

Chapter One

Port Townsend, Washington

May 8, 2014

"Where the hell is my tennis racket?" Scotty Jeppesen hollered as he raced around the cluttered house, looking everywhere. "I left it right here by the front door. I'm going to be late for practice."

A tall girl wearing only an oversized t-shirt walked sleepily out of the end bedroom, heading sleepily for the bathroom. She paused in the dim hallway, her long legs looking fantastically toned, a maze of tangled, blonde hair covering her face. Large blue eyes briefly appeared beneath the hair, glittering in the dim hallway as if she was looking into sunshine. She stared off into space, turning her head from left to right, then downward.

"Under the couch down in the basement, dummy," she said in a sleepy voice.

"Thanks, sis," Scotty shouted back as he dashed down the stairs and dove under the rec room couch to retrieve his racket. He then pounded out the front door, closing it with a bang behind him.

The girl paused at the door of the bathroom, eyes flashing again. She didn't bother knocking. "I'm going to be late, Adam. Hurry up."

Scotty's twin, Adam, opened the door, toothbrush still in his mouth, to look at his adopted sister.

"Jesus, what happened to you, Kara?" Her face was puffy, one eye swollen slightly, her usually perfect hair a tangled mess.

"Kal decided we should spar at full power. No holds barred."

"And he kicked your ass! Cool."

"I'll kick yours if you don't hurry. I gotta get my shower and put on some makeup today to cover this up."

He opened the door wider. "Go ahead. I'm almost done. I won't look."

"In your dreams. Out!" She gave him a shove that propelled him down the hallway and slammed the bathroom door behind him.

Adam picked himself back up. "You know, just because you claim to be from Iceland," he shouted back at her, "you don't have to pretend you're the Ice Queen all the time."

Kara was famous for being gorgeous and tall and ridiculously fit, but she was also infamous for her icy cool, especially toward the jocks and older guys who constantly tried to hit on her. It was the Jeppesen family secret, along with a handful of her friends, that Kara had never set foot in Iceland. She came from an even more distant shore.

"Hey, you can look under our clothes with those x-ray eyes and see us walking around naked, but we can't look at you?" Adam shouted back, still irritated.

"I don't look," she said from behind the bath room door. "I can only handle so much ugliness at one time."

"Ha, ha," Adam replied as he paused in his bedroom to toss his toothbrush on his desk and stuff his books and gear into his school bag. He quickly brushed his hair and then headed to the kitchen to grab a bite of breakfast before school.

The sliding wall of the Jeppesen's kitchen had been opened to merge the inner space with their covered patio, allowing them to enjoy the unusually mild Spring. Global Warming had been good to the Pacific Northwest, warming and drying its infamously wet climate.

His mother, Abigail, was reading email on her iPad. His dad, John, had his head in the local newspaper.

"So, Kara looks a bit beat up this morning," Adam said. "Did you guys see her come in last night?"

"Beat up? Impossible," his dad said without looking up. "The kid's invulnerable. I read the report on her after S.T.A.R buried her in that hole with that nuke. The only damage was a great sun tan."

"Well, you'll see when she comes out. Said something about sparring with the big guy."

Abigail looked up. "Yes, she mentioned something about that last week. How he's trying to train her to fight someone of her own power. Not that she's likely to ever meet anyone who can make that claim."

“What about Doomsday?” Adam replied. “He’s stronger than Superman, more or less. And what about Darkseid’s Furies? Kara said some of those monsters have Kryptonian DNA mixed in.”

“Kal knows how to handle Doomsday now,” his mom replied. “I presume he’s told Kara.”

Abigail was a researcher at S.T.A.R labs who specialized in analyzing the limits of superhuman powers, focusing on potential villains. “And Darkseid has never synthesized pure Kryptonian DNA,” she added. “We don’t think its possible. So the Furies will always be second-rate.”

“But Kal insists I will someday,” a female voice replied. “Meet someone stronger than me.”

They all looked up to see the girl who’d become such a part of their family over the last two and a half years. Kara stood as tall as the twin boys, who were the same age as her. She was dressed this morning in a pink zip-up Abercrombe sweat shirt and a pair of tight jeans, leaving a broad swath of perfectly-toned midriff bare. A simple white bead choker was her only jewelry.

Abigail looked at her closely. “Adam said you had a puffy eye. Looks normal to me.”

“I healed it after I saw how bad it looked. Makeup wasn’t going to cut it.”

“Ahh, I saw you less than ten minutes ago,” Adam said. “Was puffy then.”

“Then is then. Now is now.” She shrugged, saying, “Suns up.” As if that explained everything.

Between her perfectly white teeth, intensely blue eyes, golden blonde hair and all that perfectly tanned skin, Kara was a stunner. She looked at Adam and smiled. “See, I even have all my teeth.”



“Beating up a sixteen year old girl? Doesn’t sound like Kal El to me,” John added as he looked up at his recently adopted daughter. His colleagues at S.T.A.R had recently engineered a car crash in Iceland that supposedly killed her parents. Her “grandparents” had signed off on the adoption papers, giving Jeppesen’s legal custody. The only thing that wasn’t fiction was that her real parents were dead. Not in a car crash, but in the explosion of the planet Krypton.

“He wanted to make it real,” Kara said offhandedly as she put a piece of

multigrain bread in the toaster and opened the fridge to find the butter and strawberry jam. "He hit me as hard as he could. I was supposed to just stand there so I'd know what it felt like. It hurt like hell, but I'm OK now. Just needed some morning sunshine."

Like her cousin, Kal El, she drew her powers from the massive energies of Earth's yellow sun. She could quickly heal any injury when she stood in sunlight.

"Since when does a bare tummy meet the dress code at school?" Abigail said pointedly, looking down at Kara's outfit.

"It's a protest thing. We're trying to change the dress code."

"I thought we agreed you weren't going to draw any more attention to yourself than necessary," Abigail replied.

"Lots of girls are dressing this way today. We figure they can't suspend us all. Especially given we've given a heads-up about the protest to a local reporter."

John looked up from his paper to inspect his adopted daughter. "If it gets to that, the newspaper might publish a picture. Or some blogger. Given the way you look, you'll be the one they take the picture of."

Kara pulled the hot piece of toast out of the toaster and buttered it with her finger, then spread jam the same way. She licked her finger clean. "I can't help it if I'm photogenic. Besides, nