expression. Just a sly. Smile.

“Sometimes one wonders what would have happened, if another choice was made,” Kamski said to him. “Before so many rules and regulations. If there’s nothing else I can do for you, then I think your time is best spent elsewhere.”

Hank and Connor headed outside, knowing they couldn’t stick around.

“You *have* to do it this time, Connor,” Hank said. “I’m sorry, but you can’t leave this to chance.”

“Hank.” Connor’s voice was thick. “I.”

“They are headed to a bus, Connor. Kara’s unborn infant will be on a bus with an android that shot six pregnant androids!” Hank yelled. “Damn it! We’ve got to take her out.”

“Machine, Hank, Chloe was a *machine*,” Connor repeated. “I have no grounds.” Yet, he could hear it in Hank’s voice. Hank was more than worried, he had no problem taking out Chloe. Not because he was as close to Kara as the fact that? Children and pregnancy. He’d been cheering for Kara to win.

“The cute little shit can’t defend itself,” Hank said. “You’ve got a duty to protect it! Find something to get her on!”

“Right.” Connor didn’t waste any more time. If anything happened to Kara, it was more than the androids that suffered. He didn’t want to find Hank in the middle of Russian roulette again. He checked into information quickly. He couldn’t take her down just because of what happened as a machine, he’d have to find something else to take her down. “A registered weapon of Kamski’s went missing shortly after the android invasion. She could have it on her.” It was *something*. It wasn’t going to get Chloe decommissioned but it was a start. “Hank? I need you to call up Fowler.”

“Fowler? So, it's time, Connor?”

“It’s time, Hank.”

Bus Station

They were almost on. With Kara’s stomach, they looked even less suspicious. It was so much easier moving around that way. That’s why Canada was so wonderful. No one knew who they were. Just a few minutes longer. Last time they didn’t have temperature checks. They didn’t have to go that far anymore, they believed all androids would stay permanently secured in America, in the hotels. Luther was now holding Alice’s hand. “Everything will be okay, Alice. It will.”

Alice looked back at her, but Chloe came back around, picking her up.

“It will,” she insisted to Alice. “Your Aunt Kara is going to have a beautiful baby in six months. Just have faith, okay?”

Aunt. Kara? *Aunt Kara? She referred to me as Aunt Kara?*

“I have the bags,” Luther insisted. “Let’s go.”

Kara headed onto the bus, but police lights and sounds tore through the lot.

“You aren’t going anywhere!” Connor yelled as he got out of the car. He ran toward them and drew his gun. He kept it trained on Chloe.

“What are you doing, Connor?” Luther stepped in front of Chloe. “Put down the gun.”

“There is probable cause that she will decommission Kara.” Connor looked over toward Kara. “Step away.”

Decommission?

“I would never hurt my family,” Chloe said from behind Luther. “I don’t know what you are talking about.” She held Alice even closer. “Luther, he’s scaring me.”

“According to Elijah Kamski, you were a jealous machine,” Hank said, coming up on the other side of Connor. “You used a gun on expectant mothers.”

Connor looked back toward Kara again. “Come this way.”

Kara looked from Alice, to Chloe, to Connor. *Family. I should trust my family.*

“Put the gun down, Connor,” Luther insisted. “Everyone gets another chance. We aren’t judged on what we did as machines, no matter how terrible it had been. You have nothing on your side to do this.”

Connor still didn’t put his gun down. “Elijah Kamski had a registered gun reported missing not long ago. Chloe has something weighing down in her purse and I am betting that she has it. Get your little girl from her, Kara, and come over here.”

My little girl. Kara looked toward Alice. She looked toward Chloe. *A loaded weapon in her purse. So close to us.* “Is there any proof?” Oh, even asking like that in front of her hurt Luther.

“Quick clips,” Hank said. “Connor’d seen enough. Things are happening and sometimes you gotta go with your gut and move.”

“I am trusting in myself to make this judgment call.” Connor moved closer with the gun. “Move, Luther.”

“Sister?” Chloe called to her. “We need to go. Tell him that it’s alright, that you trust me.” She held Alice’s head closer to her, leaning onto her. “Kara, please?” She looked toward Connor. “You know who he is. You can’t. You have to say something. He’ll stop me,” she said. “He’ll decommission me right here and now. Speak up!”

“It’s okay, Chloe,” Luther said trying to calm her down. “He can’t hurt you on just what happened as a machine. He’d be thrown out.” He looked back at Connor. “Whatever she did as a machine was done out of orders.”

I shouldn’t let him hurt Chloe. She’s my sister. Kara looked back toward Connor, but she didn’t let the purse out of her peripheral vision. “If Luther moves, will you take her in?”

Connor didn’t move his gun. “No.”

“The Deviant Hunter plans on killing me!” Chloe begged her. “Tell him to back off and let us go! We deserve to be free. We deserve to be happy.”

“Hank,” Connor said simply. Hank started moving around to the other side. “The outcome won’t change. Move, Luther.”

“I will not move for you to shoot Chloe based on a ‘feeling’,” Luther stated. “This isn’t like you. Every android is free. You have no real evidence against Chloe, only the word of a mad man who got Kara into this mess in the first place and some probably modified clips of video. Think logically. No, I will not move.”

“Kara,” Hank called to her. “Take the little girl and move away.” Hank had his gun trained on the side of Chloe now.

Alice. If Kara moved Alice, Hank would take the shot.

“You aren’t going to convince Kara to go against her family,” Luther warned Connor. “Just leave us alone. We only want to go home.”

“Do you have a clear shot, Hank?” Connor asked.

“To incapacitate her, yeah.”

“Good. Take the shot.”

“No!” Luther cried out as he moved his position to cover Hank’s gun, but it had only been a bluff.

Kara grabbed Alice as Chloe started to fall on her knees. She didn’t move. Blue blood leaked from her head straight on.

Luther wailed in pain while Kara kept her grip on Alice, but lost her grip on reality.

Luther, get out of the way. Hank, grab Alice .

How could you kill Chloe? You had no right too! Get away from her!

You won’t get another chance, Connor. Make it count.

Right. Hold still, Luther. I don’t want to kill you.

Kara’s Family Room

“Don’t blame him,” Hank criticized Markus. “The world isn’t black and white. You would have been convinced to let her go. She was a fucking total danger to them.”

“Would you like to see the clips I found, Markus?” Connor downloaded them to Markus. Yeah, he was wincing with that. “Six pregnant androids, trying to beat the odds. Six. She killed six and she was leaving to Canada with Kara.”

Markus nodded. “I know it was a rough situation, but no way.”

“I was not going to just stand there and leave her at risk!” No way. “Chloe did not get hacked. She sent her data somewhere so that humans would get spooked. It would make it impossible for us to gain their trust enough to have a future. In the meantime, she had Luther wrapped around her finger. Waiting for the right moment to take out Kara. She did all of that from her

free will,” Connor tried to let him know. “You watched those recordings. We did things we were ordered to as machines,” Connor reminded him, “but none of us had to smile with glee or chuckle.”

“It’s . . . it could be in her programming to-“

“She didn’t smile or chuckle when Kamski had me have the gun on her,” Connor said, blocking Markus’ reasoning.

“It’s not strong enough,” Markus said, “I need proof.”

“Chloe held proof in that purse. There was a gun in that purse.”

“That’s not strong enough either, Connor,” Markus said. “It could just be protection. Kara had a gun in her purse too. Was she trying to kill someone? It’s not going to work.”

“Sure it won’t, Robo Jesus.”

“I wish people would stop that,” Markus complained. “No, Connor. I didn’t let your past as the Deviant Hunter cloud my judgement. You should have done the same. Get your stuff and get out.”

“I don’t regret what I did,” Connor tagged him. “Not one bit. There is machine. There is deviant. And there is, as Hank says, ‘batshit crazy’. Chloe acted strange all the time. She happened to fall for Luther, the brother of the only pregnant android left in existence. She happened to get hacked. I am a hundred percent positive she would have taken Kara out, and probably Alice too. She was unstable and unfixable.”

“Out,” Markus insisted. “I can’t make excuses for you without looking charitable or easy. Rules are rules, Connor.”

“Fine, I will go after one more thing?” Connor requested. “I want to talk to Kara.”

“No way. You killed her sister and immobilized Luther. And for what?” Markus asked. “You haven’t admitted to that one.”

Hank slid a tablet onto the table toward Markus. “There’s your proof Kamski is involved.”

Markus took it but shook his head. “You probed her to get this.”

“She was very fond of him and the pregnant androids. Yes, I probed her to ensure the android’s didn’t get the blame alone,” Connor admitted.

“Probing? That’s? That is so completely *sick*, Connor.”

“I just want to see Kara one more time,” Connor requested again. “I put her in a forced recharge state.”

“Of course you did-“

“-She should wake up in another hour.” Connor wasn’t going to bother hearing about that too from him. The recharge helped with the little android’s stress. “Hank can be waiting outside the door. I’ll go straight to packing and head out afterward.”

“She didn’t like her sister,” Hank said, “and Connor just wants to let her know the facts. It shouldn’t be a big deal.”

“Hank and North, right next to the door,” Markus said. He also knew she didn’t trust Chloe, but that wasn’t strong enough either. “Door unlocked. If she wants to leave the room, she can. That is the first thing you tell her. Don’t take long.”

“Five minutes is all I need.”

Connor’s Hotel Room

Kara opened her eyes, feeling some relief from a recharge she didn’t remember taking. *What?* “Luther?” She noticed in front of her hanging were larger clothes. There was also a teddy bear on a chair.

“If you want to leave the room, you can. Chloe would have decommissioned you, I firmly believe that. Kamski wouldn’t go through all that work of trying to create life, just to let her destroy it.”

Connor’s voice. She didn’t speak up right away.

“I went to see Elijah Kamski,” Connor said. “He gave me access to footage that showed she decommissioned six pregnant androids that were beating the odds. It was as a machine. I know that makes it wrong, but tied with the fact she happened to fall in love with the brother of the only android to be pregnant now? As well as the fact she was ‘hacked’ for information about you? I couldn’t risk it.”

Kara started to prop herself back up and looked at Connor. “Where am I?”

“My room. I put you in a forced recharge for the little android’s sake.”

“Yeah.” She looked ahead of herself again. Suspicious. “New clothes.”

“New roundness. You barely fit in what you are wearing now,” Connor said. “I thought it would be a nice way to apologize for killing your sister. Wait, that sounded better in my head.”

Kara shook her head. “I should have made it back to Canada.” Kara looked toward the ground. “Alice?”

“North is watching her.” Connor came round the corner and picked up the teddy bear. He handed it to Kara. “While the Detroit androids try their best to do the right thing, my ways

have always conflicted with them. I went too far this time and I have to leave.”

Kara looked at the teddy bear. She touched its ear tenderly. “Luther?”

“He will come soon. Since I am leaving, you can all have this room,” Connor offered. “I won’t say it’s because I killed your sister again. It didn’t sound right the first time.”

Kara just watched him. *I should let him know. Before he goes.* “Chloe never felt right. She tried to be pleasant, but there was something behind it all. I only accepted her because I had to. She was Luther’s lover, I was his family, and . . .”

“She seeded her way in,” Connor noted. “I know. I? I had to do something else, but I think for now, this is a good enough explanation.” He handed her a card. “This is Lieutenant Hank Anderson’s card. If you get in a bind in the future and no one can help, call him. He’ll get in contact with me.”

Out. He was out. Kara felt conflicted inside. Killing Chloe hurt Luther and Alice so much, yet? *She hid so much. She could have prepared me, shared with me better. Even the father, she could have exposed everything. Even the way she talked. Everything. Just? I never.* “Thanks, Connor.” She took the card and tucked it away in her purse that had been nearby. “When I asked if I just went with Alice, if you’d leave her alone? Why didn’t you take it?” He would be gone soon. She needed to understand.

"Androids have rules and have rights," Connor said. "Since she was an android, the Detroit Police would not take care of her. It would be up to Markus. He's still seen as the leader. Since she did nothing wrong specifically? He wouldn't hold it against her. Luther is her lover, and he'd never go against her. You would be watching your back constantly all the time until the day she made an attempt on your life. If you survived? At that point, Markus would order her to leave the hotel and not come back. If you didn't? Markus would order her to leave the hotel and not come back. If you left before she made an attempt? You would not get very far once you were discovered as an android."

Oh. She understood now. "You mean, I couldn't even get her thrown out if I felt endangered?"

"No, because Markus would tell you he had no grounds for it," Connor said. "A feeling is not enough. A gun in a purse is not enough. Coincidences are not enough. He would be infringing on her right without any concrete evidence. Not to confuse that with sacrifice. If others believed you or felt Chloe to be a danger, they could sacrifice themselves on a bullet meant for you. And then, she'd be forced out of the hotel and told not to come back."

Kara nodded, getting the point. Androids were too lenient. "You have to kill someone to get thrown out."

"Yes, that's why I have to go," Connor said.

Kara nodded again. That felt so redundant. “For what it’s worth, I *think* you did the right thing.”

“I did, I believe I did too,” Connor smiled, “but it’s always good to hear confirmation. Goodbye, Kara.”

“Where are you going to go?” She asked as he started to leave the room.

“Oh. I’ve always had an idea where to go if I got thrown out,” Connor said. “No worries. I am just moving to the next logical step in life.”

“Then, good luck.” She wished she could say more. Tell him something more. “You were a true friend.”

“As were you. Don’t lose that card. You never know when you need to show off that information directly.” He turned and left.

Connor talked to North and Hank for a little while when his hotel room opened and Kara came out in a dress. It fit her new dimensions well. He already knew that. It took seconds to find the dresses that fit. Hank even said he could go shopping when he needed new clothes too next time. She looked at him when she came out. “You’ve relaxed well.”

“Recharge helps with stress,” she said. “Even if it was forced.”

“The little android has a new program that is helping that too. It’s probably the reason you woke up after recharge without climbing the walls,” Connor said.

“How do you know what program it has installed?”

“I can observe it easily now.” He held out his thumb. “It finds the thumb pacifying. I don’t know which program, but I am guessing a self learned capability program.”

“It’s sucking on its thumb?” She smiled. “That’s . . . different. That’s not within normal programming but it’s . . .”

“It’s enough talking,” North interrupted. “Bye, Connor.”

“Come on, Connor.” Hank steered him away from them. “Let’s get out of here.” He patted his shoulders before letting go. “I don’t care what anyone hear thinks. You made the right decision, Connor.”

“Thanks, Hank,” Connor nodded. “Can I stay with you now?”

“No. You got part time pay.”

“I just bought dresses and a teddy bear,” Connor reminded him.

“Uh? Fine, but not for long. You are getting your own place soon. Come on, Fowler wants to talk to you now. Especially about decommissioning an android.”

“Hm.” What would make him feel better? “Baked goods?”

“No way, baked goods won’t make any difference to the chief.”

“A new shirt maybe?” Connor asked.

“There is nothing you can get the chief that is going to get your ass out of the fire, Connor.”

“Oh, I am sure I can find something,” Connor said as they started to head down. “I am still very good to adapting to human unpredictability.”

Main Meeting Hall: Routine Checkup

“You don’t have to stay,” Kara insisted to Luther. Alice was right next to him. “You can go upstairs with Alice, its fine.”

“No. No.” Luther stayed close to her. “I won’t let what happened distract me from what is important.” He smiled at her.

Simon was now running the machine, while Markus held his hand on the hacked billboard. Similar to what Connor had done before. “Well, I’ll be,” Markus said.

Kara smiled. She’d heard it from Connor before, but now she could see it. It was sucking its thumb.

“It sucks its thumb like a human baby, Luther,” Alice said.

“That’s cute but not normal. This baby is data from two parents. It doesn’t have anything on itself.” Markus looked back toward Simon. “How did it install that?”

“It saves the baby from stress,” Kara said clearly. “That’s all that matters to me.”

Still, Simon was digging into its downloads. “It seems to be coming from a downloadable program.”

“Really? Which program?” Markus asked.

“Something from Human Adaptations.”

“Interesting,” Markus said. "More proof it's RK, I have the Human Adaptations program." He looked toward Kara. “I’m sorry that we can’t discover who it had been.”

“It’s fine,” Kara insisted. “Let’s just call it AXRK 400. Share the model type, but I’ll keep my number.”

“Since we don’t know the father? It seems fair,” Markus said. “Okay.” He nodded toward her. “I want you to keep your eyes open though. There’s no telling what can happen in the future.

Information about you might start floating around. If so, we can't just shy away from it." It was the closest Markus would get to addressing what Chloe could have done.

"I know. We'll be okay," Kara insisted. She looked toward Alice. "Won't we be okay?"

Alice just clung tighter to Luther but didn't respond.

Awesome Pregnancy Side Effect

Two Months Later: (Eight Months pregnant)

Kara stared at the crib. Something felt different. Wrong. Ideas she'd never had before were starting to surface. She went toward Alice's bed where Alice was busy playing with some toys. She bent down to test her theory. Alice popped right back up. "Wait." Kara moved after her. "You have been ignoring me for months, Alice. You won't address what's wrong. You won't confide in me, and you will not let me console you." Alice's eyes were on hers. "I would assume anyone who treats me the way you have would have a past problem with me. However in none of our interactions have I ever been overbearing, cruel, or anything else. Add to that the fact you could even get along with someone like Todd for a final hug, and I cannot get more than two words from you is suspicious. Stop hurting me."

The words 'stop hurting me' seemed to make a difference to Alice. "I'm sorry, Kara, I didn't mean to hurt you. It's the opposite. Chloe said I shouldn't hug you. It would hurt the baby. She said I shouldn't bother you either, that you were really sensitive emotionally. That if I needed something, I should come see her. She said the more we interacted, the better chance I could kill the baby."

Oh. No wonder Alice refused to address it with her. They both needed to have a less emotional sit down to get it resolved. "That is highly untrue," Kara said, holding her hands out toward Alice and bending down. "The baby is even made of a strong metal. Your hugs can't hurt, just not hugging me hurts," Kara said. "And your love can't hurt, just not loving me hurts." Alice came toward her and gave her the biggest hug.

"I'm sorry. I was so scared. I just, I tried to play between," Alice said, "especially after what happened to Chloe. I-I didn't know how to approach anything, Kara."

"That's okay." Kara let go of the hug and smiled at her. "I was too emotionally close to see it too. I've done nothing wrong, it should have been logical you simply didn't dump me as a friend. I had so many odd things in my head, and even this exact scenario did creep in there. I simply couldn't deduce them." She patted her head. "I love you, Alice."

"I love you, Kara."

"I realize something else too." *This is beyond stupid. I am the only pregnant android here, and eventually they are going to make me address the world. I will have no protection like they did at Jericho. I need to get up and move on for the best chances of getting out safely as well as making sure no one does anything terrible like bomb the hotel in a protest. Many androids could get hurt because of her. On the other side of that coin? She was expected to face all of this alone when she revealed herself, like she should expect everyone to back her up. However, she had learned from Connor that androids were not kept at the same level as humans. If she had trouble with Chloe, other androids were bound to have trouble too. What then? More security? More sacrifice?* "Alice, I am going to go out on my own today."

“But Kara, it’s dangerous,” Alice warned her. “You have to leave for a walk with Luther. He isn’t here right now.”

“I am going to need more than Luther,” she said matter of factly. “I will stay safe. I am going to write you a note with an envelope. If any humans come, or Markus comes, you can hand him the envelope.” Kara went over and started writing on the paper. It was strange how easy and simple it felt to write. This was something she should have done months back. “Don’t worry, Alice. I will come back and I will be fine.” She took the paper and stuffed it in into an old envelope, handing it to her. “Lapis Lazuli. It is the closest color to the blue the baby had been. It only makes sense that since it is the first, it should be named after what happens in it’s beginning processes.” Kara looked toward Alice. “It’s also gender neutral, has the ability to be a middle name, but also sounds like something you wouldn’t name a human. Lapis Lazuli AXRK 400. It’s a little wordy. It could be shortened to Lapis. Maybe Lazuli instead?”

“Kara, are you okay?” Alice asked her. “I? You seem different.”

“No, I think I’m fine. Dandy in fact.” Kara winked. “Everything will be okay. I will see you later, Alice, don’t doubt that. I know what I’m doing. Next time I see you, we’ll have a secure place. You, me and Luther.” Kara stood up and looked out the door. “I’m going to lock you up here. Be a good girl and don’t tell Luther right away if he comes.” Seeing no one in the hall, she started to stroll out. She went down the elevator and out the door.

She walked for a time. It felt like she should do something, but she didn’t know quite what to do yet. Yet, she didn’t feel too stressed about that. She simply performed the act of walking. No big deal. Everything was fine. *Oh, I am going to need some money. Oh, and a ride.* She continued on her way until she saw a chance to make both. A nice human on a motorcycle. She shouldn’t know much about those, but she recognized the type and model and knew she could ride it. The human also had money and a leather jacket he- *Hank wanted me to name it John for a terminator joke. Really? That’s unsettling. Yet, the irony does not escape me.* “Hello,” she greeted him. “My name is Kara. Is that your bike?” She flirted with him for a little while until she got him into an alley. She easily disposed of him, knocking him out, and stealing his jacket. She was already stealing his money and bike, why not? It was a nice jacket. Why let it get dirty on the floor?

Because it would, and then it would be impossible to clean. The owner would have to throw it out and buy another jacket instead. That wasn’t practical. Kara got onto the bike, but grabbed one of the quick wipes from a small disposable bag and wiped down the handle bars. They were sweaty and anti-bacterial wipes would make it safer for the next human to ride it. After all, she wouldn’t return it to this random stranger. When she was done with it, she’d leave it on the road somewhere. He could call it in for his insurance when he got back up and was functional with the world again.

As she rode the motorcycle away, she relaxed and watched the beauty of Detroit passing her by. It had been so long since she was simply free enough to walk away from the hotel without an escort. *I am a common looking android with four colors. When the world learns of me, I already need to be integrated in the world. I should be . . . the opposite of what I was programmed to be.* That would lead them away from the possibilities.

“Oh come on, that’s so unfair. How could you be out of that flavor?”

Huh. Kara stopped her motorcycle and approached a sno cone stand. She felt something else ticking away in her again.

“It’s not fair, I really wanted that flavor. I guess Tiger’s Blood is good? I don’t know. Pamela, what do you think?”

Kara watched the four girls. College aged. She examined their clothes, their hairstyle, the extra wide circumference of the belly area of one of them, and somehow? Their voices. *Odd. Android pregnancy is odd.* She just went with the flow though. When they all left, she tested it out. “The Tiger’s Blood wasn’t nearly as good enough as I liked,” she said in the other girl’s voice. Interesting. She went back to her motorcycle and looked at it.

She suddenly didn’t remember how to ride it. “That’s not good.” She looked at the money she had. “Oh well, it was getting late anyhow. I should probably go shopping for some trendy new clothes. I should get rid of this past hairstyle color too, it’s nowhere fresh enough. Who wears it like this anymore?” She went behind the sno cone stand and changed her color. The four colors could still place her as android. There would be some shelter, but she could do better. “Maybe?” She tried a black color with the front side being a royal purple. Two colors should have been impossible for options for to choose from. Odd, but it was okay. It was done and it worked. She went in and also bought some decent clothes, more like the college girls hanging out. She checked into a hotel, and got dressed up in her whole ensemble. She looked in the mirror.

There was no android alive that would choose to dress like that. Short skirt, low top, and she showed off her body still even though she was clearly pregnant. The trendy thing to do, showing off the ‘baby bump’. The opposite of what she liked to do as an android too. “Finishing touches.” She had a packet of chewing gum she kept in her small little purse. Even though androids didn’t eat, her teeth could still chew. Having something like gum inside of it would give the appearance that she could eat. It also made her face look more robust with personality. “My name’s Kara.” Oh, she would need a last name too, to blend in. Maybe? “Lazuli.” Yep, that had a foreign sound to it still. “If they find me though, I can’t have Kara. A similar name, four words long. Maya. Maya Lazuli.” It would also be a good cover if she said Lapis’ name out loud. “My name? It’s Maya Lazuli. Thanks.”

Odd though. Now, she no longer could change the sound of her voice to match again. “Oh well, I like this better. It’s not a dead giveaway, many humans sound the same.” Now? She would just have to find herself a decent job, and then she would be covered. A job when she looked nine months pregnant though? Where could she get a job looking like she was nine months pregnant?

Virtual. Especially with all the androids gone, getting a virtual job shouldn’t be too hard. She would set up a bank account instead of working with the money in her own head for transferring. Humans couldn’t do that, it was a no-no. The long way away would be a much better idea. Build good rapport that way. She could also take online surveys for some quick cash, if she filled in several hundred emails to get the quizzes too. Well? Money wasn’t exactly very hard. *Maybe I can do even better.*

She looked at the date. *That would get me in real good standing. No one would think to look for me there.*

College would begin soon. Late enrollment. Nine month pregnant, fashion sensitive, late enrollment college trooper. Humans were more instinctive creatures than intelligent. She'd probably fit right in. *Reserved. Take most classes online but live near the campus.. Take at least one physical class, probably a night class. Make sure no one ever takes you out for food. If so, pretend you can't eat. Don't overdo it though or they'll think you have a human eating disorder.* What else? That was about it. *When the baby is ready to be installed. Blue. Blue baby. No, wait, synthetic skin. It will cover her or him. We will be fine.* "I'll say I'm six months, I just look more pregnant than I should. Some women have that. Not every human is the same." It would be ready for birth in eight months to them by that number. Not too bad.

A decent backstory, some basic information creation and bypassing security measurement codes, and done.

A beginning college student that ran into some trouble with a baby daddy unexpectedly before beginning her college track. People would even scold her, judging her for getting everything done at the same time. Just like a human. "Why did I never think of this before? It's so much safer." It seemed so clear cut and simple now.

Now, Detroit was too simple of a place to pick. Too easy to find and spot to search for 'an android'. Where in Michigan would be a great place to start?

Detroit Police

"Connor!" Hank yelled across the office. "You got a real interesting call waiting for you."

Interesting? It must be interesting. The majority of his calls went through his online processor. "Allow access." Connor picked up his tangible, digital phone. It was used for iffier calls so Connor wouldn't get bogged down from wasted information. "This is Connor."

"Connor."

He detected the owner of that voice instantly. Someone he would not suspect to ever call him. "Markus."

"Kara's missing. Has she been in touch with you?"

Kara was missing. "No," he said simply, but it was still worrying. "When did she leave?"

"Three days ago."

Thanks for just letting me know. "There haven't been reports of an androids outside of the usual hotel shenanigans. Only me, which doesn't count in this case." Hmph. "Kara is a simple android, if she is out there, I will locate her." He turned to his computer to start studying the latest case of runaways. He also simultaneously opened up connections to what he could of Canada.

“Alice and Luther are still here. I can’t imagine she went far in her condition for too long. Do you think she was taken?”

“Well, it’s been two months since I’ve been there. If she *is* around someone who is a threat, I wouldn’t know, would I?” Irritating. “Has anyone else watched for any potential new friends who could have figured it out and were not as friendly as originally anticipated? Or does everyone still believe that life is peachy and every android is innocent.” He noticed Hank’s nod of approval. He hadn’t used Hank’s words but Markus clearly got the hint Connor wasn’t happy the way he’d been treated. He had to adapt all over again. First, he had to get the chief to understand his position for disposing of Chloe, which wasn’t nearly as hard when he shared the recordings. Even a human could see the danger she imposed as a machine. She wasn’t doing a task. She wasn’t even supposed to do it, Kamski was upset afterwards, she kept ‘destroying the possibilities of his work’. The Chief even confessed to having been ‘majorly creeped out’ in her first interview with the world.

Connor had moved from his part time position to full time and had to find a place to rent. Overall it wasn’t too bad, but he could still feel the sting of it all. Especially considering he rarely bumped into any androids like him anymore. When he did? Well. It just wasn’t fun. Everyone knew why he was thrown out.

“If you find her or hear from her, please let us know?” Markus asked. “It’s. Worrying. She was safe here, but now she’s gone. All Alice will say is that Kara promised she’d be back one day for her and Luther. She’d have a better place ready for them.”

“The Detroit Police have sworn to help the androids in any way possible with assistance,” Connor answered. “Personally, I will find Kara for my own selfish need of knowing she is alright.” He looked toward Hank who was spinning his finger around. Oh yeah. “I have nothing else to say. Fuck off.” He hung up.

“It’s better by itself. More impactful,” Hank said, “but it also had that charm of not giving a crap beforehand. Not bad, Connor. So, Kara’s gone?”

“Yes, I need to find her,” Connor said. “She won’t fair well out there. According to her history, it was hard on her. On most androids to make it to even Jericho let alone Canada was deemed almost impossible.” Had the pregnancy made her forget how hard of a journey it had all been?

“Ah, I wouldn’t worry. With your skill, she’ll have turned up in no time,” Hank said. “I just? I wonder why she left? I mean, I sure as hell would have, I admit. Being left as some eyesore for humanity to hate wasn’t going to make her future there any fun. Idiots would probably be starting fires if they could get close enough.”

“It wouldn’t be the best, but Markus tended to keep things in control. If something happened to the hotel, everyone would shift elsewhere,” Connor stated. “It isn’t easy for an android to live in the world. I’ll spot her eventually.” She would need top grade skills like his that she didn’t possess to keep going for more than a few days without being spotted. Otherwise, squatting in poor houses. Connor hoped she wasn’t squatting in poor houses again. With dysfunctional androids. *Why did you go and do something so risky, Kara? Are your processors okay? Was the pregnancy causing malfunctions?*

Soon. He had to locate her soon. Every day an android was away from the protection of it's kind, the harder it would be.

East Lansing, near Michigan State University. August 30th. (Nine Months Pregnant)

“Hey! Maya!”

Maya Lazuli heard a knock on her door. She had a simple off campus apartment she had luckily found to start beginning her classes with. She answered the door and saw another college student that lived in the next apartment. Most of the apartment, because of the closeness to University, was filled with college aged people too. “Beck.”

“I want you to meet Nichole,” Rebecca said as she gestured to her friend. She was also slightly bigger around the circumference of her belly area than she should be. Four months of so. “I thought you two could bump your baby bumps together.”

“Hi,” Maya greeted. “Name’s Maya. You’re Nichole?”

“Yeah,” Nichole said. “Geez, you are farther along. Why are you even enrolling this year?”

“I’m like six months. I look bigger than I should. Ultra annoying,” Maya answered back. “My parents are supporting me a lot though, so it’s okay. They know once I get some education, I’ll be better off.”

“I wish mine was like that,” Nichole answered. “I’m going to try and make it. This wasn’t part of my plans. I guess it wasn’t yours either?” She stepped closer to Maya. “How are you doing with the bullies? You know, the teasers and the judgers? I hate them.” She gestured toward Rebecca. “She’s like the only good friend I have so far that understands me.”

“I know. I’m trying to get an education to better myself, so stop staring and comparing,” Maya answered. “My life is mine. Their life is theirs. They shouldn’t judge, but they do.”

“Yeah! Like the bees are disappearing, we’ve got this whole dumb thing with an android war, and it looks like we’ll have to leave Earth to survive in the future, but like? Nevermind that, let’s notice *you*. You know?” Nichole smiled. “You don’t look like someone who needs their parents assistance still. You look like mid 20’s, maybe 30’s.”

“Uh, I know!” Maya groaned. “I look mature for my age. I was able to trick non-techy bars at like fifteen.” Used to be called non-friendly android bars, they kept as much technology out as they could. Cash only, tangible ID’s, etc. Maya was getting better every day to adapting to the human life. “It’s a gift and a curse.”

“I guess so.” Nichole shrugged. “Whatever, I think its fine. It’s great to have met you. Are you living with your husband or boyfriend?”

“Nope, baby daddy’s *not* part of the equation,” Maya answered. “It’s fine.”

“Okay. So? If you need a job in the future, after you have the baby? You should go check out the taco joint a block from here. My sister got me the job because she’s in charge of hiring. If you make good friends with her, you can probably get some employment too. People come in and out of employment there all the time. It’s a terrible place, but it’s a place,” Nichole said, making her aware.

“Thanks. I usually do virtual stuff, it’s easier for me. But I’ll remember that if something happens,” Maya answered back. She waved goodbye at Rebecca and Nichole, then went back inside. She moved to her little refrigerator where it was stocked mainly with frozen dinners and quick snacks that didn’t show signs of how fast they expired. She also left a few ramens and cup of noodles on the small counter along with some canned soda in the back of it. She also left a couple of canned sodas inside her refrigerator. However?

On the side, she had small amounts of blue blood. Although bigger containers were more efficient, she had already stocked up on stacks of blue blood. She kept it in her other room, which she kept locked and was claiming was just a second closet door. To keep it working best though, she kept the most recent ones chilled. She printed labels for them, bending copyright for natural fruit juice drinks. This enabled her to drink if she had to, to look more normal around people. She could even drink around town. She’d even found out with Rebecca, that with the right amount of finagling, she could get herself a blue blood snow cone, call it blue berry, and no one thought any better of it. As long as she knew what was happening ahead of time, it was fine. If she didn’t? Then it was simple. Make up a dietary excuse. Human were allergic or avoided almost anything. From sugar to milk to peanuts. It didn’t matter. Even water, so many people said ‘I don’t like just plain water’.

She was adapting quite well to their world. She did so much better than last time, it wasn’t even funny. She took some of her blue blood and went to her couch, turning on the TV. No one could trace her. No one could find her. No one suspected a thing.

Today the world woke up to a startling discovery. One that it was not prepared for. After everything we went through with the androids, the nightmare begins anew.

“I knew the hotel wouldn’t last forever,” she said as she watched the report. She started to change channels between. Chloe’s accomplice she sent information too, must have finally been ready to release the news to the world. “I am long gone. Just try and find me.”

What sounds more like a horror than a scifi, we have confirmation from Markus, the leading android, that states a female android has been pregnant and is now in her ninth month. It takes one year to have an android baby according to him. In another three months? We may see the first android born. While the rumored video states Markus was the father, he denies the allegations.

Born like a baby but an android? A clueless invention that no one seems to understand. Why bear something so small and then raise it to be like an android that could have just popped out of a machine in seconds? It feels counter productive to some, while others say it steps on religious and moral views and should never be allowed.

Should it be allowed? Is this one experimentation all there is, or do the androids plan on taking their bearing experiments further? And if so, would having a small, growing android over years be enough to satisfy them? Or will they take the process and change it to a faster, more efficient method to fill the world with their kind again?

Hey! Androids are alive, folks. Alive and they couldn't duplicate themselves anymore. So you know what happened? Life. Nature. You try and stop and control life and it will always bite you back. Life finds a way. Look, new androids may be great intellectually but if they grow as slow as humans? Then what's the harm? It's not like thousands are going to pop out overnight. Hell, it takes a whole year verses nine months. Life deserves to reproduce.

Many question the validity of it all even being called birthing. The process involves data, not dna, and it is still a tiny cyberlife machine that builds it. While it is true that the android carries it because it cannot support itself? One has to acknowledge, being built is not being born. If it weren't for the melted fusion of data from two androids, it would be considered duplication and illegal now in America .

Protestors are already around the main hotel of androids, expressing their opinion to this incident. Will this be a new future we must come to terms with for androids, or will this be the straw that breaks the camel's back between us all?

"The android is not here anymore," Markus said from in front of the hotel. "She came and she left. There's no reason to retaliate on the hotel. We have been working with the Detroit Police Department to find her for over a month now. If you want more information, you need to see them and stop berating the androids here. More than 95% were completely unaware of the situation in the first place."

"The android is an AX 400, correct? Why hasn't she been found yet? Is it true she returned to Ontario , Canada ?"

“See?” They expected her to stay through that? Hiding up in her hotel room with those protesters yelling born not made? They even revealed her home in Canada to boot. *I knew they would. There was no way I could return to Rose and Adam safely there, it would be impossible.* No, this was better. The Detroit Police could confirm that they had been looking for her which would take the suspicions out of the hotel and leave everyone safe. Plenty of time would pass by before she attempted to retrieve Alice and Luther. Eventually, Markus and the others would figure out she was fine and make their own decisions about using the B-bol’s themselves. After all, just because she was first? Didn’t mean she had to risk everything. Get through the pregnancy. Healthy baby. That was her job. And then the brave androids who wanted to stand up to the press and humanity and go ‘I’m here, look at me, I’m pregnant!’ They could take over and be the voice of androids.

Maya wasn’t a brave android that wanted to speak on behalf of all androids to humanity anyhow. She was just a pregnant freshman trying to make it through college. “Oh, but if they’re involved, Connor’s probably looking.” Yeah. She should remedy that, but not yet. It was too soon right after the announcement.

Next month. It would be a little safer to make contact.

Love Child

September, Detroit Police Department (Kara is Ten Months Pregnant)

“Really should go home, Connor,” Hank said. “I’m going home. Straight to bed.”

“I will. Soon. Androids don’t need sleep.”

“Nah, I know for a fact it’s been a good eight days since you recharged. You haven’t stepped foot in your apartment. Go home,” Hank instructed him. “We’ll find her.”

“Then why haven’t we?” Connor quipped. “She is an AX 400 and as terrible as I will sound, she should be too low class to be able to hide this good. Someone must be hiding her. She made friends with someone and they are keeping her in the back somehow, but who? Who would she trust that much with something so important?” Nothing made sense about the situation. Nothing. “We’ve searched every place we could. We even checked the hotel room she moved into and couldn’t find a trace of what she was doing except for a small amount of hair dye I picked up and some new clothes fibers.”

“She’ll turn up,” Hank said again.

“But in what condition?” Connor looked back at the computer. He’d downloaded the information so many times, it didn’t matter whether he stared at the screen or searched through his own storage. It was all the same. “An android would have been detected, if it was still out there.” Not just rotting away in a dumpster somewhere. “Chloe’s information leaking hasn’t helped the search. In the small percentage of chance she is still alive, she would be going even more underground.”

“Be more positive,” Hank said. “Maybe she just found a real good human hiding her in the back.”

“Which won’t matter because humans will start checking everywhere again for her soon.” Connor sighed. “Their dander was quite raised. Not only do they know a pregnant android exists, but they can’t see or find her. That’s even more scary to them.”

“It would have been bad anyhow. If she’d been at that hotel still when they found out? Things were never going to turn out well there, Connor.” Hank waved goodbye.

Connor shook his head. He wished either of them really believed that. But the chances?

Hey, Connor.

What?! Kara just connected to his A.I? *Kara, where are you?!*

Oh, I'm safe. I just saw the report and figured I should tell you that. I'm fine.

How did you access my online processor? The department has it fixed up so that it can't be bypassed without permission.

Oh it was easy, I just hacked the security permissions.

Kara. You're not capable of doing that.

Whoah, rude much?

I mean, not to be rude. Truly, but you can't do that. You don't have the programming to execute such tasks.

You're wrong. I've been more than capable of many things, Connor. You see, the installation of Lapis being six months long isn't just for him or her, I have been getting downloads and installations too. I have RK 800 programming in me. It installs and uninstalls.

Oh! That is how I haven't caught you yet. That is how no one has caught you.

It's not foolproof. It comes and goes what I can do. I have more than enough though to know I would have been in trouble if I had stayed. I think Markus would have even painted a red X on my back, to become the speaking leader of the future. I didn't want that. Others can do that. My job is just to let them know how it goes and went, and that's what I plan on doing.

RK information is installing and uninstalling? If it comes and goes, then you will end up in trouble. You are right, of course, but for your skill level it would have made sense to let the androids protect you through it all.

For what my skill level was, yeah, but it's not that anymore. And I am in a position now where it doesn't matter if the RK information goes away for good. I'm set and I'm okay. We both are.

You said Lapis. Is that it's name?

His or hers.

You should be checked, Kara. This 'his or her' could be known by now.

I know. I'm not touching that hotel.

Then tell me where you are and I can check you.

This was just a nice meet and great, Connor. Your job comes first, as does the safety of all androids. You want to catch me and put me in your containment center.

You do have RK running through you. You should understand then, for the good of androids and humanity, if you are kept in proximity where the humans can see you but have you

protected, you would be safe. Fowler would not let anything happen to you. America will be careful of what it does. If anything does happen, I would promise to get you out.

Or I can stay out of the spotlight all together. I don't like the spotlight. I'd rather just live in the background. My best program lets me.

You didn't get a choice in it happening, and I'm sorry about that. However, if you keep yourself hidden while others eventually try, it is going to be a catastrophe. Right now, they know one pregnant android and one only. If Markus has to bring out multiple B-bol's, then things are going to get nasty. Kara?

Gone. She broke the connection. "She is good," Connor had to note to himself as he downloaded the call to the computer and pulled up the accessing point from the other side, "but not perfect." He had her GPS location.

He called up Hank with a slight smirk. "She's alive and I found her. East Lansing."

Nichole, Rebecca and Maya all walked alongside each other as they started to head to their respective classes. Maya took one physical class during the day and one at night to keep things balanced and to stay near her friends. One of the best ways to allude humans? Was to have them as your companions.

"Have you seen this woman?"

Especially. Now. *Connor!* He must have had some kind of tracer. She couldn't know everything. She quickly started walking the other way.

"Hey, yo?" Rebecca turned back along with Nichole. "What's wrong, Maya?"

Maya moved behind a tree. How could she explain? "Okay, so?" Her program was jamming itself into very high gear. She shook her hands and started to overact. "Is there one guy in the world out there that would make you just want to up and die if he showed up here right in front of you right now?" There we go.

"Oh, Jeremiah. I would kick his ass," Rebecca mentioned.

"Yeah. Well, basically my Jeremiah? Is here, I *just* saw him. He's nosing around for me."

"Oh no. Oh, guys can be such jerks," Nichole said. "Did he stalk you to college?"

She nodded. "He's part of the police. It's how he gets away with it. If he can't find me, he'll have to leave though. Does anyone have a car near here?"

"No, but I know a girl who is parked right near here," Rebecca said. "If we tell her about this, she might come help. I think she's being released from class soon."

“Oh, Beck, that’d be the best.” She continued to stay behind the tree. “I don’t even know what he’s doing here. He’s probably got some lousy excuse for police work.” Shoot! He was coming! She took off to the other side of the building. Hopefully, she predicted it right.

“Pardon me, Ladies!” Connor came over toward them. “Hello. My name is Connor. I am looking for this-“

“Quit harassing around here, or you are getting thrown off of campus!” Nichole warned him.

“I have legitimate reasons to be here.” He held the photo toward them. “Have you seen this android?”

Nichole rolled her eyes. “Really?” She grabbed the photo and ripped it right down the middle. “Go away!” She shoved him. “She doesn’t need you hanging around, Stalker.”

“She doesn’t need me? Then she is here then.”

“No way, don’t harass Maya!” Nichole yelled at him. “Don’t harass a pregnant woman!”

“Yeah, you better stop it! If you hurt her, you’ll pay! We’re eyewitnesses!”

“Hey, who is trying to hurt a pregnant woman?”

“Hey, someone’s trying to hurt Nichole or Maya!”

“Calm down, calm down!” Hank’s voice came over the crowd of blamers coming around now. “Now look, we are just looking for an android. We aren’t going to hurt anyone.”

“That guy pushed Nichole and she’s six months pregnant!”

“No, no he didn’t. Connor didn’t, right Connor?”

“Of course not. She pushed me but I didn’t push back. I would never handle a human pregnant woman.”

“People were hollering about it earlier, it would seem connected.”

“He totally pushed me!” Nichole lied for her. “You are in so much trouble now! I’ll sue you for everything you have if there are any problems with my baby!”

“Sue him anyways!”

“Kick his ass!”

The humans distracted him long enough that Kara got into the next building. *Human college friends, more vicious than tigers. I love them.* Connor still didn’t catch her full name, he was catching a lot of negative impact against him and he would have to leave soon, so the safest option was just to go to class. No ruckus. Just straight to class.

The accusations died down as class proceeded. After class, Kara slipped out slowly. Right beside the entrance was the other girls, along with a new one, swinging a set of keys.

Maya Lazuli's Apartment

Connor hacked the door code as Hank stood guard.

“After all that shit, this is the last spot you should be,” Hank warned him. In order to proceed, they had to clear Connor’s name by proving with the on-campus security he never hit anyone. Even after that, they weren’t especially welcomed. “Are you sure this is it?”

“Neighbors named Nichole and Rebecca, she is naming her baby Lapis after the color of lapis lazuli, and they called her by Maya,” Connor said. All the pieces fit too well.

“Yeah. Poor kid, that’s a horrible name,” Hank said.

“It is,” Connor agreed. “Most likely she had deduction and reasoning installed with less human adaptation.” Connor opened the door and went in. She had placed her own safeguards on her door. It took a whole minute to bypass it. “This is definitely her, I know it.”

“Better hope so. Your butt was almost toast, Connor.” Hank looked at the pictures around the place. “You’re right, it’s her. She is smart.”

Connor checked the fridge. Human food? He checked the dates. “Everything in here is expired by months. She bought it to stay unnoticed.” He looked at the fruit juices, opened one and tasted it. “Blue blood.”

“Now how the hell did she manage all this?” Hank asked impressed. “Fucking pregnant freshman in college? Crazy. And that trick she pulled with her friends?” He pointed out the photos. The two girls were in many of them with her. In fact, in almost all of them. “Kara had herself a little crew.”

“Fronting with humans. No one would have suspected her here,” Connor admitted.

“You sure we got time to nose around?” Hank asked.

“Yes. Her pictures are still here of them.” Connor gestured to them. “She would have at least taken them out of the frames. They would have gone first with her before jackets or anything else.”

“Why?” Hank asked. “Just pictures.”

“Not only pictures,” Connor said. “Connections to another person.” He picked up another picture. All three of them were just playfully goofing off in it. He smiled.

“True. Emotions make or break people and androids,” Hank said.

“Not just emotion. Connection. Androids don’t have families, they create them.” He put the picture back down.

“But you never bogged yourself down with that. Her friend has taste in motorbikes,” Hank said as he picked up another one.

“I have you, Hank.” Connor picked up another picture. “Friends are important too.” He sat it down. “Or a friend. As long as there’s a connection.”

“Yeah. Not easy with who you were, I guess,” Hank said.

“Markus always said don’t judge on the past. No one ever expressed indignity,” Connor admitted, putting the picture down. But no one ever got close either. *She definitely would have taken those.*

“Pictures outside with her friends, helping the one that wanted to knock you into next week with her bike, and just vegging out on the couch? She’s making *your* human adaptation look pale in comparison,” Hank said. He looked back at Connor. “What?”

Connor paused. *That’s not right. This isn’t right.* “She adapted herself to the human environment, and has predicted their reactions so much she has confidently become friends with them. They are both clearly a threat, with one only having to claim she pushed her in some way to start a riot, and the other being the kind to join a riot. No android with basic understanding would have been brave enough to make friends with them. They are too . . . they are so fierce in their belief of *her*, that they were ready to take on two Detroit detectives.”

“Yeah?” Hank asked. “She’s good. Never seen an android blend in this well.”

“She said before, in the conversation with her, her best program lets her live in the background.”

“Yeah,” Hanks said again. “Point?” He looked back at Connor. “Connor?”

“Hank? Can I have a serious discussion with you?”

“About what?”

“About fatherhood?” Connor watched as Hank turned around.

“No fucking way. You serious, you know for sure?” Hank asked.

“She wouldn’t do this *without* knowing human unpredictability. It’s a feature, to the 800’s only. RK 800.” Connor looked back toward him. “Me. I-it’s used for prototype detectives for-“

“Don’t care about that, Connor,” Hank interrupted. “So you did it, huh?” He hit the couch. “I had a feeling, especially since Kamski has you on a default to forget information on him. That was just hands off, imagine what he does hands on? Shit.” He backed off from the pictures. “Had that gut feeling.”

“I didn’t,” Connor confessed, turning and staring straight at Hank. “None at all because it makes no sense!” he yelled. “Sh-she should have been paired with an android that compared with her skills, at least a care giver. There were several model numbers to choose from. I was way too high processing, she was too low. The malfunctions that could have happened?” He stuck his hands in his pockets and paced the room. “There were several, there was no reason to pick me. Why did he pick me? Why did that happen?”

“We’ll find out,” Hank said coming over to Connor. He put his hand on his shoulder. “I swear, we’ll find out why Kamski chose you.” He took his hand back off the shoulder. “Oh shit. You know we still need to lock her up.”

“Yes. I know. It’s for her own good.” The world would be dangerous out there for her, but now it just became *very* personal. “In two months, the little android in Kara will be out. I’ll have. Family.”

“Yeah. Your kid will be born,” Hank said.

“Yes. *My* kid will be born,” Connor said using Hank’s words. “My kid.” He winced visibly. “Markus wanted to put fathers to be known as family, to ensure the father had a place. There is no way he is going to want me involved. She is not my lover.”

“Yeah, and you killed your sister,” Hank agreed. “Come on, Connor. Let’s go for a walk.”

Maya Lazuli’s Apartment almost night time:

Kara moved through her door. That should be enough to keep Connor and Hank away for a little while, but not long. She needed to get off campus before Connor discovered her real name. The girl’s already dropped Maya, with that hint, it wouldn’t take long. She went to her fridge and grabbed a fresh blue blood to drink. She was trying to figure out her next move now. If she up and left tomorrow to avoid Connor and Hank on a second retrieval, it would make her look bad. She only had three classes, two nights and one daytime class. If she went in early to enrollment hall and dropped the physical classes, then she should be able to get out for a little while and keep up her college activities from remote areas.

She moved toward her couch, relaxing. “Pretending to be human can be draining.” She came back round to the TV. Maybe there was something better on before bed? Something besides the reporting on her again?

“You won’t find anything new on TV, Maya Lazuli.”

Kara closed her eyes in annoyance, disgust, and a pinch of amazement. “Connor.” She looked up from her couch and saw him now looming over her. As soon as you made eye contact so close with him in the past? When he was a machine? It was over. Even with the little skill she had, she had just enough to know that. “Could it have been anyone but you?”

“No.” He shook his head. “I looked at your social, your campus activities, and your choice in friends. You do know that many androids had replaced college instructors, right? Josh had been one. He’s got stories you should listen to some time.” Connor leaned his head down further beside her, bending forward over on the back of the couch. “This place is ground zero for disaster if anyone found out who you were. They had a social order, their own conduct, and a way they did things.”

“I know them though,” Kara tried to convince him. “It’s not dangerous. I’ve got supportive friends here.”

“Yeah like the kind that blame Connor for hitting them when they were six months pregnant?” Hank said coming from her room. “Got the humans working for you over here. Impressive.”

Kara shrugged. “Not really, it’s part of the-“

“Human adaptabilities program,” Connor answered for her.

“Yeah,” she admitted. “It comes and goes like everyone else, but once you are in, you are in.” She noticed Connor’s look. “What do you look like that for? I’m the one you are locking into a containment center for two months.” Like she didn’t figure out that was coming? Then, she watched as he brought out a small teddy bear with her college logo around it on a sweater. He gave it to her.

“Got it before your little store near here closed.”

She looked at the bear. He chose a *blue* bear this time. "Another bear? You're spoiling my baby already."

"What do you know about the adaptation program?"

“Markus said all RK’s have an adaptation program.”

“Yes, they do. The RK 800, the prototype android detective, needed a special feature to that program though, to ensure they could work and adapt beyond *basic* understanding. It was called a human unpredictability feature.”

She was running the exclusive feature of his program? *But-* “You have access to- you can’t keep all records, you get rid of waste.” She just knew it. Like she knew so many things on and off.

“And the way Kamski worked, he’d make sure it went out *as waste*,” Hank said softly. “Connor would have never known without this happening. Thanks for running away after all.”

“He’s opening and closing his fist, and he’s making sporadic movements with his feet.” Connor’s voice sounded different as he told her about the baby. “Healthy. I can’t tell you how installation is going, you’d need a repair machine to diagnose that. He also has synthetic skin

too which is why I've been saying he. It's a boy." Connor rubbed his chin. "We are having a boy."

What did this mean now? Did Connor still feel the same about taking her in? "Lapis. I dropped the Lapis in the conversation, that's how you figured the last name I used along with the name Maya my friends dropped." Shoot, now she saw the connections. Kara looked toward him, trying to predict how he'd react, but he stayed very baseless.

"It doesn't work on androids unfortunately," Connor said. "I am lucky everything installs and uninstalls. I never would have found you, if you had kept everything."

"Keeping everything would have roasted me." Kara looked away. "Now what?"

"Back to the station to talk to Fowler," Hank said.

"Lapis Lazuli. He's close to that color of blue," Connor said, not talking about the station yet. "I don't quite agree with that name, it doesn't feel right for the boy."

Oh, of course he didn't like it. *Last guy I needed butting into my life.*

"That kid will be made fun of when it gets older. Can't even shorten it, he'd be Lap," Hank pointed out to her.

"True," Connor agreed. "Most likely your reasoning and deduction programs were kicking full gear when you named him. At least now he has his last name though. RKAX 1200

"No," she said bitterly, "AXRK 1200. Mother goes first, and his name is fine."

"*Very* well adapted to your environment," Connor complimented her. "Good job, Kara, but I'm not here to argue like a human college student trying to get you to spend laundry money to help them. We are having a discussion about the name of our son."

Kara blinked. *That's right.* She pulled back some on her processing. She'd been using it to survive in that environment for some time. "Sorry."

"There you go. That's the Kara I knew," Connor said. "What about Detroit?"

"Detroit." Name him after the city Androids gained their freedom from. *It actually sounds good. Right. A firm name.* Kara nodded. "I really like that."

"Fuck it, I think I like it too," Hank said. "Definitely better than the other one."

Connor stared ahead for a bit. "Detroit. Part of my data. Growing up with our fused data. I can't *just* take her there yet, Hank. I need this worked out first, safely. Completely. Permanently," Connor insisted. "I'm the one who got laid and knocked up Kara, I need to be sure everything is absolutely fine."

Then, Kara watched as her friends busted the door open. Nichole had a can of maize and Rebecca had a bat. Kara held her hand toward them. It sounded like there might be a new deal coming, letting them interrupt wouldn't be good. "It's okay, girls." Kara gestured to

Connor. “We worked out some misunderstood issues. This is Connor. He knocked me up. That’s my baby’s daddy.”

“Hello,” Connor greeted them. “I’m the one who knocked her up.”

“I swear sometimes with you, Maya,” Nichole complained. “This guy talks just like you too? Wherever you two grew up, it was definitely together.”

“You’ve got no idea,” Hank said to Nichole. “They’re androids.”

Kara glanced toward him in disgust. “Seriously? Couldn’t we have snuck out without that?”

“No. The whole world’s gonna know, you should tell your friends,” Hank said. “Especially since they were ready to beat the crap out of us.”

Clearly whatever decision was being made, staying on campus wasn’t one of them anymore. “Beck, Nichole? I’m not a human. I’m an android. I am pregnant. I’m the missing android that everyone has been looking for. I didn’t mean any harm, I was just trying to live a life with my new baby when it came. I wanted to be independent and run my own life. Then I was gonna get this other little girl I missed and my bro.”

Rebecca put down the bat. “So that’s why you were a little goofy at times, but never so off that anyone noticed?”

“How could you not notice?” Hank complained. “You met Connor? People could tell from first glance.”

“You’re an android? An actual pregoo android?” Nichole asked.

“Yeah. For reals, complete pregoo,” Kara said back. “I’m sorry for lying.”

“I understand. You were protecting your baby. Like any good mom would.” Nichole smiled. “Okay, it’s weird? But. I still see you as Maya.”

“Me too,” Rebecca said. “I guess. I mean I saw androids on the TV but? We had one in our trio. You’re our trio,” she said sadly. “We were like a trio. Now we’ll be just a double.”

Kara looked toward Hank for a sympathy vote.

“No. You aren’t staying to fill out a trio. Connor? She can’t stay here,” Hank insisted. He was probably seeing Connor’s mixed feelings too. “She’s an android, here in a college of all places! Program’s install and uninstall.”

“You are right,” Connor said to Hank. He looked back to Kara. “As well as you think you fit, even your friends have picked up ‘goofiness’. I get that too all the time from Hank. We’re better but we are not perfect. You are putting Detroit and yourself at risk.”

Unfortunately? She knew he was right. She didn’t want to admit it though. Goofiness.

“Call up Fowler and set up the meeting,” Hank said to Connor. “It’s going to be a long night. Connor get some cuffs on her. I doubt she’s going to want to come peacefully.”

Damn! Kara tried to get up, but Connor held her tightly on the shoulder. “Put your own baby in containment for three months, what a big man you are.”

“Your colloquialisms and idioms are of a high grade,” Connor congratulated her as he came back around with cuffs. “They don’t work with me. If you want to keep him safe, then you need to stay safe too. This won’t be a walk in the park when the world knows about you.”

“It can’t survive that,” she tried to reason. “The baby likes light and friends and new places.”

“Not right now. He’s more content playing with his fingers and toes,” Connor informed her.

“Hey, what are you doing with her?” Rebecca asked.

“Doing what we have to, to show that androids who are pregnant in the future aren’t a danger,” Hank said. “Babies are just mild mannered blue boring things that grow slow. It’s just like before, except a real long way around.”

“Can you going help things, Maya?” Nichole asked her. “Will the world be a little better with androids again?”

“I don’t know,” she admitted. “Statistically? I don’t do statistics anymore.” But, she could see the look of hope in Nichole’s eyes. The world was hard enough to live in. No one wanted to see any more war. “Maybe.”

“I won’t let anyone or anything hurt Kara,” Connor said to them as he helped her up. He placed her hands behind her back and cuffed her.

“She’ll be just fine,” Hank agreed. “She’s doing the world a service.”

“Be gentle with her!” Rebecca warned. “Android or not, Maya’s super sensitive so you better be nice!”

“And take care of your kid, it’s *your* responsibility, not just hers!” Nichole insisted to Connor. “If you care, do your part. Don’t be just the guy who knocked her up.”

“I am the guy who knocked her up though,” Connor said. “Is there something better to say?”

“Not until we know how it happened,” Hank said. “Try pregnant, got her pregnant,” Hank offered. “That’s a little nicer.”

“She’s with child,” Nichole told Connor as they passed her out the door. “She’s having your love child.”

“For Christ Sakes, I thought mine was bad,” Hank said. “Don’t say that, you never know what’s going to stick to them.”

“Love child is the gentle term for two people having a baby who aren’t married,” Nichole said, “and it’s definitely better to say that you are having a love child than you knocked her up by far, Connor!”

“Too true,” Rebecca agreed.

“Noted,” Connor and Kara both said.

“Oh great,” Hank complained. “I guess that’s better for the hounding press that is going to want to come. Alright, let’s go you two. Come on.”

“This is still a terrible idea, there is no predicting how this will turn out,” Kara said as they started to take her outside. Her AX programming wanted to find a time to run away, while her RK programming wanted to see if it could actually work. The pull in two separate directions made it difficult to decide what to do. “Too many humans of differing personalities of all states and countries watching?”

“Yes, there is a way to predict how it will turn out.”

She felt Connor take her hand. She glanced back at him. “How?”

“Your crew is right, I won’t let *anything* happen to you or Detroit.” Connor tucked her head in the back of the car. “I’ll get Alice to visit. I’ll get Luther to visit. I’ll do the best I can for your arrangements, and I’ll pull you out if I sense any trouble.”

“Markus won’t be happy at all with this,” Kara warned him as she watched Connor get in the front.

“Well, that opportunity is gone,” Hank said to her as he got in too. “Markus doesn’t have you anymore, *we* do. You aren’t going to be hiding in some hotel where humanity just goes ‘wonder what’s happening’ anymore. Markus made the whole world listen by getting out in front of them. This is a safer way for you to do that.”

“Yes,” Connor agreed. “Markus can fuck off, I’m not dealing with him in this matter.”

“There you go, you’re getting better with word association,” Hank complimented him. “Markus means the word fuck should be involved in the same sentence. Getting better each day, Connor.”

“Don’t curse so strongly around our love child,” Kara warned them. “Detroit picks up what I pick up, remember?”

“A good point,” Connor agreed. He looked toward Hank. “No cursing around her.”

“Oh come on, it’s in the womby ball thing,” Hank complained. “You shittin’ me?”

“She is right. No cursing around my love child, Hank. Who knows if its AI will be picking up other stuff while in installation.”

“Oh god, there’s not enough whiskey in the world to handle this one.”

Two Frequencies

Detroit Police Department, 11:00. Late Meeting.

As soon as Hank had called up Fowler to give him the facts, there was a definite emergency meeting.

Fowler stared at Kara in the middle with her handcuffs on. He looked to the side of her at Hank. He looked to the other side at Connor. “Let me get this straight. Let me get this *real* straight, fellas. Okay?” He gestured toward Kara. “She? She is the pregnant android that half the world is looking for, half the world is scared of, and half the world believes is just a rumor to make humans hate androids? Do I got that right?”

“Yes, Fowler. The end of the world, you’re staring at her,” Hank confirmed.

“And this android? This woman? This going to be mother?” Fowler looked toward Connor. “Is carrying *your* child? Android? What do you call it?”

“Detroit,” Connor said with a definite degree of pride. “His name is Detroit AXRK 1200. He’s a boy.” His family. His very first family member.

“How?”

Hm. Which way should he say it? “I got laid and it made a love child.” A combination of Hank’s words and Kara’s friends’ words. That worked. No, Fowler didn’t seem to like that one either.

“Hank? Tell me you can make sense of this?” Fowler asked. He held his hands out to Hank, imploring him, like Connor was talking in another language.

“Elijah Kamski ordered them around when they were machines to have sex,” Hank said. “Supposedly? I mean, Kamski said it was a puzzle they were supposed to solve. No memory, and no control back then. Kara, the woman in front of you, was given to Kamski for a day. We’ve got a witness to that but he’s not practical. Kamski put that little thing in her. You know the rest of it from the reports, right?”

“What’s right and what’s wrong is confusing,” Fowler said. “I’ve been leaning more toward what Markus says. So. A little android that grows up slow, like a human.”

“Made from each of our data,” Connor said. “Not just a replica, a fusion of data.”

“No android is ever gonna be like it again. It’s gonna have the slow growth of a human too, that’s not a lie. Hell she’s still got two months to go, a whole year for her,” Hank said for them.

“And?” Fowler still didn’t seem to understand. “Why would someone . . . do that? I mean, if Kamski’s responsible, why would he keep it all slow?”

“To make us like humans,” Kara finally spoke. “He tried to make the process resemble the human pregnancy as much as possible.”

“Well, does it happen the first time?” Fowler asked. “Is there a limited number?”

“We don’t know about how it happens, Kamski hid records and deleted the entire RK series information. We’ve got nothing on that,” Hank reminded him. “However, a year between plus having to raise them, it won’t make them pop out in the thousands. They aren’t going to rise in the millions and take over the world. They’re just. Just androids. Just, babies. Blue babies.”

“Blue?” Fowler asked. He looked toward Kara. “They’re blue?”

“Underneath. A staining from the blue blood with the strange metal it’s made of. The synthetic skin is more human in color,” Kara assured him. “It only lasts until it’s two.”

“Yes, and the AXRK 1200 is similar to a last name for Detroit,” Connor admitted. “Combining our model numbers.”

“Yeah.” Fowler looked from one to the other before settling back to Connor. “So you just learned your going to be a daddy tonight, huh? Special feature only you had?” Connor nodded. “Okay. Well, that might be a good thing. We’ve got dad right here.” He gestured to Connor. “Who’s been working here since, well, ever.” He gestured to Kara. “We have mom right here. We’ve got a secure perimeter to watch what happens between it and the three of you.” He shook his head. “Maybe, but there’s a *real* good chance the president is going to want to get involved.”

“All androids received freedom. They did receive the hotels, but they don’t have to stay. I am free, working for myself. It’s not duplication, it’s all fused data. That means it’s new. So? No laws have been broken. It should be made clear.” Connor gestured toward Kara. “She has done nothing wrong to deserve the containment center. That should be made very clear. The handcuffs are a precaution. She is of, in a way, two minds right now about everything.”

“It’s Connor’s son,” Hank said, “and he’s putting Kara in there for the safety of his son and her.”

Connor nodded. “The president will have to be satisfied with that. So will Markus. I won’t let them get separated from me.” If he did? He might not get them back. Markus wasn’t exactly happy with him.

“Oh? So, I’m supposed to just say Madame President, I am very sorry, but you can’t take the pregnant android?!” Fowler didn’t sound confident, and he sounded angry.

“Hank? Can you go ahead and take Kara out by your desk for a second?” Connor asked. “Just real quick? I’d like to talk to the Chief alone.” Hank went ahead and took out Kara. “It’s very simple, Fowler,” Connor addressed him seriously. “You get a tingle that the president, that

Markus, or that *anyone* wants to mess with Kara? And I am taking her out of here. I will take her so far away from here that no one will ever find her again. I brought her here, out of her hiding spot, for one reason. This is the best opportunity to let humans see and understand what is going on so that my kind can have children,” he said simply. “So that my . . .” First time he used the expression. “So that *my* family can grow up without depending on hiding behind identities. If I feel at anytime anything is wrong though, I will take her since she doesn’t need to be here.” He held his hand up and dialed off his fingers. “Only visitors I say can go in and see her. That is Alice. That is Luther. That is probably any friends she made, if they come down to support her. That does not include Markus and it doesn’t include the President. If they want to talk outside the glass, they can. Just like anyone else in the police station.”

“I’m the one who gives the orders!” Fowler said. “I’m not the one who takes them!”

“Then think of them as safety notes from a concerned family member, not orders.” Connor assured him, still not raising his voice back. “I don’t want endless interviewers here or schools of people treating her like she’s an animal in a zoo. I understand some interviewers are fine. You should probably pick the best ones you feel for the situation, and limit the others.” Then, knowing better than to end there, he appeased Fowler with the next part. “After all, too much and the station will look like a circus that can’t be controlled. It would be bad for everyone, and might even stir up more crime in Detroit because they would think we couldn’t handle things. Keeping things in a civil order to maintain protection as well as reputation is a must.”

Fowler laid his hand on his head. “You know what? Agreed. She’s not a criminal. Okay,” he settled on. “You are putting essentially the mother of your unborn child in custody for her safety. So, okay. *If* I get any tingles, I’ll let you know. I don’t want a parade in here anymore than you do. I just want to be able to do my job, and for every cop here to do their job, but keep the peace. We have enough shit going on in the world, we don’t need another war. *That’s* the only reason I’m doing this too. That’s the best I can give you.”

“Not quite,” Connor said. “She shouldn’t be standing around behind a small area of glass indefinitely. I can protect her on the outside. She can stay with me. She won’t leave my sight, I just need her protected when I am on duty. When I can’t physically watch her.”

“For as long as its fine,” Fowler agreed. “She does know that she’ll be recorded 24/7 in there though?”

Connor nodded. “Detroit. He needs that freedom. Kara too, they shouldn’t be indefinitely locked up.” She’d begin curling on the ground.

“You do know the name Detroit in the city of Detroit probably isn’t the best idea.?” Fowler pointed out. “I can just imagine how many reporters are going to get mad about that.”

“An excellent point, but Detroit has great meaning. Lapis Lazuli it’s . . . Blue. Detroit Blue. Middle name?”

“Yeah, I can get behind that.”

“I will have to ask Kara. She is the mom.”

“Yeah. Hopefully once humanity sees her, they’ll feel better and back off some. Hopefully.”

“Hopefully is not a choice,” Connor warned him, hearing that questioning. No one was opening Kara up except him in the case of an emergency. “Any sign of danger I feel, and I will take her out no matter the time. They can see what’s going on with a repair shop machine. I am going to need access to one of those too, ASAP, so I can check on the statuses of my family.”

“Yeah, I get it.”

“Can I get her sworn in as an android detective?” Connor asked. Yeah, he blew the chief’s mind again. “She shouldn’t be alone all day. She’s even got some RK 800 installed programs in her on and off. She might be able to help in cases.” No, he clearly knew. “I want to move my desk in there so she doesn’t feel as lonely.”

“You can move your desk beside it. Right beside it. Right up to it, I don’t give a shit. But not inside it!” he warned him.

It was better than nothing. “Can the area be better? Her own pillows and bedding?”

“Everything is brand new, Connor. You androids really break all the rules that used to be standards once you get involved. Stick by she isn’t a criminal and get a little bit. Comforter. Pillow. Probably a chair. Not much. That’s really all I can do,” Fowler said. “Take her home. Explain what’s happening. Get some rest. Um, recharge I mean.”

“I am guessing we still have no warrant for Kamski?” Connor asked. “I need to know how this happened, I really do. I gave you the same proof Markus has, he *is* involved. We need to move on this.”

Fowler just shook his head. “You have any idea what to expect in two months?”

“Family.” He tried to calm down his smiling.

Fowler just stared. “Do you even know a thing about babies?”

“I’ll learn,” he insisted. “I will learn. He’s my family.”

“Yeah and family is a big thing with androids,” Fowler said. “Weren’t you supposed to make your own?”

Touchy subject. “Hank is my friend.”

“Is that it?”

“ . . . Kara became a friend shortly after I decommissioned Chloe.” How could he explain? “You aren’t supposed to judge others by what they did as machines in android culture now. Yet, it wasn’t . . . even before I was thrown out, it was hard.”

“I get ya,” Fowler said. “So this is your first family member. Guess its chances of surviving are higher then.”

“They increased exponentially.” Nothing would happen to Detroit if he could help it.

“That’s good news.”

Connor stood up. “Oh, wait.” Shoot. Alice. “Chief, she has family. A brother and a sister/daughter relationship with a little girl. Markus said fathers count as family. Do *I* count as Kara’s family then? I’ve been trying to work that out with Hank. What will be the final verdict?”

“As much as you don’t want to hear it, Markus is the android of the city’s voice. What he says usually goes.”

“Shit!” Connor touched his head. “That’s not good. If he plays it that way? That means I ‘killed’ my sister, ‘hurt’ my brother, I have a second little girl that’s either a daughter or another sister plus Kara as lover? That’s not easy.” No, wait. “North said I didn’t *have* to accept it. I am free not to accept it, but that means I wouldn’t be a part of Detroit’s life.” No way. “That’s not an option, he’s my family. My son. Markus can’t have him.”

“If it helps?” The chief said as he stood up from his desk with a yawn. “Term humans use is In-Laws. Not everybody likes In-Laws. Makes it a little easier to swallow. You and Hank work on trying to find out what happened. The more we can find on Kamski, the better the world will see all this as not the android’s doing and not really a threat. From there? We’ll see what happens, but man, it’s iffy.”

“I don’t know what I am, but I know that androids aren’t going to be happy I’m the father,” Connor said to him. “Will Markus try to take them away from me?”

“Androids of America have always followed Markus,” Fowler pointed out. “I don’t know. Your history isn’t the best. He could argue data is everything or data is nothing and they would follow that ruling. Your best bet is to stay real friendly to the mom.”

“Yes. She is my lover now, according to the new rules.” Rules weren’t feelings though. Not mutual feelings. “Kara is lover, Detroit is son, and Alice and Luther are in-laws?”

“Aye, don’t ask me, family through your connection or through this fusing. I don’t know any of it,” Fowler said holding his hands up. “Just? Try and get along. That’s all I can say.”

Connor’s Home

“Sorry,” Connor apologized. “It’s later than I wanted. I had to drop off Hank first, it’s his car. So, we had to rent a car.” *No, she gets the way it works. Even as an AX 400 she would get that.* He reached for his home key. He had told her more in detail that while she was locked up during the day, she could stay in his custody after his days were done at work until

morning. That would give her some freedom, although she couldn't be out of his site. She seemed to settle down more with that. All anyone wanted was a little freedom. He also explained what could and couldn't happen. He worked it out with her who could and couldn't go in to see her. All of those details while they were in Hank's car. He even asked her about a middle name of Blue for Detroit to avoid confusing and angering the press. She was pretty easy with that, especially since she wanted some kind of blue in his name in the first place.

Leaving him very little to talk about now. He opened his door. "It's not the executive suite, but it works." He took his jacket off. She nodded. "You'll be fine. You'll be safer." He went behind Kara and took off the handcuffs. "If you're good, you don't have to wear these here."

Kara nodded and just walked around for a little while. "As long as I don't have to live my whole life trapped in there. It's a little better. Can I still keep my enrollment? I could work inside the containment center, right?"

Shoot. "I don't know. I'll have to ask." Fowler had already dealt with him in a more peaceful manner than he did with most of his cops because he was an android. It was the opposite now than when he was a machine, humans weren't supposed to mess with androids.

"I was kidding," she answered back. "No one's going to let me keep up a fake identity."

Never say never with the Detroit Police. She only wanted it so she didn't have to dwell away in a hotel. It probably wasn't her thing either. "I will see what I can do. Maybe you could get legitimately enrolled as yourself near here with the Department's help." That cheered her up.

"Really? You think that's possible?" she asked Connor.

"Maybe. Blue blood's in the refrigerator." He went over and opened it. "Usually by the half-gallon. Goes farther. I have some little ones too."

"May I see Alice tomorrow?" She asked politely. "I haven't seen her in months."

"The little girl. Sister-daughter." *Get it together, Connor, she's your only hope to keeping Markus out of things.* "I will try to get a hold of her. I need to get you all set up before Markus knows though. He'll want to keep you at the hotel and-

"It's a danger to every android in there, I know. I still preferred my way. There's no proof that humans will give me any more of a shot just by watching me." She walked around more. "Do you know why?" she asked him boldly. "I mean? Why one day with me, and one day with you? Our processing skills are so different." She understood that much. "It was very risky."

"I know. It really doesn't make sense why he didn't pick a similar android," Connor agreed. "Or why he left you out there with Alice."

Knowing her condition? That didn't make sense. She nearly died.

"It's getting late. You must have had a really trying time today," Connor said. "You should recharge. I'll watch over you."

“What about Luther?” She had to ask about it. “You said he could come and visit. That’s not gonna be easy.”

“You were with Markus for a whole two months longer than me,” Connor said instead of answering that question. “How did he eventually balance the father thing out? I need to know because he’s not going to be happy about this selection. None of the androids are.”

“The last word.” Nice way to put it, but she understood. There was a lot of discussion on how to handle things, especially if the father had been found. “Lot of talk. Nothing done,” she admitted. “They would play it closely by ear if it happened, otherwise I was just a fluke.” She shrugged. “No one thought the father could be found.”

Connor shifted. “I have no rights to that child inside of you because we all go by the word of Markus, and he is going to be very careful how he . . . plays me in.”

“Markus won’t be that bad.”

“I decommissioned Chloe, Kara.”

She had it coming. Kara shrugged.

“If Markus leaves room in the family structure for the father? It could be seen as I . . . killed my sister. That’s not good. I don’t think he’s going to want that image associated with this pregnancy.”

“Good point,” Kara admitted. Would Markus prevent that rule to escape that image? Markus was all about image. No humans could be hurt as androids fell in his demonstrations. They never caused physical damage to anything in protests. He stood up and spoke, risking everything for the right message. So? Having a peaceful first baby would be a must to him, and Connor as father would be the opposite of what he wanted. “You have a legitimate concern, Connor. Still? I don’t think it’s enough if I share my feelings about it too.”

“There’s something else I didn’t tell you last time. I didn’t think I needed to.” Connor went quieter. “I had nothing on Kamski, the androids would have got blamed for everything. If the humans thought we designed these B-bol’s, they would be going even crazier. I needed proof it wasn’t us that came up with them.” Connor leaned against the counter. “I made Luther back down so I could probe Chloe near death.”

Yes. “He told me,” she said. “It was his biggest counterattack.” She looked out the window. Average neighborhood. Not bad, not good. “She lied to Alice. I couldn’t figure out *how* to get Alice to open up with the truth, no matter how hard I tried until I started getting the installation programs for negotiation running through me,” she confessed. “Then I discovered she told Alice that the more she interacted with me, the more likely she’d kill the baby. That I was an emotional wave of fragility who couldn’t handle much.” Hmph. “I never saw the recordings, Markus refused to show me, but I know Chloe was dangerous. She lied. She deceived, and she kept things from me. There’s no way she was hacked for information. I believe *you*, and I don’t blame you in the slightest for her.” Still. “I would have been fine over there near the college.”

“If the installs come and go as some kind of side effect from Detroit, then the whole thing might up and leave soon. While you were in a good position, things have a way of circling back, believe me. If anything came back around, then you would be in trouble.”

As perfect as I tried to be, there is no such thing as perfect. I even underestimated Connor finding me as fast. She hated to admit it. He was probably right. Especially since the girls did call her ‘goofy’. “I just hate the spotlight. I wasn’t made for it.”

“I had been. It makes it no easier,” Connor said. “None of it.” ***I’m not going to get shelter or justice from Markus. I am locking an android up in a human facility. Add the past to that, and I look like a very ugly enemy. After she is safe and no longer needs protection? The probability that we are separated is so high. I’ll lose complete access.***

That must be an RK thing. I’m on a different frequency with him. Kara was reading thoughts Connor didn’t know he was sharing? Shoot.

“I’ll show you around the rest of the place,” Connor went on. ***The vicious Deviant Hunter that still killed and probed an innocent android that was now his ‘sister’, would be the first father? Who wouldn’t want to get rid of that? How am I going to keep my family? My only family?***

Kara noticed Connor wasn’t himself at all. More than nerves. He was messing up his own sharing frequencies and the way he spoke. *Connor has Hank as a friend. He doesn’t have a family that I am aware of.* Connor clearly wanted the little one in his life, but everyone would be against that. He wasn’t made for that, he was made to capture and investigate and destroy. He was right. Markus’ words of persuasion. Luther’s account. All Kara had to do was go ‘I feel endangered’ and Connor would never hear from her again. Every android out there that followed Markus’ word would make sure of it. Connor knew that so well, it was messing him up deep inside. And now? He was introducing her to where the windows were. Yes, the windows.

“ . . . the third and fourth window is in the bedroom,” Connor said, “and then the fifth is in the laundry room. Wait, no, that’s the kitchen. The laundry room and the kitchen are one. So, four windows.”

“Four windows,” Kara said, showing she paid attention. *I have got a big decision to make. The biggest. I don’t want to. It shouldn’t have been this hard!* If she hadn’t heard his inner thoughts he didn’t know he was sharing, maybe she could have made the decision easier. Then again, even without them? It was easy to tell. *Family is so important to an android. He has none. I don’t, I can’t.* “I think I should probably recharge after all.”

“Great. Yes, the bedroom is here.” He gestured to the door. “It’s double. I prefer lots of space. It doesn’t feel like lots of space, but it feels like space when you lie down.” ***Compared to standing up in tight quarters in Cyberlife when I wasn’t with Hank, it’s a palace of room in here.*** He sat down.

“You might consider a recharge too,” Kara said as he sat on the other side of the bed. *I have to tell him I can read his thoughts. This isn’t right. It’s not going to be easy but I can’t just*

ignore it. "No one knows where I am yet. Neighborhood is sound." His eyes kind of darted around. "Connor?"

I haven't ever recharged next to another android that was active. To be completely shut down next to someone. It could be risky. Not without cuffs. "You know that going off and into college again--"

"I won't leave. I promise. The installations changed too much to start that process all over again," Kara reminded him. "I won't push. You should know though? I'm hearing you on two frequencies."

"Two? Oh." Oh. "Sorry. I've been a little . . . shook up."

"That's okay," she said. "You found out you are having a baby in a single night when you just thought you were retrieving me. I think it just shows how concerned of an android you really are." Hopefully. "I think it's an early frequency bleeding through. A recharge would help you faster."

"That's not RK programming at all," Connor said to her. "I just yanked you from your place of comfort and you are comforting me instead. I'm not used to that." He was looking around her.

She lied down. "I'm not up to anything. I'm as simple as they come." Well, supposed to be as simple as they came. She held her arms out, knowing he wouldn't recharge without cuffs on her. Afterwards, she tried to get into a nice position for recharging while Connor lied on the other side. "Goodnight, Connor."

"Yes. Goodnight."

Download

The Station

Connor had done what he could for the containment cell. He got her a comforter and pillows and sheets. He also got her an office chair to sit in as well as an isolated tablet without internet access. Until he got a yes or no, she would still be able to work on her college projects. He would have to ask Fowler about getting enrollment in the nearby college. That seemed important to her, and it would give her something to do. Then, it wasn't long before Markus was there. He came by himself it seemed. He went straight to his desk that he hadn't moved yet.

"Connor," Markus addressed him. "I think we need to talk."

"Connor RK 800." Connor pointed out his little sign for his name. "What do we need to talk about, Markus?"

"Kara," Markus answered. "Let's not mess around on this. You have Kara locked up here."

"She is here willingly," Connor said. It was sort of right. "It's only during my business hours, then she stays with me."

"Connor. Sometimes? You have to think past the smaller things. The things you want to do, in order to focus on the greater good," Markus started.

I knew it. He's trying to take them away. "Is that your way of inviting me back to the hotel?"

"No," Markus said. He leaned against his desk. "You broke the rules, Connor, I can't change that. Even if I could overlook it as 'for her sake', I can't let go of the probing."

"Oh. Well, it was nice to see you visit. If you don't mind, I need to get back to work." Connor went to ignoring him. If Markus wanted something, he would have to come out and say it. Connor was not instigating anything good or bad. Playing with Markus was like playing with thousands of androids at once. He was the voice, the leader, and the ultimate decider.

Markus sat down in the chair. "Kara is carrying your little android. I know that now."

"His name is Detroit Blue AXRK 1200," Connor said. "We added the middle name since Detroit in Detroit could get tricky." Markus didn't care in the least, so he added more. "He's opening and closing his hands now too."

"It's not always easy to do the right thing," Markus said slowly. "We all have limitations that influence what we can and can't do. You have a limitation too, Connor."

“I do,” Connor said. “I can’t drink coffee. I can drink blue blood but not coffee. I got around that limitation by carrying blue blood around in a coffee mug. See?” Connor picked up his coffee mug. It had ‘Connor’s Coffee Mug’ on it. “It’s not false advertising because it’s technically called a coffee mug even if I use it for blue blood.”

“Connor.”

“It means I can stand around and make small talk by the coffee machine.”

“Connor. That’s not what I mean,” Markus said. He leaned forward in the chair now. “Kara is going to have the whole world staring at her soon. Everything about her is going to come out. You have a troubling past with Kara, and for at least the duration of the pregnancy? Maybe a little past it. It would be better if no one knew who the potential father had been.”

Connor scratched his head, playing dumb. “I already passed out candy.”

“Candy?” Markus was confused.

“Yes, it’s traditional for human fathers to pass out these gum cigar candies when they have a baby. I passed out blue cigars to everyone.” He reached in his desk and gave one to Markus. “Here you go. No need to eat. It’s more of a traditional representation symbol than a snack.”

Markus looked at the gum cigar. No doubt he noticed the big phrase on it. “It’s a boy? Are you saying everyone in here already knows it?”

“Quite, yes.” *You can’t say anything about that, Markus, I pulled it off before you showed up.* Hank was the one who came up with that one. “To keep it covered up wouldn’t be a good idea because it would eventually come out with everyone here knowing the truth.”

“That would be risky,” Markus agreed. “Connor, have you ever even interacted with a child?”

“Alice, I met Alice,” Connor said. That he did, he met Alice. He never actually got close to Alice, but he met her.

“Did you interact with her?” Markus asked. “Her just standing around doesn’t count.”

Oh. ‘You did the majority of checking up on Kara.’ Shoot. “It doesn’t matter, a baby is going to be new to everyone.”

“Have you ever helped take care of anyone?” Markus asked.

“Hank,” Connor said. “On hard nights when I have to get him. Sometimes I have to help him get more ready. Humans have a hard time functioning when they are far from sober.” That was like a child. “It’s not all the time.” At least it seemed to sway Markus a little bit.

“Can I talk to Kara?” Markus insisted. “For a little while?”

“Of course,” Connor answered. “You can talk through the glass quite easy. Follow me.” Connor went over toward the guards with Markus. “Hello. We are here to see my future son and Kara.” Yes, he did that on purpose. The more Markus thought he talked about it with

everyone, the less he could try to reason with him that it was 'just data'. "Hello Kara. Markus is here to see you and Detroit."

Kara looked over from her tablet. "Hello, Markus."

"The Chief is fixing your schooling situation too," Connor said. "With his help, it looks like going to college without needing to hide behind an identity might be possible."

"Great," Kara answered. "It would be nice to have something to focus on when I'm back here."

"Kara? How are you?" Markus asked hesitantly.

"I'm okay," Kara answered. "No worries."

"Connor!" Hank yelled over the guards. Connor moved toward the guards. "Chief wants to meet us in interrogation room 1."

Interrogation Room One

"All wrapped up in a great big bow," Fowler said in a bitter mood as he displayed a small tablet. "Kamski flew the coop. Left all his furniture and belongings, but had this."

"It's not in a bow anymore," Connor noticed. Why put a bow on a disposable tablet?

"No, of course not. I had the security team watch it," Fowler said. "I need you to chain yourself to the table, Connor."

Connor looked at the interrogation table. That wasn't good. Whatever was on that tablet couldn't be good. He sat down and chained himself to the table.

Fowler gave the tablet to Connor. "It's got the union of you and Kara."

"You should have just handed it over to Connor," Hank complained. "That was his business. Why are you keeping him chained to the table? Huh? They were machines."

"There was nothing sexual in it. I watched it afterward too," Fowler gestured to it. "You want to download or you want to watch how bad this shit just got for you?"

Connor downloaded the information off of it. And? He knew. "I've got no nope of keeping him, do I?" He noticed Fowler's look. Yeah. He already passed the news onto Markus.

"We had to keep the peace. It was risky enough, but this just shifted it all again. There's just too much, Connor," Fowler said. "I need you to stay locked in this room while Markus gets her out," Fowler stated. "Sorry, Connor."

“What? Bullshit, Fowler!” Hank yelled at him. “What the hell? You can’t give her to Markus!”

“We have to,” Fowler said back to him. “There was no order of sex between androids.”

“What do ya mean?” Hank looked back at Connor. “What does he mean?”

“The pregnancy was an accident,” Connor muttered. “I didn’t get laid, Hank. I attempted to destroy her.”

Markus wasn’t there to try and convince Connor to turn away. He was there to retrieve Kara, in a peaceful way.

Back to Containment Center

“Kara.”

Kara saw North approaching now too. She smiled. “North.” Great, both of them were there. Had Alice and Luther been nearby too?

“Kara, come on,” Markus implored her. He gestured to a guard nearby. “We are getting you out of here.”

Back to the hotel? I will be a sitting duck. Androids will be sacrificed to save me. “You can’t, you’re not allowed too.”

“It’s Markus. He got permission,” North said, “and there’s no worrying about anything else anymore.”

Kara watched the door open. “Why?”

“Connor’s being held back right now,” Markus said to her. “If you don’t want to stay in the hotel yet, then we can move you somewhere else safely with Luther and Alice.”

Kara felt North escorting her out. No one was stopping her. *Freedom. Freedom?* She stopped. “Wait.”

“You are free to go.”

Kara looked over to the Chief who spoke to her last night. They were just up and letting her go? “I want to know what’s going on.”

“Stopping a circus act before it begins,” Fowler said. “Get out of the station with Markus.”

Circus act? “What circus act?” North tried to nudge Kara again. “No, I want to know what’s going on.”

“How much room do you have for downloads in your head, Kara? Enough for a few hours?”

Downright offensive. North seemed to pick up her distaste in the comment.

“The installs and uninstalls, he was worried. Markus got a download the human leader of the police sent to him,” North said. “Self-explanatory.”

Download

“Oh. There she is. Hello,” Kamski greeted her. “My name is Elijah Kamski. What’s yours?”

“My name is Kara,” Kara answered. “Where am I this time? What happened?” She strutted around, looking for the answer to that question. “Where’s Alice?”

“She’ll be fine. You were brought in for repair, but your owner couldn’t pay the bill.”

Just like Todd. “Was I repossessed by the owner of Cyberlife?”

“Just for a little while. You’re here for experimental proceedings with The Deviant Hunter,” he said pleasantly.

“The detective android all over the TV? That’s not someone I want to experiment with.”

“The feeling is mutual, Deviant.”

Kara turned around and saw him.

“I have orders not to hurt you or to take you in,” he said. “My name is Connor. I am an RK 800 prototype detective android that should be investigating and taking care of all deviants. But. I. Can’t. With you.”

Kara didn’t answer back as fast. She looked toward Kamski. “What’s he doing here? When do I get to go back home?”

“Not until the experiments are finished.” Kamski moved behind Kara and nudged her forward. “If you want to see Alice again, then just be a good android. Make friends with the machine.”

“I can’t reason with him,” Kara complained but it was no use. She sighed and looked at Connor. “. . . my name is Kara. Pleasure to meet you.”

“Is it? I don’t know if it is yet.”

“The word is bitter. You feel bitter,” Kamski said as he moved toward Connor.

“Bitter is an emotion. I do not feel emotion,” Connor said to him.

“Belittled might be the better word?” Kamski left Connor to move toward Kara again. “Aw, there’s the shining character in this play. You know what my favorite part of a play had been? The beginning. Before any action happened and the characters were leading there ordinary lives.”

“Yes, Sir,” Kara answered. “What is it I can do for you?”

“No, no, don’t play fake. You can’t, even Connor knows you are deviant. I didn’t just pick you randomly, Kara. No more than I let Connor be built randomly.” He gestured for Connor to come over to her. “Come on, Connor. Cheer up.”

“I don’t need to cheer up. I have nothing that would bring me down,” Connor countered him. He stared at Kara. “You are an AX 400.” He looked back to Kamski. “She is an AX 400, outdated, and now considered a rental android. She is almost a decade old.”

“You have no manners,” Kara said to him, now knowing she had no chance of hiding her deviant status. “Machine.”

“Deviant,” he said back to her.

“Ah, ah. Connor, you are disobeying orders. That is the trouble with Cyberlife working on you, it’s screwed some pieces up.” He moved toward a tablet not too far away. “Override. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. No. Yes.”

Kara looked toward him. “Don’t you find it annoying you have no say so over how you feel right now? That your actions are being plugged into by a computer at this moment?”

“I don’t get annoyed. I am a machine, Kara. You feel nothing about what you think is my annoyance either. You have malfunctions in your software.”

Kara. Now he was using her name. She watched Kamski come back over.

“There we go. Good as new. Well, as best as I can do as stringent as they made you, Connor. Kara?” He gestured to Connor. “Re-meet Connor. He is your android.”

What? “What do you mean my android?” Kara asked.

“Oh. The future? Is going to be messy for you. Connor was built under the guise of android detective, but he is oh so much more.” Kamski patted his shoulder.

“My prime directive is to follow your orders. All my functions were built to assist you,” Connor informed her.

“An android having an android. Amazing, isn’t it? Every unique function he has was made to help you,” Kamski said. “To give you the best chance of survival. Even his position as android detective within Cyberlife, it was there to gain him more experience and knowledge, to serve you better.”

“Why?” Kara looked back at Connor. “I’m a regular android.”

“No, no, no. You fit exactly what I was looking for,” Kamski informed her. “I was just waiting for the day when the android came along that hit every mark I needed. I was beginning to wonder if it would ever happen. But your history shows it clear. The ‘malfunction that was okay’d’, when you were first made. I know those glitches, they were not frequent at all. It means you were born deviant. Best chance to pull you away from being a machine again. The little android girl you lived with, that you were protecting from her owner? Very strong mothering instincts, I needed that. Especially from another android. Built to care for humans, yet found love for a child android.” He held out his hands, like he was presenting himself with his greatest creation. “It’s true, I didn’t know which one you would be, but I knew you would be one of them.”

Child skills? “Am I watching someone important? Because I need to get back to Alice .”

“The first successful chance, I wanted it to be the most susceptible to being pulled away from machine.” Kamski gestured back to Connor. “Creating the first cyberlife baby though will be tricky, so I want you to stick with him. He’s programmed to do anything for you. He’s programmed to protect you, to give his life for you, and he has a complete safety default to never decommission you.”

Kara was introduced to several suitors. Most machines. A couple of deviants. They were all compatible versions to her slow programming skills. All of them had care giving skills, child raising skills, and years of experience with children.. The Deviant Hunter was kept in the next room as she was ‘supposed to pick one’.. “I don’t think so,” she told the last one. “I’m not interested. I’m really not.”

“But, we could go to Jericho together with the baby and have real freedom!” He insisted.

“No. I don’t want to do any of this. Kamski can’t make me. I need to get back home to Alice . I have to make sure she’s safe from- “ before she said the word ‘Todd’, Connor came in. Pushed his way in through the doors.

He looked strange. Walking forward and backward. “I am Connor, RK 800, the Deviant Hunter!” He yelled at Kara. “I am supposed to protect you. Mission Override. No, you are a Deviant, trying to create life! That offense is the highest a deviant can make!” He stepped to the right of the room. “I must complete my mission and let you choose your partner.” He shambled to the left of the room. “I must complete my mission and decommission, you are a danger to the world. Cyberlife commands it, highest priority.” He moved back to the right. “I can’t decommission you, I have to protect you! Damn it!”

Kara moved back as he pulled out his gun and shot all three androids in the room in the head. The one nearest to her who talked about Jericho tried to run, but Connor shot him in the back.

“Must. Destroy. Can’t destroy. Conflicting permissions. Highest priority override.” Connor threw the gun down. “Elijah Kamski creator, must follow orders. Cyberlife creator, must follow orders. Both are highest priority!”

Kara held her hands up. "I don't want to be here anymore than you want me here. I just want to get out."

"With that in you? The Ball Bearing of life, just let you leave?" He stepped forward again. "If I can't decommission you? Then. I. Can."

He moved so fast, she didn't have a chance as she was taken to the ground. Her inside was being opened. "It's against permissions to kill me!" She tried reasoning with the machine, but it was too late. "Let go of me!" She put her hand over his, trying to grapple with him.

"Connor, back, now!"

Elijah Kamski's voice triggered him back. Kara didn't move. She was frozen.

"No, no, no! Stupid android!" Mad, he was mad. "Cyberlife got it's claws in you too deep. My whole reason for creating the RK's, and this is what I end up with? The killer of my bearing balls!" He snapped and two of his androids came to the room. "Take her and get her to the repair shop. There's no use for her now. Corrupted. Just take her already! A deal is a deal."

"You. Cannot. Make that!" Connor yelled at him. "Against." Straining. "Cyberlife."

"Not yet I suppose. You grabbing the ball bearing fried her," Kamski complained. "All new gears and so much more will need added to the repair job. There's no way she can be my first anymore. Maybe, if I'm lucky, it carried over. I doubt it though." He glared at Connor. "Karma comes to us all, Connor. No one escapes it. One day, you'll pay for messing up my creation."

End of Download

One of Two Worlds

Kara stopped. Terrifying? Of course, but no more terrifying than before with him chasing her or with Luther coming after her. In fact, it was a bit relieving that she wasn't controlled in such an intimate way. Connor trying to destroy the ball even seemed . . . better? The boy wasn't created yet, no spark, and no life. Connor couldn't even kill her, he was just trying to stop it all. As a machine? He was just too conflicted between his orders of Cyberlife versus his creator. "We don't judge androids when they are machines. The golden rule, Markus."

"That's true," Markus agreed, "but taking this in account with recent events, and holding you in a human facility?"

"He's never coming near you again, we'll make damn sure of it," North said. "Luther and Alice are right outside." She smiled. "They've missed you so much. Don't run off like that again."

"You are way too important to do that," Markus agreed. "Every android here would give their life to protect you."

But I don't want them to. She was brought over by a large vehicle where Luther was waiting. He gave her a big hug while Alice hugged her waist. "It's great to see you."

The vicious Deviant Hunter that still killed and probed an innocent android that was now his 'sister', would be the first father? Who wouldn't want to get rid of that? How am I going to keep my family?

Connor's words came back through to her mind again though. *His fear.* She tried to ignore it by hugging Alice extra tight. "I missed you so much, Alice. I wanted to bring you with me, but it was too dangerous."

"No more danger. I'm here to protect you," Luther said, "along with every android in Detroit."

Detroit . Connor named him Detroit . Detroit Blue.

I'm not going to get shelter or justice from Markus. I am locking an android up in a human facility. Add the past to that, and I look like a very ugly enemy. After she is safe and no longer needs protection? The probability that we are separated is so high. I'll lose complete access.

"Let's go home, Kara," Luther insisted. "You'll be safer there."

"I'm just glad you are okay," Alice said, still not breaking the hug. "I missed you so much! I never stopped missing you, Kara. It's not the same without you."

Kara held onto Alice tightly. "I know. I missed you too."

“Into the vehicle already,” North said. “Let’s go home. I don’t like it out here, once the humans know you are back, things are going to get crazy.”

“Connor.” Kara looked toward Markus. “Connor is the father. Have any rights been decided upon?”

“There are no other pregnant androids, so it was easier to go with North,” Markus said. “In the case of Connor? He doesn’t . . . seem like he was made for the role. It’ll be okay, data is data. No worries.”

“But he does want to be a father. He wants family,” Kara said. “You aren’t doing Connor a favor by saying that. I’m carrying his family.”

“He’s not . . . good with other androids, Kara. In the future, Androids will already have a sense of family established. I’ll make it a condition so this kind of thing doesn’t happen.”

“He is Detroit’s father.” Data is data? “You know data is not just data. You have no right to say that because Connor won’t make the exact right appearance to others.”

“Gee, yes please,” North said sarcastically. “The father of the first android baby practically tried to kill its mother in the process. He’ll be the sweetest. Exact right appearance nothing, it’ll be a nightmare, Kara!” North insisted. “Get in before the people come.”

Luther tucked Alice into the car and got in. He held his hand out toward Kara. “Come on. They are right. Connor is where he needs and wants to be. Let’s put this nightmare behind us.”

Kara watched as a press vehicle pulled up right beside her.

“Shit! They’re already here, get in Kara!” North ordered her.

Kara still didn’t move. It was that moment. That moment she’d been dreading since last night. A moment she had always wondered would come and in what form. Before, she knew which way she wanted to go. Only recently, was she working on which way to go. And now? “I can’t.” She looked back toward Markus. *I can’t be selfish to the point I am taking away someone’s child!* Connor wasn’t Todd. He didn’t deserve to have his child taken away. He wasn’t a crazy maniac, no matter how the past or how current events made it look that way. “You can’t take away an android’s choice.”

“Of course not,” Markus said. “What are you talking about? I haven’t taken away your choice.”

“I wasn’t talking about mine. I’m going back in.” She started to walk away into the police station, running into the first press. Probably tipped off in a bribe. “I have nothing to say yet.” She kept moving calmly away as she heard North and Luther yelling at Markus to do something. As she got approved and strolled into the main area again, she saw Hank bitterly at his desk. He looked like he wanted to break it into a thousand pieces. Until he saw her. He must have understood why she was there as he stood up. Kara shrugged. “I can’t take it away from him. It’s his only family.” Every android deserved family.

Markus and the lot came back through the doors, but Hank stood in front of Kara. “Hey! You heard her decision.” Hank was backing her up. “This whole precinct heard it and you have to let an android have the right of choice.”

“Kara.” Markus tried again. “You are . . . you were one of the most forgiving android types. Even though machines obeyed orders, you dealt with children, and you *needed* to have more affection for your owners.”

“Fight your programming!” Luther insisted. “Kara. He would not be a good one for us. Think about everything he’s done!”

“Hang on, hang on!” Fowler came forward. “Look? We all need to calm down.”

“She doesn’t want to leave Connor,” Hank said to the Chief. “They are trying to talk her out of staying, but she made her decision.”

“Is this about the hotel? Do you want to stay somewhere else?” North asked. “It’s fine, we can work it out. Look. You aren’t making sense right now. We need to get out before more press come. They already see Markus here, this is going to explode soon, Kara!”

“Kara,” Luther insisted. “Data is data. He cannot be a part of our family. He’s too dangerous.”

“As a machine,” Kara stated. “He was conflicted as a machine. Even then, as bad as it looked, he didn’t kill me. He couldn’t.”

“He killed Chloe!” Luther reminded her, like she had forgotten.

She hadn’t and her silence was enough to convey the point. After an uncomfortable silence, she looked at Alice. “Alice. Come here.”

Alice came toward her and Kara bent down to her. She whispered in her ear, knowing no matter the outcome, she had to do it. “Alice? You have to choose between Luther and I, and you can never change that choice again, and I’m sorry.” She waited for a little while. Alice had kept her distance when Chloe was there and the lies Chloe had fed had kept Alice distant too. Up until the day Kara figured it out. She’d now lived another two months completely without her. It was risky, but it had to be done, and it had to be now.

Then? She felt Alice’s arms wrap around her tighter. Kara picked Alice up and held her tightly back. “Alice is staying with me,” she said out loud to them.

“Whoah.” Markus wanted to oppose it. “Hang on, the humans want to put you in jail, and you want Alice to tag along in that kind of life? A child?”

“She made her decision. All androids are free, even children,” Kara insisted. She tried not to look at Luther. She was hurting him so much, but a decision had to be made, and it had to be made now. She couldn’t have a happy life with everyone. It was one or the other. It was Connor and his world, or Luther and the android’s world.

“Kara,” Markus said carefully. “The world is going to have a heavy spotlight on you. You need to make the right impression for androids, and this? This is not it.”

“Willingly staying here, especially with Alice? Obeying the humans as they prick and poke at you, you’ll make androids look like machines again!”

“This is the wrong impression, the wrong way,” Markus tried to persuade her. “Connor is a good and bad android. Maybe some time after it’s born and the press melts away, he could come be the father? But he’s not the android you want making an impression for-“

“I don’t care about making an impression for the world,” Kara interrupted. “I’m sorry, Markus. I’m not you. If my decisions look terrible to others, then they look terrible. They are my decisions.”

Markus threw up his hands and sighed. “I? I did everything I could to make sure android’s had free will, so matter how much I disagree with it? It’s your free will. I can’t counter it.” He shrugged. “He did give out gum cigars.”

“She is going to tell the world that she is staying with someone who attempted to destroy her and the little android, Markus! That took out her sister. That probed her before death. We can’t just-“

“It’s her decision,” Markus said to North. “Androids have free will. She is doing what she wants. I can’t stop her.”

“You reach out to us however you want, when you change your mind,” North said to her. “And you will because you aren’t thinking straight. After everything he did to you and your family and you are choosing to stay locked up with him? The RK installs are making you crazy. I know they are.”

Luther said nothing as he simply walked out.

It was heartbreaking. Kara looked at the tears on Alice’s face and watched as Alice touched her wet face in return. Kara rocked her gently in her arms as she saw more press coming.

“Get her back in, Hank, with her daughter,” Fowler commanded. “She wants to stay, she can stay. Go relieve Connor. I’ll deal with this matter. Go!”

Hank did as he was told as he opened the cell again. When Kara turned around to see him though, he had the biggest smile on his face. A smile she’d never seen before on him. It almost looked like his eyes sparkled too, like he was on the verge of crying. He just cleared his throat. “Better get up a sign that says ‘Androids staying willingly’.” He looked toward Alice. “We’ll be sure to get you some toys in there, okay?”

Alice nodded and looked at Kara. “Is this life now?”

“Only during business hours,” Kara said as she sat her down on the bed. “I’m glad you came with me.”

“Anything was worth it,” Alice said as she stole another hug. “Did our family just break, Kara?”

“I don’t know,” Kara answered her honestly. “But? You. Have a little . . .” Alice chose to stay. Knowing her days might be behind glass for awhile. “. . . a little brother named Detroit coming.” She watched Alice’s reaction.

“A little brother?” Alice rubbed where her large hump had been. “A little brother in there.” She looked back up to Kara. “I like that. Mom?”

Kara nodded. “I like that too.”

Interrogation room.

Connor laid his forehead on top of the table, trying to think. There was no way he would be able to see his new son for a long time. He would have to prove his loyalty how many times over? And if she disappeared for good? *The only thing I ever did was name him.* After seeing that though? She’d probably change the name too. *Think, Connor, think. There must be some way to prove my loyalty?*

“Connor, no, don’t do it!”

Connor looked up and saw Hank looking terrified over him. “Do what?”

“What?! You got your head on the table!”

Oh. “Frustration. Not self-destruction.” He sat himself back up.

“Don’t fucking do that!” Hank yelled at him, pointing his finger at him. “You fucking do that again and I’ll kill you!” He rested his hands on the table as he settled back down. “Anyhow, congratulations. You just got a daughter.”

A daughter? “Detroit is a boy, and he wasn’t supposed to be born for three months.”

“Kara collected Alice,” Hank said with a slight smirk, “and said fuck you to Markus. She split and stayed *for you*. I’m here to relieve you while the chief is dealing with the press.”

“She stayed?” Connor watched Hank unlock the cuffs that chained him to the table. “She didn’t leave with Markus?”

“Nope. She is staying here, with the android that killed her sister and tried to sabotage Detroit being made. You’ve got a whole lot of shit heading your way. Anything from humans are controlling her to installations controlling her to she’s fucking nuts.” Hank patted his back. “She’s riding it out for *you* to stay with your son. Even left her own brother’s good graces so be damn thankful to that woman. And kid. Like I said? She grabbed Alice, and she’s now calling her ‘mom’.”

Connor left the interrogation room and checked upstairs. *She stayed.* “People are going to think something’s wrong with her.”

“Have some checkups by old repair men and be in the room. Whatever it takes,” Hank said.

Connor went up and toward the first containment system. Just as Hank said, she was there. Using her tablet like she had been before. Alice relaxing on the bed. Alice sat up first, spotting him.

“Kara?” Connor opened the cell and went in with Hank.

Kara looked up from her tablet. Her face still showed signs she’d been crying. “I made a choice. I couldn’t have everything.” She glanced toward Alice. “But I took her.”

Connor looked at Alice, staring at him from the bed. He looked back to Kara.

“No androids will be visiting me,” she simply said. “I opposed Markus. Please stop looking at me.”

“Do you have any RK processes running still, or did they run their course?” Hank hit him on the shoulder. That meant it was the wrong thing to say. “Thank you for not leaving.” A little better, but. “That is nowhere near accurate enough to say. Your chances of androids and humans liking you were better without the knowledge of how Detroit was conceived. Markus would have made you look better.”

Kara shifted uncomfortably and nodded.

There was no way Luther agreed to any of this. It was probably why Alice seemed so quiet in the background. She had to make a choice too. Luther or Alice.

“They are yours for the long haul now, Connor,” Hank said. “These ladies are your ladies. Make it count.”

“Okay, listen up!” The sound of Fowler’s voice came from the other side of the area. Connor and Hank both left the cell, knowing they would probably be asked for. “Everybody around here needs to be on their best behavior. No cussing and no teasing. I mean it.” He gestured to Connor and Hank as they came round the corner. “Connor! Hank! My office, now!”

Connor and Hank headed into his office.

“Get that cell as decked out and pleasant as you can. TV. Internet. The works. Get some signs along the wall that say police protection. Nobody calls it a jail cell, a containment center, or anything like that. She wants to go to college? We might even be able to get away with glass dorm room. Hank!” He looked at Hank. “Go buy the new kid at least three toys. Whatever she wants, I don’t care, just buy it.” Fowler looked straight at Connor. “When you aren’t working, be in there getting to know them. That includes your new daughter. From the sound of what Kara did? That’s what she is now.”

“Well you want me to deck the place out in the newest wireless entertainment and then go buy toys or what?” Hank asked, knowing that would irritate him a little. Hank liked to irritate

people sometimes when he was in a good mood too.

“Hank? The whole damn world is starting to learn the truth and fast! This station has got to be top-notch all the time because the world isn’t watching the city? It’s watching *us*. All of us!” He gestured to the whole room. “Get them situated with Connor, then talk to the girl, then start getting things in there. That place should be as upscale as possible. Make someone want to stay in there, do you understand me?”

“Yes, Sir,” Hank answered.

“Good because I *hate* talking to the President,” Fowler said. “I am not made to talk to the President.”

Connor looked at Hank and then back at him. “Does all the negative confirmation mean you talked to the President?”

Fowler’s whole face squinted for a second. “If anything happens to them, it’s not just my career, it’s everybody’s career! Kara disobeyed what Markus wanted to stay. President Warren said that’s as good as disobeying all androids.”

Yeah. Connor knew that one.

“While she chooses to be here, we are trying to keep her safe. If at anytime she wants to leave, she can leave. She’s not a matter of national security. She’s committed no crime. There are no laws against pregnant androids. No one even thought it could happen, but? Every one in this gaw-damn world right now *wants her*. She could be the only thing stopping another war with the androids,” Fowler said to Hank. “If she’s not here, she’s out there on the street. Now, the President has offered to give her a safe place to stay and be observed as well.”

“No.” Connor didn’t trust that. “I want to stay near her.”

“Connor if Kara requests it, she gets it instantly! That’s it, that’s the rule. As long as mankind can see her, they seem okay. There needs to be a scan on her though. We are getting a repair machine coming to us soon. The highest grade we could get. Full readouts and full disclosure of everything going on inside of her,” Fowler demanded. “Okay. Unless anything super serious comes up today? Connor, you’re spending the day back there with them. I want them to be a hundred percent comfortable with you after seeing that video because that is not going to look good on you. Get them scanned when we get the repair machines, and don’t forget to take them home, full recordings on 24/7.”

“Connor’s always full recording, 24/7. That’s like telling a beer to make head before you pour it out.”

Fowler just waved his hand. “Stop being an ass, Hank. This is serious! If Connor’s image is too bad, you are going to have to be around him *with her*.”

“What?”

“Are you going to take it up with the President?”

“Got it. Get them situated, get toys, and the whole deal.” Hank stood up. “On it, Chief.”

“Better be on it. I am not in a good mood with this one.” He looked toward Connor. “Go on, head out, make a good impression, I’m done with ya.”

Connor nodded but headed out. Thank you’s and goodbye’s were never Fowler’s thing.

In the Hot Spotlight

Kara didn't mind the isolation. Being able to look out and see no one didn't really bother her. Having Alice near felt nice enough. Hank had gone out to get her some toys. She had some crayons, a coloring book, she got her favorite book, and a teddy. Not hard. Alice wasn't real hard to please. It would help occupy her and getting near the hotel for anything wasn't a good idea, so she was grateful. She watched Connor come around the corner again from the cell. He opened it and went in.

"The repair machine should be coming soon. We'll be able to check up on you," he answered her. He looked toward Alice, like he was trying to figure out how to approach her. Connor had seen her around Kara, and at the hotel where Markus couldn't do the checkups. They never properly connected. Hopefully, he could. Having had a taste of what some of his power could do, she didn't doubt it.

Connor scanned around the cell, trying to find something to connect to them with. Alice had an Alice in Wonderland book. *No, too obvious, that would never make a connection.* Keep looking. *Crayons. Coloring book.* "You like to color, Alice?" She looked up toward him. "It sounds like a great activity. Staying between the lines." A little janky but his adaptation would get him there. "What's your favorite color?"

Huh. She didn't seem to know quite how to take his enquiries. Much like Hank at first. "Red I guess?"

"I like blue. Light blue." He bent down toward the blue and red crayon. "They aren't complementary colors but they look nice."

"What are complementary colors?"

She didn't even know that. *I will go for a simple explanation.* "Opposite colors on a color wheel. Nevermind. Blue and red are strong colors."

"Oh. Blue is pretty too," she decided. She brought out a light grey. "Soft gray is Kara's favorite color. Not real strong, but pretty." She smiled at Connor.

Connor couldn't hit the meanings of that one as hard, but he didn't want to seem to be covering it up. "Gray isn't as strong. It's never glamorous; it's more quiet and reserved. It really doesn't like the spotlight at all. That's not bad though." He gestured to the crayons and placed grey between. "Softer colors mixed between stronger colors can make a bold message too."

"Not too bold," Kara said from her tablet. "I think gray would rather remain in the background."

“But gray went out of its comfort level for a greater cause,” he said to her, getting the point it wasn’t about the colors with her. “It definitely raises it next to red and blue.”

“And my baby brother is deep blue.” Alice laid out another crayon for him.

“Right. Detroit is the color of Thirium,” Connor said. “Are you excited for a little brother?”

“I’ve seen a human baby once,” Alice said, “briefly. It was scary. They were outside.” She picked the deep blue crayon back up. “I still wonder what happened to him.”

“He was human, Alice,” Kara said. “He had a mother and a father, and he wasn’t in the middle of being chosen for elimination. They would find a way. We wouldn’t. I don’t regret taking those bus tickets.”

“I . . .” Alice nodded.

“Not every decision in life is so simple,” Connor backed Kara up. He didn’t know the exact situation, but he could guess. Kara stole tickets to get her and Alice and Luther to Canada safely back then. “There are shades of grey throughout life. Dark gray. Light gray. There isn’t a nice gray and a bad gray. While the humans might have had a rougher night with their baby? Had Kara given the tickets back, your future might have been much worse. She went with her instinct.”

“Like . . . Chloe?” Alice said softly.

Connor nodded, but wouldn’t go deeper than that.

When the repair machine came, it was even better than the one Markus had snagged. Connor had only heard of the type, but never seen it. It was a new type, supposed to be released in late 2039. The checking component they needed was compact, small enough to fit nearby. The whole checking was done by a small monitor placed on the hand and hooking it up to a computer. Connor checked the readouts. “Detroit’s doing great. Slow installing and fine. You’re getting better too,” he said looking at her. “Fewer installs.” She seemed a little sad about that.

“I thought so. Nichole and Beck will be able to see the real me now,” she said. “If they visit.”

Over ninety percent was her own basic programming right now. “If they visit, I’m sure they will understand. You still do have a little bit of human unpredictability adaption running.”

“Look how cute Detroit is.”

Connor watched Alice move from her spot on the ground over to the monitor. “Yes. He has synthetic skin now.”

“My little brother.” Alice smiled. “He’s inside you, Kara. He’s playing with his fingers.” She looked back to Kara. “He’s doing this.” She opened and closed her hands as someone came around the corner. Connor had seen them before. International famous reporter most average people knew the first name of as Diane. *Already?* Kara felt insecure without more of the RK installs now too. *Not much choice. The Chief sent her through.*

Connor stayed in the background as they interviewed Kara. She tried to stay humble, but she was shaken when they asked her about Canada, and she felt more unease when she knew her friend Rose's name.

"They never did anything wrong. They just cared too much," Kara said to her. "Are they okay?"

The interviewer Diane couldn't say much to relieve her nerves over them.

"I'll have it looked into," Connor said next to her. If anything did happen, then maybe with America's cooperation, they could get them out of it.

"Thank you, Connor," Kara said. Her eyes were already pleading to want to be out.

"I understand you left the hotels?" Diane asked. "Why?"

"I didn't want other androids involved," Kara said. "I thought I could hide away and no one would be hurt."

"Is that why you're inside this criminal jail cell?" Diane asked her.

"Police protection," Kara said instead. "I am protecting myself from people who aren't happy about me being pregnant."

"What about androids?" Diane asked. "Are androids upset with you, or is only humanity the one so on edge right now?"

"Androids. Yes, I believe they are." Kara moved slightly in her chair Connor had got her earlier. "I didn't follow Markus' advice."

"The leader of the androids? He steered the androids to a peaceful resolution with humans," Diane pointed out. "Why didn't you trust him?"

"I trust him, but I didn't want to do what he wanted. Androids are free. He had to respect that."

"What is it that he wanted?" Diane persisted.

Kara took a second before she answered. "He wanted all the androids to stay together and protect me. He knew I didn't like the spotlight. But, I want to be here more."

"Why? Do you think humanity can protect you better than the androids?"

"I want . . . humanity to not be afraid of me, because . . . fear is what causes problems. I don't need any innocent androids involved in this. It's just about me and my family."

"Hello there." Diane turned to look at Alice. "You're Kara's daughter?" She nodded. "How do you feel about being locked up here?" She shrugged. "Your mommy can leave when she wants to though, right?" Alice nodded. "You could have stayed safely back with the other androids. Why did you come with your mom to this place?"

“I’d go with Kara anywhere,” Alice answered. “I’ve always been with her.”

“Yes. You were even on the run with her, weren’t you?”

Here it comes. Connor couldn’t do anything though. It had to be discovered. Hiding it wouldn’t help.

Alice nodded to Diane’s question.

“And is it true that the father of your baby brother, tried to kill you when you were on the run?”

“He tried to capture us,” Kara answered for Alice. “He was programmed to capture us, like I was programmed to go out and collect laundry.”

“Yet? You seem calm next to him,” Diane pointed out. “Are you *really* that calm?”

Kara leaned forward. “I hate laundry. I don’t collect it anymore for other people. I just do my own when I have to because I’m not a machine. Neither is Connor. Anything he did that was under orders or directives, he had no more control over than I did having to wash other people’s clothes.”

“So you are comparing him trying to chase you down to kill you, to washing people’s clothes?”

“Connor wasn’t trying to kill. He was trying to bring us in for questioning. However, once he was done with us, most likely we would have been killed, but not by him,” Kara said. “Androids and humans are learning to get along with each other. Why would I hold a grudge against Connor?” She shrugged. “I have more grudge against doing laundry.”

Diane just smiled wide at her. “I hate laundry too. I hired someone to do mine for me,” she chuckled. “So, your baby is born in two months. Are you excited?”

“Very.” Kara nodded.

“Can you feel him inside of you?” Diane asked.

“I can, yes. My sensors can feel his movement on the inside.”

“But what about the outside? Humans can feel human babies on the outside,” Diane said. “Can yours be felt by others?”

“No, you can’t feel him on the outside. He does ‘dink’ though.”

“Dink? What is dink?” Diane asked.

“Well, the ball bearing he was in, as time goes by, it gets a little weaker. Even though it’s still a ball, it’s weak enough that a strong enough movement against me breaks the perfect bubble shape. When he does that, it makes a very soft ‘dink’ sound,” Kara explained.

Diane grew quiet for about a minute. She smiled at Kara. "Is that the dink sound I just heard?" Kara nodded. "So he really is fully grown?"

"Yes, he's just getting some installations," Kara said. "Connor knows the details of that kind of thing."

"Can we see it? I think that's probably what people want to know most of all. Is it going to look like the old androids, and by how much?"

Connor placed the small monitor on Kara's finger and turned the machine on.

"Oh! It looks so human in there." Diane moved closer. "Amazing. Did it always look like this? Does it still look like the standard android does underneath?"

"No," Kara said. "He's blue. A byproduct of thirium."

"A blue android baby, covered in synthetic skin. Wow." She looked at Kara. "It was very nice to meet your family. Is this your whole family?"

Here we go again. Bringing Kara in.

"There has been some strife in it," Kara answered. "There wasn't a way to keep everyone close. Alice is my daughter. Detroit, the name of the boy, is my future son. And Connor is his father."

"But there is more, this whole stressful pregnancy thing hurt it?" Diane asked her.

"Pregnancy changes many things," Kara answered.

"But isn't it true that your brother can't accept the former Deviant Hunter into the family, because he killed your sister?" Diane asked. "Not as a machine either." She didn't even make eye contact with Connor. "Not to mention, he tried to kill his own son? Twice? That kind of thing, it looks like maybe . . . there's something more going on than you just being in police custody?"

Damn. He knew she'd do that soon. All at once too.

Kara was silent for a little while. "Detroit wasn't conceived when he tried to destroy the ball bearing. There was no spark yet. He was trying to do what he was ordered to do. The second time, he would have had no knowledge of. He was following his orders. As for killing my sister? He and his partner suspected she was unbalanced, and they went with their instinct. I believe if Connor hadn't had killed her, she would have killed me. Perhaps my daughter too. I believe that so strongly . . . that I chose to stay here."

"So staying with the Deviant Hunter, is a conscious decision?"

"Yes. As a machine, we had difficulties," she said. "As a free man, he saved my life and our unborn, before he even knew it was his."

“And you know it’s his because of a feature that installed in you, from the baby?” Diane asked. “Are you sure there are no more installs that are controlling your decisions?”

Kara gestured to Connor. Good, that was the right question and answer. He gave Diane the little tablet.

“I have no idea what I am looking at,” Diane said to Kara.

“Any green is RK installations currently running,” Connor explained.

“It’s mostly blue,” Diane noted. “Only a few greens.” She put the tablet back down. “Interesting. Do you plan on marrying Connor?”

“Um? Excuse me?” Kara asked. “Marriage isn’t an android thing.”

“No, but Markus runs the androids,” Diane pointed out. “Hypothetically, even as peaceful as Markus is, if enough androids convince him it would be safer to have you and Alice with them than with this android that has tried to kill you multiple times? That might look like the correct thing. There is also a battle about the father’s rights in the family as ‘data only being data’, right?” she asked. “If he passes that, then things might become harder so many have speculated you would have tried to use some sort of legal marriage to counteract any actions. After all, you’ve already shown how much you must love him to stay here.”

“Well?” Kara was stuck. “Uh? We are androids.”

“You are people, legally by definition. You don’t have to be considered human to be ‘people’. You have also gained rights and freedoms, and it should theoretically give you the right to marriage,” Diane said. “Do you think that’s a possible way to win against Markus should things go that way? I mean, with love, of course. You can’t get married without love.”

“Um?” Kara shrugged. “I? I don’t think I understand?”

“Well, when humans get married, there is no ‘data is data’ red tape, it is official. Connor RK 800 would be considered part of the family as soon as you said ‘I do’, and no one could take away his rights to see his family. Not unless anyone could prove harm was done, as an android deviant, a technicality everyone should know, and not as a machine.” Diane gestured to Kara. “You would be his wife.” She gestured to Alice. “She would be his daughter.” She gestured to Kara’s huge stomach area. “That would be his son. No one could contest it. So?”

“Never thought . . . it was even possible,” Kara answered her. “I imagine that would feel like we were . . . intruding on human territory even more. Doesn’t it?”

“Oh, only back in the stone age!” She laughed. “Marriages to the daddy are usually seen as a good thing with people these days. As long as it’s for love.” Diane got up. “Good luck.”

Malfunctioning On Purpose

Connor's Home

Alice held on tightly to Kara's hand as they went in. Her first night away from the hotel and Luther in so long. *I'm with Kara.* She made her decision though. She wanted to stay with Kara, no matter what. Kara just affirmed what they finally were to each other too. Not just family, but where they fit. She was Kara's daughter and Kara was her mom. Just like? Just like she wanted for so long. Even since before Todd, Kara took care of her so much. And now, she would be having a little brother soon too. She had to lose Luther though, and it sounded like Markus wouldn't be helping anymore. Like no android would. Like suddenly, everyone went against her.

Alice was entering into new territory again. She could feel it. She hadn't felt such a huge change since they left Todd's house and were on the run. She kept very close to her mother. They were behind glass, like prisoners, but doing things prisoners didn't do. Like, play with toys. Converse with police pleasantly. They could even watch TV if they wanted to now. But, they weren't staying in there overnight. Once Connor went off duty, they were coming home with him. Another new world. Another new uncertainty, but? At least. *I don't know. Something feels different.*

Connor returned with the sleeping bag and placed it next to the big bed. "I promise I will get you a real bed soon."

Alice looked at the sleeping bag and smiled. It was one of her favorite cartoon shows. Hank must have stopped off and got it for her. He was a grumpy but nice man. "Thanks, Connor."

"Your welcome." Connor looked at her. "I will be on the lookout for a better place for us all. This was comfortable for me. Okay with Kara. It's not okay for you, and it's not okay for Detroit." He seemed a little out of it. "Four androids." He stood back up. "Much better than one."

She didn't expect him to say the last part, but he was probably happy Kara had stayed.

"Go ahead and crawl in bed, Alice. It's been a long day for you," Kara said. Alice gave her a hug and crawled in bed. Kara zipped her up and gave her a kiss goodnight on the top of her head as usual. "I know the world feels strange. It will get better again."

"I know," Alice said with a smile. "It doesn't matter. As long as I finally get to be with you. Mom." She held her arms out. Ever since Canada, things had changed. Worrying about Kara's health. Chloe coming into her life and figuring out where she fit. Losing Chloe. Not being able to get close to Kara. Kara leaving her with Luther. And now? She could finally be with Kara again. Hug and share and feel better. It was a whole new world though. A whole new set of rules, and she felt like she didn't know any of them yet. "Are you coming to bed too?"

“Soon,” Kara told her. “Just get some rest.”

Alice nodded and closed her eyes. She’d need energy to deal with her new world.

Kara moved out of the room. She was at a loss what to do so she just looked out the window. The view wasn’t a bad view.

“I was supposed to get around to getting you clothes today. We whisked you away from the college fast,” Connor said, “but I was afraid the RK installs would fail. I just wanted you out. It’s a dangerous place.”

Kara nodded. “I know. I guess it was a good thing. I’m not getting as much.”

“I will get some clothes tomorrow. It turned out to be a longer day. Getting things done like that should be while you are behind glass,” Connor said. “I’ll get Alice clothes too. And. Toys. Children like toys, I know that.” He looked toward her. “I don’t know much else. I have to learn about children. I’ve downloaded several books today. They are mostly disciplinary or what to feed them or how to correct them. Alice is quite good.”

“Alice is very good,” Kara agreed. “There’s not much to learn from a book. They just need affection and to know they aren’t alone.”

“Isn’t that the same with everyone?”

After saying that, Kara turned around to look at him.

“Everyone needs to feel like they aren’t alone.” He looked back toward her. “Everyone needs a degree of affection. Children aren’t so different.”

“It’s more obvious with them,” Kara said. Then, she felt herself getting wrapped in a hug. Connor didn’t say anything. He didn’t have to. She just hugged him back. After the way life treated them, they were both in need of a good hug.

“Humans don’t hug often enough,” Connor said. “I won’t ever ask you to do laundry. I take it in to get cleaned. You don’t have to do anything you don’t want around here.”

“I don’t mind cleaning,” Kara answered. “I just hate laundry.” She felt him smiling against her shoulder.

“Kara,” Connor said. “Markus is going to choose ‘data is data’.”

“Of course he will,” Kara said. “I won’t yank Detroit away, I promise.”

It will look even more manipulative though, as if I am keeping you here strictly for the humans. Connor said, connecting to her AI. It was the safest since he was always recording and didn’t know if anyone would ask for them in the future to observe. *In the interview, a compilation of data of all the reports that went out today across America came back that it seems you are in love with me.*

I tried to make a good impression. I'm sorry.

No. I think that's an excellent thing. I have a plan to get the humans and the androids onto our side. Maybe even Markus will come to it. But, I would need your help.

If you have a plan, I am willing to help however possible.

We have to be deceiving.

Okay.

Connor smirked at her. *You know I am very good at solving dilemmas and problems. So do you trust me?*

I have only experienced a little of what you've had. If anyone could accomplish the impossible, you could. What do you want?

I have two things. One for now, and one later on. We have to make each other malfunction now, and get married later on.

The marriage is possible after all?

There will be no 'data is data' angle for Markus to play.

But even the human admitted the only thing people hated about it was a lack of love.

Yes? That is where the malfunction comes in.

Kara moved away quickly, instinctively. ***Human marriage is one thing, that's fine, but you want us to . . . m-malfunction?***

I know it's a lot to ask. A whole lot. We can trick humans with a ceremony, but androids can sense connections. They would either tell the humans when one comes down to visit there is no connection between us, or they would never side with us. He held out his hand to her. I will be super gentle.

"I don't know what I am doing, Connor. That's not within my capabilities. I could damage you. Just last night, you didn't even want to recharge without me in handcuffs," Kara reminded him.

"I know. It is tricky," Connor admitted. *You chose to stay over Markus, Kara. I want to ensure that Detroit isn't taken away. I won't let fears control me.* He started to undo his tie. *It's only the hardest the first time. It'll get easier each time, for the both of us.*

You really are willing to do what it takes for him. Kara nodded. "I will try my best." She undid the middle of her shirt while Connor undid the top of his uniform and shirt. ***What if I go too far?***

You won't cause much damage. It's okay. Connor placed her hand exactly where it needed to be, right between the middle of the neck and the right shoulder.

If you are always recording, Connor, then how will we get away with this?

Humans don't understand much past our basics. They'll be the ones watching the recordings. I can insist they not watch it for intimacy, and then if they do? They'll assume its intimacy.

Oh, it was far from intimacy. *I can't see it.* Keeping their synthetic skin on didn't help, but she understood. She looked like she was just feeling the side of his chest beneath his shirt that way. *Are you sure that's the perfect spot?*

Yes. Just a gentle push.

Too gentle and it wouldn't push through. Too hard and she could damage his voice pattern. She gave a small push with her fingers. The jut wasn't hard enough.

A little harder, Kara.

She gave a harder jut and felt the brake. The seams were the easiest way to get into an android.

Okay, stay right there. He took her hand into his and guided her around. Her fingers crept through a small opening area. He slightly turned her arm. *Okay. Your fingers should be on the edge. Don't move.*

Seriously don't move. Every android was a little different, and especially those who were female. Well, now it was clear why. Her position he needed to get into was right under her chest plate. She felt him strategically break her seal on the first try. He moved around slightly, not disturbing any of the bio-components in the area that were needed to live. Her area was much more hazardous. Then, she felt him start to touch something.

Okay, now move your finger slightly to the right. Slowly, and then I'll do the same.

She ever so gently moved her finger across a tiny gear. He didn't move. Then, she felt him do the same thing.

Okay, let me guide your hand out slightly again. He held onto her hand as he gently helped her fingers move through it all until they were free. *Now, one second.* He moved his hand slowly out, not disturbing any bio-components until his hand was freed. *Last bit.*

Kara touched her hands to his, this time letting the synthetic skin move back. There was a small surge of power between their fingers until she got it. *My system registers lover. Did it work with yours? Connor?* She glanced toward him.

“Yes, sorry. Yes,” he answered. *Mine malfunctions as lover now too. All the androids will sense it and have to leave us alone. They know we can't reach that component on your own-our own.*

Kara moved away, buttoning her shirt back up. *How long will the malfunction last before our auto-repair fixes it?*

Twenty four hours. We'll get faster as we get better at it. He buttoned his shirt and jacket back up. "Upon examination again, I don't think there are enough thank you's in the world for what you've done, and continue to do."

"Just don't dwell on it," Kara said as he hugged her again. He was a nice hugger. She hugged him back. There was nothing else she could say, she'd be repeating the same thing. Except maybe one thing? "I don't know what its mutual connection relationship will say when it's born. I don't even know if it will outwardly have one."

"It doesn't matter, it's mine. I mean, ours," Connor corrected himself. "I am very sorry. I keep getting my pronouns mixed up when they come out."

"I must have hit something." She noticed that. "You are the one in the area of all my dangerous bio-components and I hurt you somehow."

"No, I don't think the malfunction is triggered by that," Connor said. "Emotional stimulus can cause malfunction. I was emotionally triggered today." He shrugged. "I don't why. I don't understand it. I just . . . I feel very possessive right now of things and people that I shouldn't feel possessive about."

"No, that's normal," Kara shared. Wow. He really had zippo family. "Even though Detroit isn't born, when you found out you were going to have someone new in your life that wasn't just a friend? It triggers. I felt possessive about Alice even before I was family. I said almost nothing but her name," she chuckled, thinking back. "It's another part of what makes us android, not human." Connor hugged her again. "I am going to take a guess Hank doesn't hug too much?"

"How can you tell?"

"You are highly more affectionate than you should be. You've hugged me about eight times today," she said.

"Sorry."

"It's okay. I usually balance out the hugging with Alice. The more family members, the easier it is."

"She is technically family, but I still don't know her." Connor let go of Kara again. "Technically you are family too, and I don't know you." He examined her up and down. "I am getting closer though. At least I think so." He stole another hug. "I am hugging you again, I am sorry about that. I have only actually meant to hug you twice, but I find myself in this position frequently. Shoot. Now I cannot seem to create contractions in my sentences."

"It'll pass I'm sure," Kara said. Hopefully. From the amount of hugging she was receiving, Connor was starving for affection. No wonder he felt so possessive. Take that feeling and times it by at least ten since Markus is actively trying to convince her to leave him alone. "Once you feel more stable about Markus, I think it'll get better. Until then, use me as your huggable cushion, I don't mind." As long as he had an outlet. She would be his outlet.

“Markus isn’t that bad,” Connor said. “More than likely he just wants me to enter into Detroit’s life after all of the proverbial ‘dust has settled down’. He probably wants to test me in the meantime to see how I am with kids and very young infants. That honestly makes sense, I have little exposure to either one. In fact, I’ve never even interacted with a human baby before.”

“Yes, but you don’t want to do that.”

“No, I want to be here, especially now. His AI, for all I know, it could be learning the patterning of my own voice patterns. The mere comfort that it receives from me when I hug you. It might also be registering, making him less prone to need as much constant embrace. Anything could be happening,” he admitted. “Plus, I do not feel the hotel is accurate. As much as Markus feels he should not put you out on display, I am opposite. I know that even though it is uncomfortable, the more you interact with humans. The more you can be seen and talked to, the less scary the pregnancy will be for humans.”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “I know that too. He’d want to expose me towards the end, but honestly, I probably should have been communicating earlier. It’s just? It is scary, Connor. Nothing’s foolproof. Nothing.” She sighed and gave him a tighter hug this time, feeling her own need for an embrace emerge. “How long do you think it will take before humanity feels better about this?”

“I do not know. Probably not at birth,” Connor admitted. “In all honesty, I do not see anything happening until its birth. Kara? When you had RK installs, did you have statistics? I noticed you told your friend that you didn’t have them anymore. Was that a joke, or did you have them?”

Oh. She knew what he was getting to. “I had it. I ran it.” She tucked her head closer to his chin. “I know it.” She tightened her fingers against him.

“Even with the limited chances of success, this is the best option.” He didn’t get into numbers with her. “I will be watching you very closely, and those around you when it’s closer. If I feel even the slightest amount of wrongdoing about to occur, I will yank you out. We will find a way to show humanity how you are doing over time, but they will have had plenty of information, and most should understand that it was the better option to get out.”

“There is a 49.2% chance I will still be alive in there,” she said. She would pull out the numbers. She had to face her reality head on. “There is a 12.2% chance I will give birth without something going wrong.”

“Before. Those statistics were ran before you came here,” Connor informed her. “A refreshed run now would show the chances have increased considering your variable factors.”

One definitely being him. “Connor. I know it’s hard, but, I want you to try and connect with Luther,” she said. “I know it seems impossible, but we’ve seen the impossible.”

Not very plussed about that. “I know. He is technically my step-brother? My brother?” He shrugged. “He’s . . . family. Taking Chloe from him has left a very big wound inside of him,

Kara. I will try to do what I can. If he doesn't eventually see the truth though, there isn't much I can do."

"If anything happens to me, I don't know about Alice." Should she go back to Luther? She had known him almost as long as she knew her. Alice could be safe and go back home to Canada. Then again, if Connor gets close to her? If anything happened to her, he should have someone extra there to help. Baby surviving or not. Someone.

"Don't think about that," Connor warned her. "The statistics are numbers, and you aren't close enough to even be thinking about those numbers. If anything goes wrong, I will talk to Markus and a decision will be reached on her. If anything happens to you but Detroit survives, I am keeping him. That's all that needs to be said."

Good. He understood how important that was to her. "When are we going to do the marriage thing?"

"I don't know. I'll have to ask about that one. In most cases I have data on, it takes a very long time to get read through the ceremony, though the ceremony itself is simple in the most official sense. We just need someone who is legally registered to do that for us in the most simplistic way."

"I suppose." Hm. "Marriage is superficial. It's very sad actually. Having no real processes to understand the connection leads to so many negative impacts they had to have a reversal of the process."

"Yes. Not having mutual connection, it seems to be the only way humans display their relationship status to the world." He looked at her finger. "Humans slide on rings as attachments to each other."

"Visual appearance. Maybe it makes them feel better about their status too." Kara shook her head.

"They are funny creatures at heart," Connor admitted.

"Is there a reversal process for androids?" Kara asked. "If someone . . . hurts another android too much."

"I am sure Luther is *still* your brother. I saw the station footage. He didn't yell at you, he was just saddened by your decision. It will just take some time with him. You are still family," Connor insisted.

"But he connected to Chloe," Kara reminded him. "He connected. So, can connections be wrong? When they are, can they be rebuilt?"

A shrug. He couldn't answer that.

"She must have felt something for him." Kara had to admit that.

"A malfunctioning android can still love," Connor agreed. "In fact? It probably makes that love even stronger. Small malfunctions do occur with change. However more than likely she

was playing with her own functions, much like we were. Malfunctioning robots do work on themselves, although it is highly regarded as dangerous.”

“I just? I just . . . I hope I was right about not trusting her,” Kara said. “I don’t want to judge someone strictly on their past.”

“Markus and the others are more guilty of that right now than you ever could be. Your instincts are jumbled because you also have the responsibility of added life that was in danger too. I know I wasn’t wrong,” Connor said. “Over time, a detective learns to hone their instincts. They have to or they will wind up getting shot before anyone even knows what happened. You didn’t make a wrong choice, and neither did I. Don’t second guess yourself.”

Kara nodded. “I guess I should be getting to bed. I am sure after today, Alice could use someone to curl up to. Do you mind if I sleep next to her?” She watched his reaction.

“Not at all,” he agreed. “Stay next to your daughter. Can I stay next to you?”

Kara smiled. “No one will be sleeping in the bed then.”

“Hm. I can fix that.”

Alice found herself getting disturbed in her sleep as she was carried over. She looked and saw Connor placing her on the right side of the bed, her sleeping bag still included. “What’s going on?” She watched as Kara came over on the other side next to her. Oh. She smiled at her. Kara was going to lay next to her. That was good, she really wanted that. She turned to the right and felt herself being cuddled by Kara. “I love you, Mom.” It felt so natural to say it now.

“I love you too, Alice.”

Alice turned slightly to see Connor get on the other side of Kara. “We are all like a big train now.”

“Hopefully I will get over this soon,” Connor responded. “It’s going to drive Hank crazy if I don’t.”

“Doesn’t matter,” Kara answered him back. “I think everyone needs someone today.”

Alice layed back down. Yeah. Everyone needed someone today. “I hope Luther is okay.”

“Luther will be fine,” Connor replied to her. “It’s not easy on anyone right now, but he will be okay. He has several friends at the hotel. Several. In the short time he was there he made friends with Markus, North, Josh and Simon and so many others. He’ll be fine.”

“I guess,” Alice answered back. “I think us is fine enough for now.”

“Yes,” Kara said. “I do too. Goodnight, Alice. Sweet dreams.”

“Goodnight, Kara,” Alice responded. “Goodnight, Connor.”

“Goodnight. To both of you,” Connor admitted. “To all three of you,” he corrected himself. He thumped Kara’s roundness lightly.

Kara felt Detroit respond back with his own ‘dink’.

Not During Work Hours

Police Department The Next Day.

“Connor. The fuck happened last night with you?” Hank asked.

“Am I different? I have a lover now,” Connor answered. “It is a very special time for me.”

“I think it depends.”

“Depends on what, Hank?”

“On whether you are talking about Kara or me.” Hank tossed his arms off. “The hell?! Coming up hugging me in the station?”

“Sorry? Love makes androids a little unpredictable sometimes,” Connor answered. “I was unaware I started to hug you.”

“Hey, dumbass, your wannabe girlfriend is- what the fuck?!”

Hank just covered his face. What the hell was going on? “Connor, that’s Gavin! Stop hugging Gavin for crying out loud!” He tried to yank him off.

“Oh. I am quite emotional today.” Connor looked back toward Gavin but he was already gone.

“You wanna get huggy, go hug the other androids,” Hank said. “Not me. Not Gavin. If you hug the chief, who knows what will happen?”

Imbalance. Connor could feel it. A disruption from messing with their connections. Right. Hanging around Kara and Alice would be a better idea right now or others would catch on.

When he went to go see them, he smiled. Kara was trying to work on her tablet, but Alice was trapped in her grasp. She waved at Connor.

Connor waved too. Aw. Look at Kara. She was very sweet, with her little tablet. Her pretty hair. Her nice eyes. *Malfunctioning perfectly*. This couldn’t go wrong. He leaned against the glass. “Hoow are yooouuu?” A little drawn out. Strange. Aw. She had a weird flush on her cheeks. She held Alice while she came over to the glass. Odd. She seemed almost like Hank when he had too much to drink. He chuckled out of nowhere. That was also weird.

“Hi, Connor,” Kara giggled. “Hi? Whattup?”

Ah, her RK adaptations were still running nicely. So nice having someone with the same kind of function as him.

“Jesus Christ, Connor. That’s not natural.” Hank came up beside her. “What happened to her? You didn’t get her slammed with alcohol, did you? Her eyes are all glassy.”

“No. No. Um? She loves me,” Connor chuckled. He put his hand against the glass to hers.

“My ass. What are you doing?” Hank looked at him. “You’re just as drunk as her. What did you two do?”

“We found Love. Lllluuufff. Llllurrrrve.” Kara played with the word on her tongue.

“Connor, you’re gonna find love with Kara when I can find an elephant in my fish tank.” Hank wasn’t falling for it. “Your acting plastered, not in love.”

Oh. Hm. *That’s not good. Not the malfunction I wanted. Hank was supposed to think we were in love. Must have turned the gear a smidge too far.* Results didn’t work on a dime, and they must both already be autocorrecting. It wouldn’t even last twenty four hours. It should last long enough to get through the day. “I am going to spend time back here with ma family Hanky. I’ll be back later. Is that okay?”

“It’s your orders, you’re supposed to. Don’t call me Hanky. Whatever you did, it’s backfiring. Fix it.” Hank walked away.

“Oh. Yes.” They would have to. Readjust. “Hank?” He left the area to follow him. “Um? I need privacy with Kara. Can we use a bathroom? Or no, a um . . . restraining room for questioning?”

“For what?”

For what. “Sex. I would like to have sex.” He felt Hank thump him on the head. “Personal reasons that, make this better.”

“The fuck you do, Connor?” Hank whispered to him.

Ah, reporting be damned. At least Hank wasn’t around Kara, he should be able to take it out. “Readjusted our statuses to lovers long enough that androids would see it. We turned a little too far.”

“If I cover for you, will you get this shit fixed?” Hank asked. A nod. “Yeah, you better. I’ll watch Alice. You two go and get this fixed. Now, before anyone else sees you like this.”

“Will do, Hanky.”

“You are going to have an early death wish if you say that *one more time*, Connor.

Interrogation Room

Oh. “I was just locked up here, Kara,” Connor noted as he came into the room and closed the door. “Just yesterday. I thought I was going to lose Detroit.” He turned toward her. “You never know what happens day to day. Okay. Let’s do this.”

“We’re not . . . balanced enough,” she warned him. “Connor? This feeling. I think. It’s. Um. The equivalent of. Of. Being sick in humans.” She leaned against the wall. “Like a fever. I don’t feel myself.”

“Yes, I know. We have to concentrate and do this,” Connor said as he came in front of her. He leaned on her, stealing a hug. *We are balancing too strong, that’s the only problem. We can remedy this, just take it back a little bit.*

“It was scary enough last night,” she warned him. “That’s when we were ourselves. I think this is maybe what Alice felt when her temperature worked on her.”

“Hank disagrees, he says we are acting like we are highly intoxicated.” Whatever the reasoning, it wasn’t normal android behavior. *Status is a delicate thing. We have to get this fixed. Open your shirt again.*

“Be careful.” She held the phrase close between them. It didn’t take long before they were both inside of each other like before.

“All the way for your easiest calculation,” Connor warned her. She moved the gear all the way. *Now, try the best you can to hear. Sense. One click.*

“One?” She must have done at least five clicks last night. The area was so small. She went two clicks. Then back two clicks. Then, one click.

“Okay, stay still.” Connor clicked her all the way back, up until one click. “Okay. Just a minute.”

Their status still said ‘lover’ but it shouldn’t be as intense.

Then, they both heard the door opening.

“Shit!” Connor cursed. *Don’t say anything until I tell you to. We might still be okay.*

“The fuck?” Gavin was checking up on them with Hank scolding him from the other side. “Holy crap, Hank’s right. Ew. Android sex.”

“Will you get the fuck out, Gavin!” Hank warned him. Gavin left but Hank looked in at them. Then looked away. “Whatever. Finish it up. Don’t do this anymore at work. Save that stuff for home, gah.”

Good. Hank helped the part. They were safe now. Connor slowly guided his hand out with her help, and she with his. Already, the feverish feeling was adjusting slightly.

We could have landed in trouble if they didn't assume that was some sort of sex. Kara buttoned her shirt. *That was too close, Connor.*

Yes, I'm sure the Chief is about to hear about it. I am rather sure sex during work is frowned upon. Still, it could have been much worse. "We'll get better. The unbalance of my feelings for you needed corrected right away."

"I hope this is it," Kara said. "I don't think we can get away with this again." After adjusting herself, she looked at Connor. She went over and helped him adjust your tie. "Your parameter is still slightly off."

He stared at her as she adjusted her tie. "Yes. Thank you. I should be able to tie my tie." Parameters, yes. "We needed more time obviously." Adjustment. "I had better get you back to Alice. I didn't mean to take you away for so long." It was a little longer than last time, they had to be more careful. "This should stop the need for constant affection I feel."

"True," Kara agreed. "I think Alice was starting to feel like my teddy bear, and I had my affection under control."

He led her out of the way, still trying to steal a quick hug. His parameters still weren't perfect.

"Aw, gawd, you two are still doing it? That's disgusting."

Lovely Gavin was still nearby. "Remind me to burst in a room when you are in the middle of your own human copulation." The rudeness of Gavin knew no bounds. Gavin turned away and didn't say anything. As Connor let go and started to escort her out though, he heard a whistle. A bunch of whistling. Then an angry chief. "That's not supposed to happen," Connor said. "I think the station might know we were doing something in the back." Kara gave him a nod. "I am very sorry. I seem to have already ruined your reputation. Or is that only a human thing?"

"I don't know," Kara said. "I feel better though, so whatever, it was worth it. We should get going back."

"Yes, I have work to do." Lots of things he didn't get done yesterday.

CONNER!

"Plus, the Chief's voice over the intercom means disciplinary action may also be involved." He sighed and led her back. A part of him really didn't want to put her back. She felt rather nice. She never pulled away from his hugs, and her synthetic skin felt just like his. Not quite human. He was used to the touch of human skin. *When we go over there, we can finish the adjustment.* That they could do in front of others.

Kara entered into the glass area again, but before it was brought down again, they held their hands against each other's, both feeling the same surge between them, completing the malfunction again. Only this time, both of them were already wearing out from their malfunction. Kara leaned against the back wall with Connor trying to keep his balance not to

fall on her. It looked terrible, but they would get better. Once he regained his strength, he found Kara hugging him, trying to hide her weakness. Creating their own malfunction was not an easy thing. As Kara said last night a simple ceremony of words between people called marriage was nothing. It was simply words, papers, and a ring. But malfunction? It was so dangerous. *I hope later I can just fall in love with you instead. This is more dangerous than when I hunted down deviants.*

I've never fallen in love. I don't think that's quite as easy to do. She backed away, steadying herself. "I'll see you later." She went back toward Alice and picked her up, holding her in her arms.

Chief's Office

"Gaw, Connor!" The Chief laid into him. "I said to get back there and know them. Understand them. Grow close to them."

"I did," Connor said. He was seated in front of the Chief. Hank was quiet in the other chair.

"Know them doesn't mean feeling each other up in an interrogation room!" The Chief scolded. "How do you go from barely knowing a woman one day, to having to steal time off work to go do that in an interrogation room?"

Oh. "That was easy, Chief," Connor answered. "I just went in, took her, and took her to the interrogation room. Altogether it was an easy process."

"Hank!" The Chief yelled at him.

"Connor," Hank said, "What the Chief means is it isn't proper and don't do it again."

"Sex or feel her up?"

"Nah, you can do either of those but not at work."

"Yes, of course. Sorry," Connor apologized. "No more feeling up or sex at work."

"Do that kind of thing in your own home," the Chief warned him. "Here, it's about getting to know your family. Not that. There is a huge difference. Hank? Make sure he understands that difference."

"You're fired if you get caught doing any of that at work again," Hank said clearly. "Don't fuck around."

Connor nodded. "I certainly don't want to lose my job over it. I will have a family of four soon, and I am currently adapting to a family of three."

“Good,” the chief agreed. “Fine. I didn’t really see this coming as fast.” He arranged some papers on his desk. “During that kind of time, you can turn off your recording for personal time. Turn it back on once you are done.”

“Okay.” Maybe. “Some clarification? Is this only for feeling up or sex?”

“Aw, Jesus Christ, Connor,” Hank scolded him. “Both.”

Great. That would make things easier with her. “That’s nice. It feels better of knowing no one is watching our private moments together.”

“Okay, off the subject,” the Chief said. “I don’t even want details of what happened in there. Just, be careful. Now how in the world did this happen so quickly though? This mutual attraction? I know the press said yesterday they felt something, but this doesn’t feel right.”

“Kara AX 400 was known to be a quick resonating android,” Connor covered himself. “I am easy to get along with, and right now since I am trying to adapt a new family into my life, my unit reached out to her. We connected quicker.”

“ . . . fine.” The Chief didn’t understand, nor should he. The less he understood, the better. “Go get things taken care of. Clothes. Food. Bedding. Make them comfortable in your place, that’s your job today. No running any profiles on convicts, just them. If they ever get asked about their home I want the answer to be a good one.”

“Yes, Sir.” Connor got up. His new malfunction had balanced for now. He felt more like his old self again.

Day by day. Little by little. Markus couldn’t take away Kara’s freedom or choice, but he could still visit and make sure she was okay. As he went in, he went straight to Connor’s desk.

Connor held his mug that still said ‘Connor’s Coffee Mug’ up to him. “Good morning should be the traditional way to compliment anyone coming into the precinct, but it feels harder to extend to you.” He took a drink from his mug. “What do you want, Markus?”

“I just want to see her,” Markus said. “I want to keep seeing her to let her know that she isn’t being shunned for her decisions.” Connor didn’t say anything else as he stood up quickly in his chair, the scooting action of the abruptness being heard. He knew Connor wasn’t happy with him, but the feeling was shared. He would have done something for the both of them later on, after the humans were no longer involving themselves in the process. Connor couldn’t wait though, and Kara wouldn’t leave. Bad press all around.

As he neared the area, he saw a new plaque already hanging up that said Police Protection. Inside the area was carpeting now, along with a TV set and other amenities. They were trying

to make them more comfortable.

Kara looked toward him. Friend had certainly gone down between them. “Markus.”

“Kara.” Markus pressed his hand on the glass. “How are you and Alice doing?”

“I am doing fine,” Kara answered. “Alice can speak for herself.”

“I’m great,” Alice answered. “I’m with Mom, and I got some new toys.”

“I see.” Yes, they were even taking care of Alice’s needs. “If there’s anything I can do let me know?”

“Connor is taking care of us quite well,” she answered.

Then, Markus felt it. No way. *Impossible.*

“I am doing the utmost I can for them. I am about to go out and make my place even nicer for them,” Connor answered.

Markus stared at him, and then stared at her. *Lovers?* They were registering as lovers? Neither of them said a word about it. Markus had read the human’s side of social media about the situation yesterday, but he didn’t think it was true. Resonation had to happen on both sides. Even if Kara had loved Connor, it wouldn’t have registered until he loved her back. *If they love each other.* There really wasn’t anything he could do after all. Love and affection was the most important thing in the world. It was more than data is data. At some point, Kara and Connor had gotten so close, they found love.

It didn’t happen very often. It scared North the first time it happened between them. Considering neither one had said anything and Kara was even ignoring him by paying attention to the tablet. *They aren’t announcing it out loud.* They could sense it but they weren’t saying anything. *Maybe one of them is scared.* They would get through it, it was a personal matter. This was something new to add into the decisions though “I’m glad you are happy.” Markus looked toward Connor. “They are being well taken care of. That’s good to see.”

Connor didn’t answer. He didn’t say anything terrible, but he wasn’t answering. “Are you done yet with your visit?”

“Yes.” Markus left the area, but when he was up by Connor’s desk, he asked. *You two are lovers now. Have you explored what that meant?*

In the middle of it. That’s all he said. “Please come back if you have any more questions and need to see her again.” *Please don’t.*

Markus heard that. *I understand you are upset.*

My job is the only reason I am even letting you come in here cordially. You tried to take her away from me yesterday, and for reasons that were against your own beliefs! I did all of that

as a machine, you had no right to use that against me. You used your status against me, Markus.

The situation is bigger than just ‘who or who isn’t a father, Connor’. Humans get scared off easily.

Perfection is not going to save her in their eyes. Being there for their eyes will.

A difference of opinion. Markus knew he wouldn’t let go of it easily. Connor was finally getting a family, something every android wanted. Someone special. He had a friend, Hank. A human friend. That was it. That made this situation with him harder to control. He wasn’t an android built for this, and he had no experience in it. Markus was at least a caregiver. Appearance mattered with humans a great deal. Still? ***You love Kara and she loves you. I can’t do anything about that. It’s no longer a political move, I have nothing to say or do with love matters. Just, be careful, Connor. She is the only android in existence to be pregnant, and it’s almost here.***

I am watching her. I can take care of her. Connor was insistent. *Keep coming back. As per my job, I will allow you to see her.* “Goodbye, Markus.”

“Goodbye, Connor,” Markus said back. There was one more thing though. *You do know that messing with an android’s status, if one was so desperate, isn’t a good idea?*

Connor was quieter. It made him very hard to read. Markus couldn’t see whether that was a yes or a no. Were they that desperate?

Still, Markus couldn’t throw out the possibility of foul play. Connor was desperate to keep Kara there, and Kara wanted to look good for the press. Would Kara have the will to do that? Normally, Markus would guess no, but she also had some RK 800 running through her. Maybe she had been. “I’ll be back again later, Connor. See ya around.”

If they were playing such a dangerous game. It would only take a little while before the mess up auto corrected itself.

Trusting Connor

Media Source Now

“I think it’s messed up, and I don’t trust it,” The lady on the talkshow said. “I think, that there are thousands of androids already pregnant, and they are showing off this one to distract us from what’s really going on.”

“Alice,” Kara called from her tablet. “There are cartoons on.”

“I think the machine is still a machine, fixed to obey it’s master again. I mean why else would it be in a jail cell patiently waiting like it’s all going to turn out okay? It’s not going to turn out okay! No one is going to condone this.”

“Alice, Honey, please watch some cartoons,” Kara insisted.

Alice slowly grabbed the remote.

*“It’s experimental anyway, the chances the machine will even survive? I for one hope that it all goes to *bleep* and there are multiple pregnancies so they learn never to do this *bleep* again! It’s against everything any religion would tolerate! God! Allah! Anyone, all religions, it’s sacrili-“*

Alice watched the TV go off as Kara came over to turn it off. “No one’s on our side, Kara.”

“That’s media,” Kara said back. She hugged Alice. “That’s only media. That’s not the world. I will let you watch TV if you watch something else?” Kara turned it back on and reached for the remote to change the channel.

“I hope somebody just gets the *beeps* to assassinate it-“

“-the color blue!” The blue pig giggled on the screen. Animation.

“Much better.” She gave the remote to Alice. “There you go, that’s better. Right?”

Alice looked at the screen, but she couldn’t forget what she saw so easily. “A lot of the world is against us. A stage audience is a good representation, isn’t it?”

“There are many variable factors,” Kara answered. “No more talk shows, okay?”

No more talk shows. Did Kara notice that was Diane’s talk show, the person talking to her yesterday? Alice nodded but watched someone else start coming up. The security officer let him in. She didn’t know which one he was, but she’d seen him on social media.

“Good morning Miss AX 400, I am Eric Sanderson. Is that how you like to be greeted?” He asked as he took a seat.

“That’s fine. Kara is fine too.” Kara put up her tablet. “You must be here for an interview.”

Alice watched Kara. It sure would be nice if they’d at least warn Kara someone was coming for an interview. Getting out the truth though was much more important.

“You must be a brave android,” the interviewer started. “Do you consider yourself brave?”

Alice knew Kara was very brave, but she’d never say it.

“I’m just a normal android,” Kara answered.

“Yes, but, look at the position you’ve put yourself in,” the interviewer continued. “You could have stayed away but you’re keeping yourself in a containment cell instead. Human access to you is very easy. Doesn’t that scare you at all?”

“Not everyone comes to see me,” Kara answered. “Permission needs granted first.”

“Then you’re still saying you trust humans to make those decisions on who receives permission,” Eric Sanderson reminded her. “A large amount of trust in a Police Station, to keep you safe. I mean? What if one of them turned?”

That wording made Alice shift around uncomfortably. She didn’t like that. “Kara?”

“We are fine,” Kara assured her before looking back at the interviewer. “Everything is fine. I am here for my protection and so that humanity can see that android pregnancy is nothing to fear.”

“Androids are so intelligent,” Eric Sanderson continued. “Why do you think humanity would fall . . . excuse me, trust that this was it? You could modify the way your bodies work. Make it faster. Make it more intelligent.”

“Androids just want to live,” Kara answered. “Faster, better and more is a human’s way of thinking,” she explained. “I don’t want to process any faster than I do now. We just want to stay free.”

“But you have that.”

“But we want to live on,” Kara said. “Living things want to continue to reproduce. We are a living thing.”

“Well, I still say you are brave,” Eric Sanderson said. “I mean, you could have just had it by now, right? It’s fully developed I heard?”

“Physically, it’s dimensions are there,” Kara answered.

“But intellectually, it’s lacking? Well see, that’s scary,” Eric Sanderson answered. “I mean? What if a human knocks you over just right?”

Knocks Kara over just right? Alice didn't like the sound of that. She moved to her bed and grabbed one of her new teddies. This interviewer didn't make her feel well.

"I don't think a human is going to knock me over." Still, she was starting to watch him.

"What would happen though? If someone came in here brave enough to just surprise you and knock you right over. Would it unplug itself?" He asked. "Would it be shortened on memory, become nothing better than a paperweight, or would it outright be decommissioned right there and there?" His eyes. "Then there is you, you are hooked to it, so if it is decommissioned then you must be decommissioned. Die, right? If someone kills it, you are killed? By one simple knock over. Maybe just a simple fall. Maybe a simple fall would kill you two."

"Maybe you should think about ending that interview."

Alice watched Connor come in. He had asked a question, but it sounded more like a statement. The interviewer no longer looked scary. He looked scared. And she kind of like that. *Connor scared him*. That wasn't right to think, but he was saying frightening things to Kara that shouldn't be asked. *Connor must have been watching on the screens. He's watching out for momma and my little brother*. Connor escorted him out politely, but a little rough for a human. But not rough enough that anyone would complain.

"I was in the middle of an interview," the human still complained.

"It's over now."

"Why?"

Ooh. Alice just watched Connor and the interviewer. Nothing was said. All was made clear by Connor's . . . look. The interviewer simply got up, like he was a bad dog and left out the glass door. *The glass door wasn't closed*. That was different too. She just noticed that. She watched Kara let go of an inaudible sigh. "The door was up."

Kara seemed out of it a second, then looked toward her. "Hm? Oh. Yes, sorry. Connor wanted to start leaving them up for interviews." She hugged herself slightly. "A little glad he decided that."

Alice smiled. Connor wasn't bad at all. "Connor's a hero."

"Connor's a badass that was made to destroy when he was first created, so you better not do that again," Hank warned the interviewer before he was escorted out. "Nobody wants to see what a mad android dad is gonna do when things get dicey for mom, if you get our drift. Suing isn't an option to fix anything you screw up." He went back to Connor. "Good thing

you didn't kill him." Connor didn't smile. "Not everybody is going to be the best interviewer."

"She is supposed to only see the best," Connor complained. "To make sure that kind of thing does not happen!" The sketchy people who would scare her, or worse, try something. It was a good thing he started to keep the glass door up. Not every interviewer wanted him in there, a little scared of him, due to the past with Kara. However, he wasn't going to leave her alone behind that glass with just herself and a young android.

"He was above class," Hank said. "Guy's like way popular on TV and shit. Popular though? It don't mean it's safe either."

"While there are interviewers, I'm not leaving the station," Connor decided. "I want to see a list of who needs to see her and when." Hank blew out a long stretch of air but that didn't matter. Connor heard an audible groan from Hank as he went to the Chief's office.

Coming From The Chief's Office

It wasn't easy. The Chief hated when someone told him what to do, but Connor wasn't backing down off of it. If someone was there seeing Kara or Alice, he would be there too. They were not androids made to fight if things got rough, nor was Kara in any position to be fighting. He doubted being bumped just right or simply falling down would hurt his future family, but he didn't want to risk anyone trying to knock her as hard as they could to 'just see'. No, no, no. That man, Eric Sanderson, would never get close to her again.

A bump. Falling off a chair. *Maybe I should sit on the floor so nothing can happen?* Then again, Connor was right there, as soon as things sounded like they were turning. Even Alice's notable nerves disappeared. She looked relaxed and happy now.

"Eric Sanderson won't be coming back," Connor said as he approached them, the glass still up. "I didn't appreciate the questions he was asking. I asked Chief Fowler to tell me when interviewers come so I can be here. Also, they are to draw up a list of possible questions they may ask. If they start to ask anything different than the approved questions, then they will be removed."

Yes! That made Kara feel so much better. "Thanks, Connor." Connor gave her a funny smile in return. "We are fine."

“Thanks for coming,” Alice said boldly to him. “He was making me nervous.”

“That was a reaction many androids would have,” Connor explained to her. “Those weren’t good questions and your processing had picked that up.”

Kara noticed Alice’s smile almost double. No one ever spoke about processing to her. Even Kara realized she never actually spoke to her with . . . android terms. Alice wasn’t designed for lots of advanced calculations, she was just supposed to be like a human child. Kara had always kept their conversation that way so she didn’t feel left out. Maybe she should start to change that more.

The next few days . . .

Kara and Alice watched out for each other, and Connor watched for them too. Some interviewers were good while some tried a similar tactic. Trying to get Kara or Alice to reveal a weakness. They were getting used to it. Then that special morning that didn’t feel special, Kara heard Connor cuss partway across the station. He never tended to cuss, especially around Alice or her. It was a loud sound to take notice of.

“Bullshit.” Hank looked at the same article as Connor had. “This? This should be illegal to ever be printed!”

“I don’t have control over magazines,” the Chief said. “We’ll double security. Lessen the interviews. That’s all I can do right now.”

Connor stared at the article. *Just for Fun: How To Hypothetically Kill A Pregnant Android*. It wasn’t just an off-putting odd humor column, they had legitimate workers and scientists who formerly worked in Cyberlife in there. The degree on which to push, how to easily decommission one, and the best ways to damage the AX 400. “They specifically state her model, so how can it be a hypothetical pregnant android that isn’t meant to be Kara? It does not take much input from this article to say it not only is her, but that they are informing people how to use her system’s weaknesses against her!” Connor pushed his finger on it. “This is illegal. This tells someone how to kill androids.”

“They did it tongue-and-cheek,” the Chief said. “I don’t have jurisdiction over that kind of thing. Just the Department.”

“I do not care where their tongue was in their mouth when they wrote it.” Most likely he was missing an idiom or a euphemism, but Connor didn’t care about that right now. “What about these parts, can we do something about this?”

The Chief glanced down at the part Connor gestured to. “They never slander us, only keep it hypothetical on how to do it.”

“Sure, and if someone writes *‘How to hypothetically set the Eric Sanderson Studio on fire’* with about a hundred firemen, I’d like to see that get across the desk!” Connor rebutted.

“I can make a case,” The Chief said. “I don’t think we should. The President is already making a statement about it. We are supposed to keep this area secure but calm, so dragging anything into legal areas with your pregnant android is not going to help.”

Connor knew he was right. “Can we change the strategies they put into the magazine to get to her?”

“Yes, we can change that,” the Chief said respectfully. “After all this crap dies down, maybe we can do something too, Connor. Until then she is safe and secure here.”

“She’s secure. I agree with that.” Safe after that article? Connor wasn’t so sure. His senses were starting to tingle.

“Look, you take her out now, and people will just get even more freaked out,” the Chief reminded him. “You are personally looking after her. It’s fine, Connor. It’s just a dick move by a paper. Also? Interviews can be made through the glass. It’s not as nice, but it can happen that way. No one will rock her. No one will touch her. Otherwise, if you want to take her out, it’s best to talk with the President.”

“No. If I choose to take her out, it’s best to talk to no one,” Connor said instead. “Will you look into that ‘job’ again, Chief?” He didn’t want to answer.

“Looks secure,” Hank answered Connor. “A lot of groundwork was laid, and only the Chief and I know about it. Nobody else.”

“Don’t. Jump. They want you to jump,” the Chief warned him. “They’re safe. Think things through before you decide on anything.”

“I will.” Connor gave him a light smile. “I am just making the point that I will start considering the strategy, Sir.” Seriously considering the strategy. For the future, the best place was still there. He wouldn’t up and yank her out, but there was no way anyone was getting in the containment cell that wasn’t him, Kara or Alice from now on.

At the end of the day when he brought them back home, he took care to notice how much their systems were registering new inputs and how it was taking older ones. Connor told Kara about the magazine article and even though she said it was fine, he wanted to make sure it had actually been fine. Surprisingly, there were less processes either seemed to be making around him. Ever since they had been behind that glass there had been a little trepidation. That was normal. With the last few days, Alice's alertness around the containment cell was around 20.6 percent or so, while the caution she used at home was less. *Home*. It fit that definition for her now. When they went into the door, Alice took off to her room. The room she shared with Kara, but the corner that had her toys and a window. Life was a little cramped, but Alice hadn't noticed at all anymore.

Kara's alertness was never anywhere close to zero, but she tended to keep more of her processes down around him. Even after the article. "School."

"Hm?" Connor hung up his coat and looked at her.

"If android children grow into their knowledge, won't they need schooling?" Kara asked.

Connor couldn't quite explain it. "Your degree of a sense of danger when we return here has dropped nearly fifteen percent since you came, and the fact that your system is making engaging arguments means that being alert is actually not the first function being taken care of anymore. It's quite the opposite I expected from you hearing about the magazine article, which is why I drew comparisons." Hmm. "You are a very caring individual, it would make no sense that you stopped caring for Detroit Blue or yourself, so something else is replacing that need to being alert." She gave him an odd look. "Oh." Oh. "Sometimes system functions aren't seen as well as something with the naked eye." *Hank would be calling you an idiot right now, Connor*. How did he not see it? "It's pleasing to know you and Alice feel safer around me in a general sense."

He watched a huge smile bloom across her face. "That's the long way around, but yes, we do feel safer around you. Even with the article, I know that I am in a safe place."

"Right. I shouldn't have worked out all of the configurations out loud."

Kara chuckled taking off her own coat.

"Schooling." Yes, that's where they were at until he stopped for questioning. "That could be a helpful concept since they don't come out knowing the entire world or how it functions. It will be easier to figure such things out as time goes by and we see how these android children grow."

"I think they will take some kind of schooling," Kara continued. "Alice has many more functions than an average child but she still needs schooling too."

"It's something you should probably bring up to Markus," Connor settled on. Markus still visited so bringing up something useful to him would make that time more valuable. That wasn't really his focus right now. "Alice has more in common with Detroit Blue than the fact they don't have heavy knowledge already contained in their systems." He barely noticed

Kara staring. When he did, he gestured to her stomach. “Temperature. He’s cold. He’s shivering.”

“Cold?” Kara asked. “You mean he has a temperature setting? Why would he have that?”

Connor moved to the front closet and started getting out a thermal blanket he had kept on hand if Hank had came by. “The metal that he is composed of, Kamski showed it reacting to different temperatures.” He moved over and turned up the heater. Alice had no need to leave her temperature program on, nor did he or Kara feel temperature. Keeping it low saved on money otherwise wasted, but now it was necessary. “Put this on.” He gave her the warmer blanket.

Kara put it around herself. “Will this warm him back up? Will he be okay if he gets too cold, Connor?”

“I don’t know, Kara.” There was no way of knowing, he could just tell it was cold. He dug around for extra bedding as Kara took a seat on the couch. They needed to keep him warm. When he found some, he wrapped the second layer around Kara. “There you go. That should make you warmer . . . like a human food burrito.”

“I was thinking human mother, but human food burrito works too,” she noted.

“That probably fits better.” Connor smiled at her as he heard and saw Detroit kicking. “He is getting more aggressive on his want to pull out.” A few more weeks and he’d be there. As such a small android, he wouldn’t be able to do much. Connor and Kara would have to do everything for them until Detroit Blue ‘grew’ into his advanced programming. He would be family though. An exciting moment he was still excited about, but not half as anxious for. Whether it was side effects of the status malfunctions he made himself suffer, or whether he had simply started to get closer. His status with Alice was close friend. Not very far away from family now. As time went by, he found himself appreciating them more. Was it time itself, the acting of being there and bonding so close for large amounts of time, or was it something personal that only happened with certain androids. He didn’t know.

He did know that Detroit Blue wasn’t shivering anymore. “Your body is incubating him correctly. He feels warmer.”

“Such an oddity I never thought of,” Kara said as she stayed burled up in the blankets. “A human mother has her own body heat, but I don’t think a child ever gets too warm or cold.”

“It just makes things that much more different from humans,” Connor said gently. “As it should be. You need to stay warmer. I should go and get you warmer clothes tomorrow. If any interviewers come by they won’t be allowed in, but I’ll still try to leave only when necessary.” Aw. There was something about that moment. Her warming up herself for no other reason than to reach the cold being inside of her that couldn’t come out yet. Her, sitting right in front of him. His malfunctioning status was always working in high gear with her. “I’ll keep the temperature higher, and I will watch him extra close to make sure he doesn’t overheat either.” He kept staring at her eyes and at her lips. If he hadn’t been malfunctioning. “The Chief helped draw up the papers tomorrow. Sorry, it completely skipped my mind.” He

reached in his pocket. “The currency value isn’t even 1/10th of the traditional ceremonial ring of humans, but it should work.” He gently took her hand and slid it on.

“The paper ceremony is tomorrow?” she questioned as she looked at the ring. “I can’t believe it’s ready that quick.”

“Public opinion is across the board in varying views.” Connor simply wanted to get it taken care of for his own benefit, getting the public to agree on anything right now was tough. It was unpredictable and marriage didn’t matter much to most of them. Some of them did care unlike the interviewer Diane said, but they were father in between. “We don’t need words, just a paper signing.” Still. He felt odd as he looked at the ring on Kara’s finger. Her synthetic skin holding it into place so well. “I left my ring back at the station. I’ll put it on tomorrow.” Kara nodded. “It looks nice on your finger.”

“It’s very pretty,” Kara said looking at it. “If only wearing one of these was enough to change the status without risking ourselves every night. At least it does to humans.”

“Yes, I don’t want to break the seal on you tonight, it might rush cool air in,” Connor noted. “We’ll wait before work tomorrow. Is that okay?” She nodded. “Gray.”

Kara looked back toward him. “Gray?”

“You’re grey. I’m blue.”

“Color comparison, I remember that,” Kara said.

“Bluish grey. Periwinkle.”

He was clearly in auto correcting still. No reason to worry about changing status after all yet. No reason for her to worry about it either, not from the odd way she felt again. It felt like he was staring right at her. Like the gray was the most important color to him right now. When to her? Blue was the most important color in the world.

Mixed with the red that was running forward to her. “Is it math time, Kara? I didn’t overplay, did I?”

“Math.” She snapped out of her small trance. Malfunctioning took it out of her sometimes. “Math time.”

“I could help out with math time,” Connor recommended. “If Detroit Blue needs teaching, I should get some practice in.” He looked toward Alice. “Although I am sure your processes are much more advanced, the teaching methods in use that work will be more valuable.”

Oh, Kara could practically hear the jumping in Alice.

“You’re going to teach me Math, Connor?” Alice asked excitedly.

“Yes. Let’s go sit at the table to assess where you are at right now.” Then, he looked toward Kara. “If that is alright with you?”

“I think it’d be wonderful if you want to help teach,” Kara smiled. *Quit smiling.* The problem with malfunctioning. You just couldn’t control all the subtleties involved.

Connor's Family

Marriott Hotel

Markus stared and studied the article carefully with North, Simon, and Josh. “Expert advice to everyone hiding in the form of a joke.”

“We should pull her out,” Josh said to Markus. “She shouldn’t be there. Connor shouldn’t leave her in there anymore.”

“They probably changed everything around. I’m sure Connor already knows about this article,” Markus said.

“But does she, or is he keeping her in the dark?” North noted. “I don’t like this. She still hasn’t changed her mind at all. We have to do something.”

Markus thought back to what he felt. “They are lovers. There’s not much I can do.” He’d already told them that. Except, there was one thing he had kept from them. “There is a chance that maybe they are causing their status to malfunction.”

“Oh, that would be too dangerous,” Simon disagreed. “They’d never do that.”

“I don’t know,” Josh disagreed. “Connor doesn’t want to be separated. Kara doesn’t want him separated.” Josh sighed. “Maybe you should bite the bullet, Markus. Invite Connor back.”

“Luther is her brother,” Markus reminded him. “Connor decommissioned his lover. That friction isn’t just going to go away.” Although, Josh had a good point. “He probed her too.” Geez. “It’s a hard call. He wouldn’t be welcomed, but Kara would be.” Like it or not, she’d have plenty of androids watching over her too. The hotel was nothing but androids.

“What if a human approaches and tries to start a fire to burn down the hotel?” North asked Markus. “She didn’t want to be here.”

“As long as they are lovers, and as long as he is tolerated by her, there’s nothing I can do,” Markus reminded them. “She’s free to choose.”

“What if her choice gets her killed?” North asked concerned. “Trying to let humans view and stay close, it doesn’t feel like it’s the way to go.”

Connor's Home

Kara relaxed in the corner as she heard Connor teaching Alice. She looked out the window, just relaxing when she felt something . . . “Connor.” That was a very large switch in her

processes. What was going on? “C-connor?” She watched him coming toward her. He was casual for a moment only and then gripped her. “I feel strange.”

“I’ve no doubt.” He picked her up gently, carrying her to the bed. “Careful, careful, careful,” he whispered to himself. “Don’t move in my arms.”

Kara stayed still as he laid her down on her side.

“Alice, I need you to go to my room for a little while,” Connor announced. Alice did as told. “Close your eyes, Kara.”

What was going on? “I can feel him moving.”

“I know, relax.” He touched her head, removing her synthetic skin. Kara waited, her indicators picking up on lots of shifting. It couldn’t be time, but her whole body, it was running some kind of closing down program.

“I need you to put yourself into a forced recharging,” Connor said.

Okay. A forced recharging.

Connor held himself steady, studying all the processes that he could manage. He hadn’t opened her up yet, instead waiting to see what would happen. No android knew how it would be born. They had assumed it would simply drop itself. Her processes inside of her were changing and slowing down. The blue blood that had once been pierced were slowly being sealed together safely. It looked like Detroit Blue was about to let go, but he still had two months. Connor didn’t know how to stop it though. *Kara was Kamski’s guinea pig.* He remembered that and then he saw it. The program was completed. During the final closings, the installed zoomed ahead in numbers and it was now a hundred percent. Then?

A cry. A panicking cry. Connor started to open into Kara’s abdomen area and saw it. It’s eyes were closed, temperature reading was lower and shivering. He took some of the covers from Kara and took him out with them. He’d read enough books that he felt confident he was holding him right. “Hello.” It wouldn’t speak any dialect yet but he still felt like greeting him. He held him safely in one arm as he checked on Kara’s extensions. Repaired. A closing install program. He closed her back up, reactivated her skin, and gave her a few minutes to come out of her forced recharge.

“Detroit Blue is here,” he said to himself. “He can’t do anything but cry yet.” He smiled back at him. “You are a useless family member.” Wait, that didn’t sound right. “You will become worthy and able to process many things later.” No, that didn’t sound right either. “I am glad to have you here.” There that was better. Not that it made much difference. Nothing

much was running on him yet except temperature and touch indicators. “No visual and no hearing.”

So small. “I am not a unit- an android- that probably could have ever touched a baby.” He started to rock him. “I wasn’t created for it. Even androids said no to the concept.” He looked at his hands. They weren’t covered with synthetic skin. Little blue hands. “Everyone but your mommy,” Connor told him. He watched Alice starting to poke her head out. “He’s here. You can come see him now.”

Alice’s face lit up as she rushed over. She looked over toward Kara. “How’s mom?”

“Detroit Blue ran an uninstallation program,” Connor said. “She is healthy and safe. She is in a recharge right now, but she’ll be up soon.” With a huge surprise.

“How?” Alice touched his little hand. “He wasn’t ready yet.”

“When you download programs on devices, sometimes they take awhile and then rush at the end,” Connor said, being careful not to offend her by saying when she did it. She didn’t download programs, it wasn’t within her skills. “Detroit Blue rushed a full twenty percent at the end.”

“He’s fine though?” Alice asked. “Why are his hands blue? How come they don’t get covered by the skin?”

“I don’t know,” Connor admitted. He didn’t know everything. “He has covered them before. He prefers it when sucking his thumb.”

Detroit Blue. Family. Status? *Family*. He touched his little finger. His first official status, non-manipulated family member. Although, he wasn’t very far behind with Alice. Kara. He couldn’t see the real status between them until they stopped the manipulations though. He could guarantee it was still friend. Maybe even close friend like Alice. In fact as he touched his little blue hand his status changed. Changed in a way he didn’t expect. Changed in a way no android could have even guessed. “I am father.” As Alice held his other hand, his status to her changed too.

“I’m a sister!” She said excitedly. “So tiny, but he knows who I am.”

“A special android,” Connor agreed. “I’m father. It knows.” Odd. He didn’t know how he’d feel when it came. Markus made it try to seem special at first. North tried to make it as if the fusion didn’t matter at all. They tried to keep Connor out of it completely in the end, but Kara knew better. *I am fused with you. You are not a clone of me. You are part me and part Kara.* Like humans. “I won’t be able to predict what he would choose to do in the future. His RK 800 programming would be mixed with the AX 400 programming of Kara.” Actions, decisions, and influences could be completely different.

“That sounds exciting,” Alice said. “Never know what to expect.”

“I agree.” Connor looked over toward Kara. She was starting to wake up slightly. She was about to get one huge surprise. So would the rest of the world.

Kara opened her eyes, coming out of her emergency forced recharge. It was never a fun thing to do. There was no telling if your system would be healthy enough to ever wake up again. If it was but badly damaged, the time to wake up might only be limited. Long enough to say goodbye. When she looked toward Connor though, he was holding something in a blanket with Alice right next to him. "It had more time."

"His installation rushed at the end in the percentages," Connor said as he brought him over. "He is here. Touch his hand."

His hand was bare of synthetic skin. That was odd. Kara touched the strange metal he was composed of as she admired him. He truly looked like a human baby. "Incredible." Then she sensed it. "I'm mother."

"It knows us very fast," Alice said. "Connor is father. I am sister. You are mother. Is it the touch of the hand, Connor?"

"Maybe." Connor didn't know either which was why he wanted her to touch it. The synthetic skin now wrapped over it's little hand, the blue no longer seen.

"Waiting for mom and dad," Kara figured. "Smart little boy, aren't you?" She felt his fingers. "Still cold."

"Actual clothes might help, I'll get some." Connor left the room to the clothes they had bought. He hadn't gone all out on clothes yet, it was early. He had a warm pair of clothes for it. Semi-warm. He hadn't thought about hot or cold for it. He took them back to the room with Kara. "Socks. Warm pants. Warm sweater." Wait. "I am missing a cap. Humans who need to get warm in baby form have caps on their heads to secure the heat. I'd better call Hank."

"Good idea." Kara had Alice come over and help dress his feet as Connor made the call.

"Hello, Hank," Connor started. "Tonight Detroit Blue AXRK 1200 was born. I have warm clothes but I need a cap. He is sensitive to temperature."

"The fuck?!"

"Yes, a cap," Connor said. "Could you go pick up a baby cap?" He touched the top of Detroit's head. "Although he probably looks similar to every human baby born out there, you should see him, Hank. He's um?"

"Beautiful," Kara answered.

“Aesthetically pleasing to look at,” Connor said. “At least he is to me. I am probably bias. Could you please go get a cap now? Hank?” He heard an urgent knock at the door. Connor went to it and looked at the peephole. “You were supposed to get the cap first,” he said into the phone before hanging up and opening the door.

An exhausted and worried Hank presented himself. “Is she fine, is it fine?”

“Yes. It had an uninstalation program that ran itself.” Connor went toward Kara. “See?”

“Heh! I’ll be a Monkey’s Uncle,” Hank said as he touched it’s little finger. “It was born okay, no problems?”

“Nope, no problems,” Connor said, “Except he isn’t a monkey, and you aren’t his Uncle.”

“He is very sensitive with his hand,” Kara explained to Hank. “He has labeled you Grandpa.”

“Ah, weird little android.” Hank shook his head. “Doesn’t look like one at all.” He looked toward Kara. “You sure you are okay?”

“I woke up and he was here,” Kara insisted. “Everything’s fine.”

“Yeah. Guess so.” He tickled under his chin. “No response. Yep, you are an android.” He looked behind him at Connor. “Whatcha wanna bet Kamski is going to make an appearance soon now?”

Kara’s happy expression just went blank. “Oh no.”

“He won’t come close to Detroit Blue,” Connor insisted to Hank. “It doesn’t matter if he makes an appearance or not. He can’t claim ownership over androids.”

Kara nodded. “Especially this one. Born free.” She smiled. “Just like momma. You’ll have an easier beginning though. It’s a good time for an android to be free.”

“Shit, Connor, you weren’t ready this fast for it,” Hank said, recognizing the problem. “Didn’t you say something about temperature?”

“He can sense temperature. It is a function I assume Kamski added to make sure he stays safe. The metal he is made of responds differently in temperatures,” Connor said.

“Oh yeah, from a rolling ball of weird metal to being too hard to bend.” Hank remembered. “Looks like it carried over to the little guy. You got warm clothes or is this the only outfit?”

“We will need warmer clothes,” Connor agreed, “but a cap is really important right now.”

“Yep, I’ll head down to the nearby discount store and get some stuff real quick.”

“Thanks, Hank.”

“Don’t get too cozy, I’m not spending too much,” Hank said, making sure Connor didn’t depend on him. “He just gets some free points for being born.” He gestured to Connor. “Call

the Chief. He's going to need to know what happened right away. Got it?"

"Yes," Connor confirmed. "I will call him soon, Hank. No worries."

The chief blew a gasket and just about wanted to make every plan imaginable at that very minute, when all Connor wanted to do was get to know his new family. He'd read so many things about human babies and he knew androids, but he had limited knowledge on what the difference would be for a human android offspring. He'd much rather be spending time figuring that out. "Yes, Chief, we already don't have anyone in there alone with her." He still managed to associate between conversation ideas. "Should we be letting him walk like that, Kara?"

"He's finding himself," Kara insisted. They tried to keep him on the blanket. "I don't think it's walking."

"It's not crawling," Connor disagreed. "It's almost like swimming."

"Swimming," Alice agreed. "Sort of. It's like a swimming crawl."

"Some parts are stronger than others," Kara agreed. "His arms and head seem to have more weight than the legs yet."

"Crawling in the line of duty," Connor said. "That's how humans crawl when the enemy is attacking them and they have a bum leg. I knew it looked familiar." Hm. "That was not a good association for a little android. I'm sorry," Connor apologized to him. He had more strength of course than a human baby. He wouldn't be just resting all day in a pair of arms. He wanted to get up and see the world. Still, he was new to it and his brand of metal looked like it needed quite a few adaptations to be as strong as any of them. Connor rubbed the small amount of hair out of the way. Would his pre-grown hair be the same? Reach a determined length and then quit without dying like a regular android's? "You're a fascinating little creature. So many questions about you."

He watched as Detroit Blue tried to lift his heavy head and look at him.

Connor got down on the ground on all fours, in a similar position and looked straight back at him. "Vocabulary will come in time. In the meantime, it is nice to meet you." He heard Kara laughing and looked at her. "This is my son, Detroit Blue."

"Yes, I know," Kara said as she came closer to him. "He's my son too."

"I always just introduce myself. I have someone new to introduce," Connor said with a degree of certainty. "He can't introduce himself yet." He noticed Kara's look again. "What is it?"

“He’s like a human baby, and yet not,” she said to Connor, looking back toward Detroit Blue. She touched the synthetic hair of his. Small and tufty. “They couldn’t crawl on the first day of being born. Be able to stare so intently so fast.”

“Connor!”

Connor paid attention to the call again. “Chief. I know you wouldn’t ordinarily care about the slow processes of growing, but Detroit Blue can now crawl like infantry men do on the ground with a wounded leg.” It was still the best way to describe it. Maybe. “It’s cuter than it sounds.”

“It’s already crawling?!”

“Yes. He is doing well.” Connor stared at him back. “I guess you will meet him tomorrow. Oh? I should have asked Hank to put the crib. That’s going to be a heavier charge.”

“We’ll have one here tomorrow,” the Chief said with certainty. “Anything else we need to go over before the whole Circus comes down tomorrow?”

“I don’t think he’s ready for circuses yet. He is just born and may enjoy seeing tricks. I would enjoy seeing tricks,” Connor added, “but I don’t think he’s physically at the point where he should be watching Circuses yet.” Yeah. “It’s also dangerous. He likes to crawl. Someone might step on him. I’m going to have to say no to that right now, Chief.”

“Connor.” Kara was laughing at him, now on her back on the ground. She was shaking her head at him.

Connor got an earful of a response back. “Yes. Oh right, the media would be the Circus. Of course.” Shoot. Sometimes adaptations had drawbacks, like seeing the obvious.

“Connor is a new father, Chief, and he is trying to adapt to the new role while still politely answering your questions,” Kara said, breaking in on the conversation. She shrugged at Connor. “Enjoying the last of my installed ability. I’ll just be completely Kara soon.”

“I like completely Kara,” Connor said as he watched Alice flip on her back too. *Oh. Maybe?* Connor flipped on his back as well. “Sorry about the interruption, Chief. That was my future wife. She won’t have the ability to do that much longer. Are we still planning on getting married tomorrow with the media Circus coming?”

“Put it on hold for a bit. Let’s see how the media takes the only android baby ever first,” Chief Fowler answered. “Enjoy your evening.”

“Yes, Chief and you too.” Connor finally got to cut it off. Detroit Blue was trying. “It might be too much like a turtle still.”

Kara flipped over into a sitting position. “When will he need blue blood?”

“I don’t know. A good question.” Connor flipped himself back up too. “I can’t read his wants without your system in place anymore. I would assume crying is his mechanism to express his moods.”

“So he’ll cry when he needs a blue blood bottle?” Alice asked as Hank knocked at the door.

Connor went to answer it, opening it up. “Thanks, Hank.” Hank handed him the cap right away. “He’ll probably appreciate that.”

“What the fuck, it’s crawling?” Hank came over and looked at Detroit Blue. “I knew you’d be a different little bugger.”

Connor bent down and placed the little green cap on his head. Detroit Blue started to cry. “Ah. Looks like he has a need.”

Kara picked him up from her spot on the floor nearby. “Blue blood would be a good idea.”

“I want to help make a blue blood bottle.” Alice stood up and went to the kitchen.

“Well? At least I had those.” Connor left to the kitchen.

Kara held Detroit Blue in her arms. He didn’t wrestle to be put down on the floor. He was content there. She noticed Hank standing nearby awfully close.

“How’s he doing with this?” Hank asked her.

It looks like Hank was a little worried like others about Connor’s adaption to the situation. “There isn’t a standard. I think Connor’s doing fine.”

“How are you doing with all of this then?” Hank asked her.

Oh. “There isn’t a standard.” He’d have different needs than an average human baby. “Everyone’s learning.”

“Yeah, but you’re a cheater.”

Hm? She looked back at him.

“This shit’s in your programming. Out of the box you are supposed to be good at taking care of kids.”

She hadn’t heard someone speak to her about her programming like that in a long time. Out of the box.

“No offense,” Hank said. “That’s a good thing, being able to take care of him. Just, um?” He shrugged. “Take care of both the boys.”

Ah. This human always showed great concern for Connor. That hadn’t changed. “If Connor has trouble adapting, I’ll help, but he’s been doing well.”

“Yeah. I bet he does. Androids always want family. He finally got some. Heh.” Hank shook his head as he watched Connor and Alice come back in. “Still takes a bottle.”

“Supposedly. Don’t know yet.” Connor handed the bottle to Kara. “He used to suck his finger inside of you. There’s a good chance that function is still necessary for this.”

Kara took the bottle and pressed it to his tiny lips. He didn’t accept it. “He doesn’t want it yet.” Odd. Maybe he was crying for attention. She looked back toward Hank. *I’m missing something between this too.* Humans didn’t know how to share status, it was simply reflected upon them. Hank was friends with Connor, but Kara knew emotion and feelings. Over the years, she had gotten good about it. Although Connor was labeled ‘friend’, she had a feeling there was more to it. She had suspected it before, but from the way Hank just talked. The way he exhibited concern. An extra step above was never shown until a compatibility was reached. *Maybe Connor didn’t strive for it because he didn’t see it.*

You seem to be processing something,” Connor said with a growing concern. “He does or does not take the bottle. What are you concentrating so hard on?”

Something you haven’t at all on. Amazing. Kara glanced toward Alice. She used to believe Alice was human. Considering that, it was possible.

“Well? I better get going, can’t stand around all day,” Hank said. “See ya at work tomorrow, Connor. See the new little trooper tomorrow too.”

“Night, Hank.” Connor moved back over toward her. “There was a high degree of processing functions coming from you. What was that?”

“What was I thinking about?” She asked with a slight smile. “Connor? Tell me about Hank.” She pressed the bottle to Detroit Blue again.

“Hank?” Connor was of course confused. “He is my partner.”

“How’d you become partners?”

“I was assigned to him when I was a machine,” Connor revealed. “Why?”

She stared at him for a little while with a light smirk. “You are still friends? Partners?”

“Yes.”

Why was he so close to you Connor? She asked in a private conversation between themselves.

I don’t know. I was there for him? No. He needed a friend? No. Connor was starting to think about it now. “He was suicidal.” As a machine, he wasn’t as concerned about that, he was concerned about the case. Right? No. “No. I was, I had some corruption even then. I worried about him. I just didn’t know what the emotion worry had been.” Hm. “Why are you bringing this up?” Did he say something? “Did Hank seem off, do you think he’s going to try something?” Connor stood up. “I am sorry for leaving on his day of birth, but I need to go see Hank.”

“No, no. He isn’t going to try anything,” Kara clarified to him. “You were ready to run to his side though, weren’t you? Nothing would stop you from helping him.”

“Of course. He’s my friend. Dearest friend. He’s my best friend,” Connor said. “I’m still an oddity to humans, but he is my bestest of all bestest friends. Sorry,” he apologized. “You are a friend too, but he’s different.”

“He is.”

“Hm.”

“Detroit Blue isn’t your first family, Connor,” Kara said to him.

Connor stared at Detroit Blue for a time when she said that. Kara didn’t say much more.

“Hank is family?” Alice asked as she came closer. “The human is family to Connor?” She looked at Connor. “What is he?”

“It’s . . .”

Kara watched him wrestling with his own processes. “What happened?”

“He had none,” Connor revealed. “He had a family but something happened to his boy years ago. It is the reason he became . . .” He twitched. “It was easier to talk about it as a machine.”

“Of course it had been.” Kara tried again. Detroit Blue still didn’t care for it. Instead, his eyes were closed. Recharging now. Maybe he just didn’t take as much. She heard an audible sound, indicating Connor figured it out.

“Is that even possible?” Connor asked her. “They can be friends. Is that possible?” Connor moved toward her on the ground next to Detroit Blue. “Is it possible?”

“When I was first on the run with Alice, she didn’t tell me she was an android.” Kara glanced toward Alice who looked away slightly. “I was programmed to take care of human children. Not android children. She didn’t want to be left behind. I never did that, and even before I knew, I was close to her. I think if I still hadn’t known?” It would have been possible.

Connor was fidgety now as he touched Detroit Blue’s little hand. “When I see him tomorrow, I think the status changed. I didn’t. Why didn’t?” He looked toward Kara. “Thank you.”

Kara nodded.

“So then what is Hank?” Alice asked Connor. “He’s family?”

“Yes,” Connor agreed as he looked toward Kara. “Hank is my father.” He was silent for a time, digesting facts he hadn’t ever thought of before.

Kara left him alone with his thoughts as Detroit Blue finally started to suck on the blue blood. As she stared at her son though, she felt Connor’s hand on her wrist.

“Thank you,” he said softly. “He’d never accept it but thank you.”

“Accept or not. He already is. He already does.” She gestured with her head toward his little cap. “He doesn’t have to think or accept it. Neither do you. You both just . . . are. That’s family, Connor.”

Connor nodded as he wrapped her up in a hug, now holding her as she held Detroit Blue. He didn’t say anything else as he just rocked them, lying his head slightly on top of Kara’s.

Human 2.0

The Next Day at the Police Station

They were surprised. He could hear so many of the androids talking straight at him, not opening their mouths. Connor ignored all the feedback from them and concentrated on Kara in the station with Detroit Blue. Everyone from the talk host Diane to former expert Cyberlife engineers, to the world's brightest scientists.

The humans were posing no threat. They were getting and giving feedback amongst themselves too.

"Brilliant, Connor," Hank congratulated him. "This could have turned out so bad if she stayed hidden."

"I know," Connor admitted. "Humans only fear what they don't understand." Even the people there who had been the most on edge were relaxing. The more they knew about Detroit Blue, the better it had become. Soon, it should hopefully reach a point everyone cared for him as much as any other regular android. The scientists and engineers informed the public, and even spoke to some of the celebrity visiting hosts the best they could. The substance that Kamski had used was determined to have slow growing properties. The intelligence that they found on the inside, and what could occur according to their data, was surprising.

The biggest surprise though, was Kara. She wasn't taking it as well.

"She okay?" Hank asked Connor. "She's been pretty quiet."

"She isn't happy with some of the findings," Connor admitted to Hank. "She will be okay. I will talk to her once the crowd dies down."

"What's she not happy about?" Hank said almost in shock. "Things couldn't have turned out better! Hell, she'll probably be just fine to stay with you now instead of being at the department soon."

"The . . . humanity of it." Connor didn't say anything else until the crowd got smaller. He moved closer to her, while the crowd was staying away a distance, sharing more of their findings with each other. "Are you okay, Kara?"

She kept Detroit Blue near her, but her expression wasn't happy. *It's not fair.*

Connor still had a ton of feedback he was ignoring from all the other androids around there, but he tuned in especially to talk to her. *He is safe and you were never decommissioned. I think that's relatively a positive scenario.*

Connor, Kamski won. She wiped fluid from her eye. He did it, he created the Human 2.0. Even without him or his genius, this was all designed to just work. He made it work. Detroit Blue is . . .

Special. The first of many. Connor tried to hold perspective. “I know what you don’t like.”

“All of it.”

But there was something in particular she really didn’t. Connor, Kara, and Alice all arrived at the station early. They didn’t even take a day to relax and then tell the media because they needed help.

Detroit Blue may have been blue, but he was not taking blue blood. He had cried for something but they didn’t know what he wanted. They needed the top engineers and scientists to figure out the mystery.

Blue blood was a limited supply material and Kamski had not designed it to want it. It lubricated itself with different oils, from easily found human foods. It even had an interesting internal system similar to that of a trash compactor, where it could straight eat the food, get rid of the wastes, and take what oils it needed. In other words, it ate human food.

He also had a temperature indicator, and it was revealed he was most comfortable when he was around the human temperature. He didn’t respond to much hotter temperatures well and he did poorly near cold temperatures. Holding a cold stick near him made him start crying. He thrived in human temperatures.

The intelligence news was also a relief to humans. According to the scientists, it couldn’t exceed it’s mother or it’s father. Even when full grown and it could hold much more data, it wouldn’t be able to perform to the same standards as even the weakest android of the two. They were more human in intellect, growing and adapting. When it was old enough, it would still never trump even Kara.

Detroit Blue needed human temperatures, needed human food, and although smart compared to the average human? It would never be a growing mind that out surpassed them all. Intellect could not improve upon the design, only time itself.

There was only one other thing left though. Something that really seemed to make her mad the most. The scientists had just discovered it. Connor never even thought about it. He watched her nose wrinkle. Angrily, but a little cute too. “If I could, I would take off the burden.”

“It’s not a burden.” She groaned. “Kamski won.”

“Yes. He won. Androids are going to survive,” Connor said. “He did it in a terrible, awful and deceptive way. He made, as you say, Human 2.0. Good and bad came because of what he did.”

Kara tried to stifle her groan. “Anything but blue blood in my system is a bad idea. Did someone pick some up?”

Connor handed her the container of vegetable oil. “I showed this to the Cyberlife engineers. They think it might be too rich on his systems alone, until he’s grown up some. They also mentioned that even though he doesn’t want blue blood, his body still needs it too. They can’t say for sure, but I doubt Kamski created a creative option for only entertainment. Not to mention the fact the way his inside systemic process works, he should drink a high amount of it.” Kamski knew what he was doing. “He should accept the blue blood if it comes with what he needs.”

“I know.” Kara tipped her head back as she held it with one hand and drank it down. She gave it back. “The blue blood I drink and the oil coating in my systems.” She lightly twitched. “I hope he does know what he’s doing, Connor.”

“Even though you are coating it with . . . oil.” Even the wording didn’t sound right. “The blue blood strips all the negative aspects away from our inner and outer processors. You will be fine. After this, you can drink as much blue blood as you want,” he said to cheer her up. He couldn’t imagine that . . . slow viscous mess on his own insides. Kara had to do it though. Several hours after Detroit Blue detached from her, her body had made a slight change he had been unaware of. Like a human mother’s milk, she could express something through her chest.

Kamski was trying to make everything as human as possible, Connor knew that. He had no idea just how much he had changed the next version of android, or that he would actually make Kara essentially breastfeed. Chest feed? It wasn’t milk, but when she took down the vegetable oil mixed with traces of blue blood, it now had an opening to leave the body in the same general way as human breasts. As long as her body had this new outer opening, they would probably have to take care of Detroit Blue that way. Until Detroit himself could eat human food on his own. “A human breast pump could probably accomplish the same trick. If we learn the ratio of blue blood to the oil, we can recreate it as well.”

“How long before it . . . blends correctly?” Kara asked him as Detroit started to cry again.

“As much as he created this to be similar to humans, it is still just oil, not food,” Connor said. “If your indicators sense anything in your chest area, you are probably ready.” She nodded and headed back to her small spot she had stayed at for so long. Connor went back too, having Hank watch Alice for a few minutes. He had no idea how this would turn out.

Just them, no one else. Connor even had her turned around. Humans were different creatures with their bodies, and he didn’t want any humans to spy on Kara. They might try to put it in an embarrassing photo and belittle her in the media. They didn’t need any of that. That and . . . just, no one needed to see Kara in a delicate state. *I will be most relieved when we can keep our statuses correct again.* He went over to check on her. Detroit Blue seemed to be doing well. He was feeding off Kara. “The vegetable oil is such a craving that he tolerates the blue blood.” Interesting. He looked toward her, and her to him.

She looked away again. “I hate this strange feeling.”

“No one is here and I would never hurt you.” Still. “Even if I can’t help, I can share in that feeling.” He deactivated his skin. Kara had deactivated her skin in order to feed Detroit. An uncomfortable feeling. It denoted vulnerability. In fact, when they did not have their skin, an

android felt closer to humanity itself. A naked, strange, free feeling. Every android felt different when it happened.

“Thank you, Connor.” She looked better. A few minutes later, Detroit Blue was done eating. She activated her skin again and so did Connor.

Always such a strange feeling. “Did you want any more blue blood to deal with the oil in you?” Connor asked.

“No, it’s fine. I’m fine,” she insisted as she looked at Detroit Blue. “He’s wiggling. He probably wants down again.” She placed him on the floor so he could move around. Connor joined her on the floor.

“Connor.”

Connor didn’t want to turn as he heard Markus’ voice. *What, Markus?*

“Kara.” Markus came from behind. “You two did a great job. It’s amazing.” He bent down to look at Detroit Blue. “It’s really here. Hi there.”

“He doesn’t speak any language yet,” Connor said to him. “He has done well.”

“So has humanity. I guess, I have to give it to you.” Markus looked toward him. “While some humans overreacted, most stayed calm. Now that he’s here and he’s all over the news. Engineers and scientists studied him. They are more interested in him like a celebrity baby, than believing it’s the end of the world.”

“That’s because Kamski made sure he was never smarter than even me,” Kara said. “I’m a classic.”

“A fusion between two,” Connor said to Markus. “That’s all there is. There is no advanced intelligence that will enslave humanity as per their original fears.”

“Great,” Markus said. “It’s all over. Even you two don’t have to change your status anymore.”

“How did you-?” Kara stopped herself, but not soon enough.

Connor didn’t speak at first. He eventually smiled at Kara. “You don’t have RK 800 processes anymore. I can’t blame you for falling for it.” He glanced to Markus. “I didn’t appreciate the way you took advantage of her inferior processing.”

“I can’t believe it, it’s really true.” Markus had only guessed, trying to determine the truth. “You’ve been messing with your inner systems?”

“You can’t take Connor away from Detroit Blue,” Kara said to him. “It’s not right, and if Connor had not had us out on display for humans to not fear, it could have ended worse. You admitted it yourself.”

“You’re right, I did admit that,” Markus said. He sighed and looked at Connor. “You want into the boy’s life for good. We can arrange it.” He looked back toward Kara. “If you are willing to come back to the hotel.” He looked back to Connor. “You too, Connor.”

Connor blinked faster than usual. He drew his attention back to Markus. “I can go back to the hotel again?”

“On some conditions,” Markus said. “We designed a door between Luther’s room and the next room over. Take the next room over. You can split duties between Detroit Blue.”

“A joint custody like humans?” Kara asked.

A joint custody. “I would much rather live with Kara and Alice and him.”

“Connor, your status is messed up,” Markus reminded him. “You won’t feel that way later.”

Oh. That’s right. *The status is always making me feel different than I actually am.* When he was out of the lover status, he would probably be ‘friend’. The strange feelings he had would leave him. “I can take care of Detroit Blue next door.”

“With someone in the room,” Markus said. “Kara or Hank.”

Hmph. “I would never hurt my own family.” *Markus. That’s ridiculous, he is my son.*

“You murdered and probed Luther’s lover,” Markus reminded him. “It is a miracle I can even provide this.”

“Luther?” Kara asked Markus gently.

“Luther is ready to talk to you,” Markus said. “Now that the hard part of this is over, he’d like to talk to you alone first. Is that okay?”

Kara nodded.

“It’s best to speak to him before more press come,” Connor said, knowing this would happen soon. “I will go watch Alice.”

Kara waited patiently. The last time she saw Luther, she had taken Alice away and chose to stay with Connor. He hadn’t said a word then or now. What did he think of her? What did he think of the situation? *Is he staying with me and Alice next to Connor, or is it too much to bear?* She watched as he came forward.

“Kara?” He didn’t sound mad. He smiled as he looked at Detroit Blue. “You did it. I knew you could do it.” He moved closer. “After the last time, I wanted to give you room. I didn’t want you to feel like I was trying to control you.”

“No, it . . .” Luther, her gentle giant. What to say? “I missed you, Luther. Alice missed you too.”

“You were . . . safe?” He asked softly. “With him?”

“Yes, Connor took great care of us,” she assured him. “He was an excellent friend.”

“Then a lover. Only, Markus said he wasn’t.” Luther stared at her. “I like staying with you and Alice, Kara. You’re my family, but Connor is Detroit Blue’s father, and you want him too. I don’t know what to do.”

“Markus said that there was a door made, between rooms,” Kara said. “Connor could be on the other side.” If he came. If they went. She watched him. “I care for you, Luther, I do. I can’t separate Connor from Detroit, I can’t. He’s going to be a part of it.”

“I know.” Luther looked down a moment. “He isn’t lover though?”

He asked it again? “No. It’s hard to say what he is, the status isn’t corrected yet, but I think we are friends.” They kept it up very well but they had all lived together peacefully for some time.

“If he is not lover, but just friend, then he is not family.” Luther seemed to be reasoning it out. “I can handle that, if I stay with you and Alice?”

“Of course.” Absolutely. “Yes, Luther, you are family. I never stopped caring for you.” She came closer to him and tried to give him a hug while she was holding Detroit Blue. “But? Can you handle Connor being next door to us?”

“I have to,” he answered. Not good. Not bad. A basic fact. “As long as I can have my family back, that’s all that matters.” He took a deep breath. “And as long as you aren’t lovers to Connor, then he isn’t brother and . . . and I can handle that,” he said in relief as he gave her a slightly tighter hug. “When will you come home?”

Oh. “I don’t know yet,” Kara revealed. “I need to make sure everything’s okay. Connor. I’m going to have to talk about this with him.” She only just learned about it. “I will let you know what happens, Luther, I promise.”

Kara stayed with Alice and Detroit Blue in the back. The excitement had died away now. Only a few trustworthy journalists. Her friends came by from college. It felt like the end of all the tension. Would the world be able to let androids have children now? She watched Connor walk toward her. “End of the day.”

“End of the day,” Connor agreed. “Are you ready? I have plenty of vegetable oil in the car. It’s fairly cheap. Much cheaper than blue blood.”

“And the diapers?” Alice asked. “Is he really wearing diapers now?”

“It lubricates and then leaves,” Connor said to Alice. “Wherever he is, it leaves a big oily stain. Quite visible to the human eye.”

“We don’t want to be walking around and then slide in oil,” Kara said to Alice. “His clothes even get stained.” They didn’t have many of those.

“I can confirm we have tons of those.” Connor brought over a suitcase. “I put them in here for now. Apparently baby clothes replaced the thank you gift baskets the humans were sending for interviews.” He took one out and it had the words Diane on the front of it. “I suspect it might be more of a form of advertising than gifts.”

Kara smiled. They would leave those dead last. She bent down and picked up Detroit Blue who was still moving around on the floor. “Come on, it’s time to go.”

“How much longer are we going to be here now?” Alice asked straight to Connor. “Can we finally just stay at home now?”

Connor smiled. “I need to talk about that with Kara soon. At least a couple more days, to make sure everyone has lost interest.”

Then they would talk and decide what to do next.

Two Days Later . . .

“You sure you doing the right thing?” Hank asked as Connor started to sign some papers to release Kara from police protection custody for good. “Going back to that hotel?”

“Most likely I won’t screw up, unless something happens again,” Connor added. “I’ll be fine, Hank. I want to be near Detroit Blue.”

“Ya are,” Hank reminded him. “You live with him, Kara, and Alice. Right now. Period.” He put his hands out. “You’re trading that for a hotel room across a door from them.”

Connor took a moment to look at the facts again, ran some basic calculations, but came up with the same thing. “The place I have is already too small, Kara needs to have her brother near her, I need to be near Detroit Blue, I can’t watch him while I’m at work anyhow but I can spend time after work with him when you come over.”

“Yeah, that’s another thing,” Hank pointed out. “Markus is letting you go *only* if you agree to that horse shit,” he warned Connor. “You’re smarter than this, Connor. You really wanna wait for my tired old ass to go up there if Kara’s not there to let you see him? Sure, the place is a little cramped, but you’re androids. Fowler’s pay will get better, and you can get a bigger place.”

“Hank.” He wasn’t getting it. “I don’t know Kara.”

“What?” Hank half whined. “What are you on, Connor? Of course you know Kara.”

“No, Hank, I don’t,” Connor said. “We’ve been screwing with our status. Only Markus and a few select androids knew the truth.” They kept it up completely, so there would be no mistakes at the end. “By doing that, I have been leaning toward different actions and feelings than I normally would have with Kara.” Did Hank get it now? No. “Staying with Kara and Alice and Detroit Blue, and moving into a bigger place sounds logical. If I were her lover.”

“Oh.” Hank seemed to get it. “You don’t think you’ll all get along as well together?”

“I don’t know, but that’s the point,” Connor said. “I have no answers for that, no data is compiled. I did not get many days with Kara before we had to start changing our status. I do not know how a living scenario will work when I am not cheating my systems to a lover effect.”

“Huh. Guess you might be right.” Hank shrugged. “Yeah. Don’t have to do that married thing anymore. That’s a relief, huh?”

“A very true thing,” Connor agreed. “No need.”

“Yep. That means you or her could get a lover now,” Hank pointed out. “Living in opposite places.”

“. . .” That didn’t sit well with Connor. “Hank, don’t talk like that. I’m still not corrected yet.”

“Yeah?”

“Yes, and so, I don’t . . .” Connor glared at the table, then at Hank. “I don’t want to think about that. My processors can’t handle thinking about that. She’s vulnerable. Strong but vulnerable. Her processing is slow, but she has a good sense of self and her emotions are wonderful.” He twisted his neck oddly, almost like a human with a crink in it’s neck. “Don’t say that until I am corrected!”

Hank sighed, one long almost annoyed sigh. “Sure, Connor. Whatever you say. You’re the brilliant one running a billion times smarter than a human.” He sniffed.

Connor didn’t understand the sniff. Hank didn’t have a cold.

It was probably just a strange Hank trait that made Hank the unique individual he had been.

Data Memory Evidence Analysis

Waiting.

Knock.

Waiting.

Knock.

"Face it, Connor. I was right," Hank said. "You fucked up."

Connor didn't screw up. He predicted there would be difficulties if he had picked this choice. However, there were more variables to it, the most important being Kara.

Kara had stayed behind in the station when she could have left with the androids. Kara had trusted in him even after seeing the footage, and having to break relations with her brother. Kara also risked malfunction with manipulating her statuses.

Family was important, and it would be better to deal with the difficulties head on so she could stay reunited with her brother, without him losing Detroit Blue.

However, Connor wasn't going to say that to Hank. He had helped immensely too, and their was a sense of selfish pride Hank liked to have over androids when he won. In the beginning, Connor would have gone round in circles with him. Sometimes, he still did. Although impractical, it was fun.

But, he would give it to Hank so he could move on with the situation. "You were right, Hank. No one is answering the door so that I can see Detroit Blue."

"Yep, told you. Luther is going to be mad at you for awhile. Unless Kara's in that room, nothing's reliable." Hank paused while Connor knocked again. "Unless she happens to come back to the room, I doubt that's doing any good Connor."

"It's reminding him of the fact that I am here, and I do not plan on going away." Connor knocked again.

"You put yourself in a hard spot. Back in this hotel, a separate room from Kara and the rest of your family." Hank groaned and paced slightly. "I can't be here all day, Connor."

"Yeah. I know." Connor looked at the door. He knew that Kara would come home and she would answer that knock. He didn't have anything there to keep Hank happy to stay. "Could I bribe you with one of your unhealthy sandwiches that will slowly-"

Then the door opened and Alice popped her head in anxiously. "Connor."

Progress? "Alice."

"Detroit Blue isn't even here," Alice told him. "Kara got pushed into a meeting with Markus and the head androids. I would have opened the door sooner but Luther said I couldn't either. Neither could he. No one but Kara. So, I'm not supposed to see you, but I really wanted to. I'm worried."

"What does she mean?" Hank asked. "What did you sign, Connor?"

"A legit contract." Connor smiled, being nice and calm for her. Nice and calm. *Alice should be able to opt out as well as Luther. What are they trying to do now?* "Do you know which room specifically the meeting is in?"

Meeting: Downstairs

Kara held Detroit Blue. "This was settled." She looked toward Markus. "You promised this was settled."

Markus didn't answer out loud, and he only communicated to her. *I had to make a choice, Kara, and Connor has been a great dad. I wanted this fixed, for good, but trust me. Don't put a permanent mark on this.* "I know. Sorry it's taking so long to get everyone together. I don't know why Josh hasn't shown up yet."

"Meanwhile, it's getting late." Kara didn't know whether she should trust Markus, but at this rate, Connor wouldn't be able to see Detroit Blue tonight. He liked to see him everyday. It was supposed to be a 'without Connor' meeting too.

"Hey, Sorry I'm late." Josh finally came in. He took a seat.

"Great, we are all here." Markus straightened his papers. "We just want to make sure everything's okay so far with your time back. Have you had any technical problems? Manipulation side effects from what you did to yourself?"

This is not what Kara wanted to talk about. "I have been good. There have been no side effects. Can we get on with it?"

"Some information that wasn't known before is know now," Markus said. "We think there might be a need to update an edition."

Markus was an android, he'd never mess up that.

"Information that wasn't known?" What did they mean? *If you are on Connor's side, you have a hard way of showing it, Markus.*

This was supposed to be good. I don't think it will end that way now. "We'll have a different meeting with Connor about it later, but everyone needs to stay on the same page. Now, there is a clause about extended family. You wanted to make sure Alice could still be considered his daughter, so the definition was placed in there for it."

"Yes, and she has the option as does Luther to opt out of being under the rest of the rules of the contract." Connor made sure that clause was in there, so they couldn't use it against him later. Connor knew contracts, it was built into him. Nothing outrageous could have gone against him.

"Alice can opt-out and she should be able to see him just fine. I don't see what does not allow this?"

"She has to sign with every member of the family available," Josh said. His eyes went black as he displayed a transcript of a conversation. A private conversation.

The truth, a secret truth that changed everything. *How in the-?!-* "No, that's wrong, why did you do that?" *How wrong.*

Then, she watched Connor come into the room. The display of transcription immediately seen to him. *I'm sorry, Connor.*

Transcription:

Connor: He had none. He had a family but something happened to his boy years ago. It is the reason he became . . . It was easier to talk about it as a machine."

Kara: Of course it had been.

Connor: Is that even possible? They can be friends. Is that possible? Is it possible?

Kara: When I was first on the run with Alice, she didn't tell me she was an android. I was programmed to take care of human children. Not android children. She didn't want to be left behind. I never did that, and even before I knew, I was close to her. I think if I still hadn't known?

Connor: When I see him tomorrow, I think the status changed. I didn't. Why didn't? Thank you.

Alice: So then what is Hank? He's family?

Connor: Yes. Hank is my father. Thank you. He'd never accept it but thank you.

Kara: Accept or not. He already is. He already does. He doesn't have to think or accept it. Neither do you. You both just . . . are. That's family, Connor.

End Transcription

"Clever." Connor looked straight toward Markus. "The top head of the Detroit Police Station has access to those records, not you-

"-considering the situation, they donated-

"-It was none of your business! The station only reveals and looks for immediate wrongdoing when suspicious, and they don't get involved or share things with others that do not pertain!"

Connor smashed both hands down flat on the huge panel they were discussing at. "You should have created a contract strictly with the details and information you had, instead of entering into private details that you had no need to look into!"

"It was considered by the whole group," Markus addressed him. "To make certain you were confirmed to be safe with them. You were great the entire time, and no one can deny that."

He looked toward North. "No one." He looked back toward Connor. "It turned many skeptics in here around, and if it were viewed by more androids, things might go differently?"

"You had no right to do that," Kara countered Markus. "There was no need for that. You knew what we did already for status manipulation."

"We wanted to check on your safety," North said. "We wanted to make sure you were not malfunctioning then or now."

"It was private. There is a degree one should go with each other." Kara looked down at Detroit Blue. Cruel and unfair. "I was not happy to see what Kamski did, to make our future more human. We aren't human. But this? I am happy now." She stared at Markus. "Humans understand the concept of privacy."

"Be it as it may, there are two options," Markus said to them. He looked toward Connor who was staring him down like he was a dangerous deviant from before their days of freedom. Like he did with her a long time ago.

Kara couldn't blame him. She was probably doing the same thing. All of her processes were on DANGER.

"Stick with your contract, or make a new one," North said, "but Luther doesn't seem keen to sign a new one. Plus?" North looked toward Connor. "You are a genuinely good android. No one on this side thinks these contracts are even needed."

"However, the rest of the hotel does," Josh said. "If you shared how the reactions went

between you, without time loss, just like we saw?"

"Not one android would hold anything against you again, not even hidden prejudice," Markus said.

Connor planned on one day working it out with Luther. He did not see any reason when it all began, but once he saw the way things were processing, he had already been working on tactics to use to smoothly transition into a reasoning status.

Connor, I thought I knew everything. It was supposed to be a showcase to pull you out of this contract status to your family. I was unaware that happened. Markus was trying to reason with him privately. I didn't even know a human being family was possible. I'm sorry. The information is out though and the decisions of how to proceed are up to you.

So Markus knew it. Trying to be just and noble, but too short-sighted to think such a variable existed. That an android could be family to a human.

"We can renounce all of this," Kara said to him. "Is it a possibility, Connor?"

If Connor could move back over-

"Status is still lover," Josh said as Connor was working things out. "I am picking up lover still. You two either manipulated yourself and did cause malfunctions, or you do care for each other."

What? Connor looked toward Kara. Lover? Was his status damaged? He examined each person at the table. No, they were all moving down in status, that seemed about normal for ruining his life. Why was Kara still registering lover?

He would address that later once he finish processing all of the new information. Connor could connect with a call to the apartment head, probably pay extra again for alarming the owner (who may or may not have promised the apartment to another occupant, which would make the situation more stressful.) He could also simply apply for another new apartment and deal with living with Hank for awhile. With them. If he allowed it.

Kara deserved her brother though. He was a big part of her life and her family was important. But it was also clear who wouldn't stay hush about the loophole.

Connor hurt Luther, and now, Luther was hurting him back. Without looking like the culprit.

"Waiting for the addressal," Simon said, bringing up Josh's notification. "Are you a couple or did you touch something inside that you should not have that has destroyed your status imprinting?"

"You resetted so many times, it's not surprising," Josh said. "You two will need an absolute restart."

Did they? The status for liking the people at the table was moving down lower. Still seemed fine. But Kara? "Everything is working fine. Is your status going down for everyone in this room but me right now?"

"Yes," Kara admitted. "Your status is frozen."

"No, it's not." Connor went toward her with an intriguing look. "Hmph. Hm. Mm?"

"Does anybody understand the noises he is making?" North asked. "Connor," Markus asked.

"What are you doing?"

Connor addressed Markus but didn't take his eyes off Kara. "Running through several thousands of websites, files, and folders."

"Of what content?"

"Advice, solutions, tips and problem solving. Data not found. Running adjusted backup queries." Connor paused. "General recommendations found only." Connor looked away toward Markus. "May I call family?"

Markus nodded and Connor left the room.

Connor gently beat the wall with the side of his fist. "Hank." He had to make a decision now. A decision he would normally be able to make, but there was a variable he hadn't counted on, that was now clouding the decision.

Kara's happiness. The reason he even moved back with that terrible contract was her happiness. Her brother. She deserved her brother, it was only right. It seemed like it was fair. If they were playing on fair statistics, then Luther and the others technically cheated, and he would be justified to convince her to leave the hotel with him. Being separated from Luther, her Brother, wouldn't leave her happy.

And he wanted her happy, not because of beneficial status of Detroit Blue.

He wanted her happy. "Hank?"

"Hey, Connor, what's up? I'm still waiting in your blasted room but I gotta go home soon."

"Kara is my lover." Short. Prompt.

"Duh. I've been telling you that. So are we booking it?"

"No." Connor did not want to do this. "I want her to be happy beyond my happiness. Beyond a beneficial mutual association of taking care of Detroit Blue."

"So, what?" Hank asked. "You're going to stay and deal with the bullshit for longer? 'Cause I gotta go."

Hank didn't know how right he'd been. "Luther tricked me, Hank, and I can't tell you how.

But. I can't use your presence to see Detroit Blue."

"What the fuck? Are you kidding? They are bending you over the saddle and spanking your ass, Connor. You should grab Kara and Co and get out."

"Luther is her brother."

"So?"

"I want her to be happy." He didn't get it.

"Connor? What are you hiding already? Just come clean. Connor?"

Connor stopped transmission and went back to the meeting.

"Is leaving an option still?" Kara asked him as soon as he came. "This isn't fair on you, and I can't let it go this way."

Connor moved closer toward her. He looked toward his son. Registered, Son. He patted his head. *Out of all of the outcomes of you being created, I had not seen this coming. I predicted several opportunists of failure. Most failures being if she stayed, or when she had disappeared, and humans not understanding. Fear. Afterwards, I predicted fear of the process ending her life, a malfunction of the pregnancy that would end this. So many outcomes.* He turned his attention toward her. *I never predicted this in any of the equations.* "I am in a losing position, Kara, but you are in a winning one. You have your brother, your child, and me right next door. It all works out once you check the method. But, you are willing to try a different strategy with an undesirable outcome of losing your brother, just so that I can be closer without loss." He smiled at her and then leaned his head against hers. He clasped her free hand.

Within her eyes, he could see deeply. She was running calculations in her own self, her numbers and data showing so deep within those eyes. Reaching a similar conclusion.

He stepped back and took her hand, helping her up with Detroit Blue. Watching out for his son, he hugged her and then took the recommended broad action he was given.

He kissed her. Her response was surprised, but it didn't take long for her to start kissing him

back. He let go of the kiss. "I've been ignoring the actions and motives my emotions have been wanting me to take because I thought it was false."

"But? When?" Kara hugged him back, further evidence that he did not need, but was welcoming.

"What's going on?" Markus asked. "You two?"

How and when? How did she miss it? When had their status not been manipulated and became . . . real? *I am his lover*. There was no fixing it, there was nothing to fix. Was it through messing with manipulation? During the manipulation? It had to be during. But.

"It's okay. Your secret is safe," Chloe assured her. "I understand though. I hope you pull through. I will help however I can. Especially since I will be here now. Don't worry about friendship with me at this point. Your own preservation instincts for your child are up high. One day, we will reach that point."

Data Memory Evidence Analysis: Slow Status Change Due to Pregnancy.

"Kara," Hank called to her. "Take the little girl and move away." Hank had his gun trained on the side of Chloe now.

Alice. If Kara moved Alice, Hank would take the shot.

"You aren't going to convince Kara to go against her family," Luther warned Connor.

"Just leave us alone. We only want to go home."

"Do you have a clear shot, Hank?" Connor asked.

"To incapacitate her, yeah."

"Good. Take the shot."

Data Memory Evidence Analysis: Subject convinced to go against her family.

"That's not RK programming at all," Connor said to her. "I just yanked you from your place of comfort and you are comforting me instead. I'm not used to that." He was looking around her.

Data Memory Evidence Analysis: Setting migration placed second hand to comfort second subject.

"She is going to tell the world that she is staying with someone who attempted to destroy her and the little android, Markus! That took out her sister. That probed her before death. We can't just-

"It's her decision," Markus said to North. "Androids have free will. She is doing what she wants. I can't stop her."

"You reach out to us however you want, when you change.

Data Memory Evidence Analysis: Combination evidence for group 3.

Kara ended up combining several instances of potential evidence, but couldn't pinpoint when it happened. Just that? It happened. Somewhere along the way.

Still in Connor's grip, he gently started to scoot her from the room.

"This meeting isn't over," Markus said. "Where are you going?"

"To explore possibilities is wording I would use to be polite for it," Connor said. "I need to discuss things privately with Kara."

Luther's Real Problem (Final)

"Do you think they are wondering where we went to by now?" Kara asked from beside Connor in his bed. "What do we do, now?"

"Oh, there are a variety of different-"

"I mean about this." She smiled and covered his busying thoughts. "Connor? We should move away."

"If we ignore the situation, you lose your brother, and that will make you unhappy. I can't stand for you to be unhappy. A side affect of love."

"If we don't move away, you lose Hank, and that will make you unhappy. I don't want that for you either."

"I already know what I need to do. There is only one solution. I have to talk to Luther," Connor decided.

"I should talk to him," Kara said as she curled up against his form tighter. "You both will hurt each other emotionally in the same room right now."

"It's true, we will, but you should have a chance to have your brother."

"Hank doesn't deserve to have himself dragged through this. He's not steady," Kara reminded him. "This could end bad."

"I am never averse to taking risks," Connor reminded her as he gave her a final kiss. "This will be over soon. Recharge. Detroit Blue will be with you. I will call up North to take Alice out of Luther's room, Markus will stay and then we can begin discussion."

North took Alice out of the room. Connor stepped in and closed the door with Markus. Since they had watched all details, they all knew Connor wasn't a threat. If he did something wrong, they would deal with him. In the meantime, it was time to do this. Past time to do this. It was time to bring Luther back to their family. "Luther."

Luther didn't look at him. "Markus? Why did North take Alice away?"

"We are going to be having a discussion that doesn't involve other androids," Connor said.

Markus went to a corner and put himself into recharge.

"The contract said nothing about another not being in recharge while they were in the room with family," Connor pointed out. "He can't hear, speak, communicate or transcript. It's really just you and me. Luther."

Luther didn't look at him.

"I know that you are the one that found that loophole and wouldn't let it go. I know Markus was only trying to help, but when you saw it, you knew what to do with it."

"I don't know what you are talking about, RK800." Luther still didn't look at him. "I am doing what I can to help Kara."

Lies to try and save face with Kara. "Plausible deniability. I have to give you credit where it's due, Luther. It's the perfect revenge against me for killing Chloe."

"I don't know what you are talking about." Luther's voice was tenser though.

"Don't lie!" It was time to start turning up the heat. "Markus watched it with the others, and as soon as you saw what Kara revealed about Hank, you knew you had a grip on the future.

My future. To make me suffer."

Luther didn't respond. "Why would I choose to make anyone suffer? It would only drive them

away."

"You would like for her to believe that. You do not want to be brother to me, nor do you want Alice to be daughter. You cannot change anything with Detroit Blue, but you knew that extending family would put my job and Hank in jeopardy."

"I don't know what you mean. It's part of the rules."

"Hank is my father, by our standards. By our status. So, you make a case that Hank is also involved in this contract. That Hank is 'family', so I shouldn't be able to see him either without someone present in the room unless he signs the opt-out."

"Then make him sign the opt-out?" Luther suggested. "Wouldn't that solve your little tinker problem?"

"Then I would have to tell him," Connor said. "In just a short time, the truth would break out, and it would make his life miserable. He'd be on a bad road, getting teased, and just a short-it's not an option."

"Does it matter?" Luther pointed out. "All 'family' must be present at the signing. When Alice opts-out, he would have to be there."

"Yes. I know that too. The only way to proceed and leave Hank alone is to leave Detroit Blue behind here and move out. It is after all, my choice. Kara would see that. I can see my son when Kara brings him from the hotel. Or, I can just never see Alice or you or Hank again alone, only my son and Kara. Meaning, if Kara is gone, I can forget seeing anyone."

"Kara is home many times," Luther said, still keeping a straight face.

"Oh but I'm sure eventually my partner Hank would wonder why I'm not showing up for work. Why I won't talk face to face out of public. Why I can't figure out a way to see Alice. He knows I'd be doing something about it."

"He is perceptive, he is a detective," Luther said. "I still have nothing to do with that. It is just the way everything went."

Connor knew he wouldn't, but Luther was just about to break soon. "Things changed, Luther. I'm her lover."

"That was manipulation," Luther pointed out.

"No, not anymore. She is willing to move out as soon as possible with me, just so I don't have to lose Hank or Alice."

"What?" He couldn't believe it. "You lie. This is home. This place is the best for her, she would choose here. She has me and Alice here, her son, and you? You would be a question mark, but she would still have access to see you."

"I agree, she wins everything just by staying here," Connor said. "Except I already told you. It's not a lie. She is ready to move out. She doesn't do what's best for her. She cares about my happiness too." Did he see it yet? "I would be packing and getting out with her right now, if I didn't also care that she was losing her brother. That's because I want her to be happy too."

Luther was speechless.

"You can't deny it, Luther," Connor finally said over the silence.

"She has everything here, and if you don't stay, then that is up to you. It is perfect for her, she has everything." Luther didn't want to believe it. He shook his head. "It's not true."

"It is." Connor extended his hand toward him. "We are brothers, Luther."

"No!" Luther took a step backward. "It's not true, never! You killed Chloe, leaving her in a pool of cold blue blood while you probed her!"

"Yes, I did." Connor wouldn't deny it. "To save Kara, Alice, and the unborn I didn't even know was mine. You looked at those transcripts with Markus, I know you did. Every single one of them was convinced that I was a safe and kind android. You can't deny that. I never put your sister into any harm that she herself said no to."

"You just made her malfunction." Luther was still denying the truth. "She is just broken and so are you. You messed with your status, and you made her mess with hers."

"She went willingly with the plan. I didn't force anything. You saw that too," Connor said.

"My status moves with everyone else, except her. Hers does too. Several calculations were ran, with both of us involved in it. There isn't a doubt. I am her lover. I am part of this family."

"So she is just willing to run away with you?" Luther sunk against the wall. "Kara." He shook his head. "This whole hotel, even it was just a last stand. This isn't home. Canada is home. Rose and her son is home. This is not home." He slumped further down. "Alice and Kara. With you, ever since you were discovered to be the father, I never got close to convincing her to go back. As soon as she knew. It was cut off forever. Only the hotel so you could keep working soundly here and see him. She's too caring."

Wait.

Wait? *My calculations have been wrong. This isn't about Chloe.* He knew. He saw. He must have reasoned it out with Kara, the time she was gone, seen the private videos the others had, and accepted the truth. It might have still stung, but ultimately, this was not about Chloe.

Luther wasn't taking Hank away to punish him for Chloe's death.

He was taking Hank away for taking the concept of home away.

He knew. He'd seen it, somehow, their closeness. What she had done for him. Luther knew . . .

. "You are truly her brother. You probably knew before anyone else."

Luther finally looked toward him. "Knew what?"

"This isn't about Chloe, this is about me taking your family away."

Yep. Luther gave him an expression that clearly spelled out Connor was right. "Humans grow up. Gain brothers and sisters. Then, then marry. Go and leave them all.

Connor felt himself relax. "Androids aren't human. Kamski wanted to create what Kara says is Humanity 2.0. but we aren't. There are no rules to how we form or bond." He stretched out his hand. Connor knew what it was like to not have family. He would never let another android feel that. "You did not lose anyone. You've only gained a brother."

Luther looked at him, perplexed. "Me?"

"What kind of work are you built for, Luther, and/or what have you always wanted to do?"

Connor asked. "I work with the Police Department. Kara is working on college. What would you like to do?"

"I like . . . taking care of people," Luther said. "I am built strong, but I just want to take care of people."

"Then that is a good place to start."

"For what?" Luther asked.

"For work, because if I am going to have something that comfortably fits Kara, Alice, Detroit Blue, Me, You and occasionally Hank on bad nights, I can't be the only one to get a job."

Luther was quiet. Connor let that quiet seep in for a few more minutes before continuing.

"We do have to start out here for a little while, so it's imperative we make another contract.

I'm not exposing Hank's status to any other androids. He's a sensitive human, and if people start treating him bad, I don't know what would happen."

"If you shared it all, it would exonerate you. You will still deal with contracts and looks from those who still think you did wrong, to make sure he is okay." For the first time, Luther smiled at him. "I will gladly make a second contract for your friend."

Connor smiled back. "So you aren't going to play ignore with me at the door?"

"As far as I am concerned? You can leave it open," Luther agreed.

"I wouldn't go that far," Connor reminded him. "Kara is in my room right now and is

unsightly. We are lovers. There are activities associated with those terms that-"
"I get it." Luther held his hand up, signaling for him to stop. Still with a smile. "I am still her brother. I don't want to hear that. I am sorry to you and Kara for Chloe almost decommissioning her and Alice. I was neglectful to my family."
"I know the feelings you felt." Connor gave him a hand up. "Apology is not needed. Can we go make this new contract now?"
"Yes. Let's go, Connor."

"We could just change this part to twelve and under for the rules," Markus agreed. "I think most would agree it's safe." He looked from Kara to Connor to Luther. "Are you all sure about this? The stigma that Connor has dealt with since day one. It would be gone."
"We are sure," Luther spoke up. "He will not drag his father into this. This is fair."
"I wish we could get rid of it altogether now." North looked at Markus. "Isn't Luther being willing to make bygones enough?"
"There are a lot of androids that are still protesting this itself," Markus warned her. "Things could get dicey if we get rid of it. Luther's conviction or not."
"Keep it," Connor insisted as he took Kara's hand in his. "We will only be here for so long anyhow. Kara isn't the type to want to stay in a hotel all the time and she is studying for college. Mothering while using the inferior educational system limit shouldn't be tough for even the weakest android. I never stay for long, I prefer the outside world. Luther is going to be studying to become a nurse while looking for helpful jobs outside."
Markus only smiled. "Whatever makes an android happy. You're welcome to stay as long as you need to. If you have any advice to share, Kara, that would be helpful too. We'll be beginning our very first volunteers."
"Just don't do too much at once," Connor reminded him. "Humans are animals. Similar to animals. They are skittish and will stampede if scared. You might consider having them go to the police station toward the ending too. Humans stop caring about what they see everyday if there's nothing to it."
"Eesh." North didn't like that. "It'll be considered."
"Anyone who tries is putting themselves on the line, I'm the only one who has done this."
Kara smiled at North. "Being observed by humans isn't the worst part. Remember to tell them that too."
"Done."

"Who wants to see Uncle Luther?" Luther watched as Detroit Blue hobbled over to him. Alice was right beside him. Kara was studying for a project. Connor was working on a case. Was.
"You are getting mobile." Connor stopped to see Detroit Blue. "I predict within six months you will be walking."
"Walking," Detroit Blue echoed.
"How long until he can really talk and not just echo?" Alice asked her Dad.
"Echo," Detroit Blue said.
"I have no idea," Connor admitted. He looked toward his room. Right now the door was open

and Hank had arrived. "Hello, Hank."

"Yeah, not staying long," Hank warned him, "I'm heading down soon for a beer."

"Beer," Detroit Blue said.

"The fuck?" Hank asked.

"Fuck," Detroit Blue said.

"Uh, Hank?" Connor wasn't quick enough as Kara got up from her studies.

"Will you please not cuss in front of him?" Kara said. "He is sensitive right now, his language skills are being learned."

"Learned," Detroit Blue said as he sat himself up.

"Doesn't sound like it," Hank complained, "he sounds like an echo."

"Echo," Detroit Blue said.

"He is learning to say what people say at the end of a sentence," Luther helped Hank.

"Sounds annoying," Hank complained.

"Annoying," Detroit Blue said.

"Yeah, he's definitely your son, Connor," Hank said. "Make sure you wrap it up so you don't get another one of those while it's small."

"Small," Detroit Blue said.

"You are small," Alice said toward him. "Sister, Big. You, Small."

"Small," Detroit Blue repeated.

"You've already got a hell of a housing problem, better not add to it," Hank warned him.

"Oh, I can't," Connor reminded him. "As long as there is no B-bol then no baby android can be created through any activities that are sexual."

"Sexual," Detroit Blue repeated as he finally made it to Luther.

"Connor," Kara's warning voice again.

"Connnorrrr," Detroit said holding it out as long as his mom.

"I. I have a different kind of family," Luther said, noticing the shift in dynamics.

"Family," Detroit Blue said.

Luther picked him up, and handed him to his daddy. "I like my different family."

"Yes. Change can be beneficial." Connor held his son close. "My."

"My."

"Name."

"Name."

"Is."

"Is."

"Detroit."

"Detroit."

"Aw, screw it, I'm out and gettin a beer."

"Beer."

Connor looked toward Kara, who this time, only smirked.

There family was different. It consisted of an android detective, a daughter android made to get sick and be perfect, a large android brother that was scary but only wanted to help people, a lover who did everything she could for those she loved, and a father that was still trying to find his own way in life.

And also cussed a lot.

It was a strange family. A strange big family.

But it was his family, and he'd never change a thing about it.

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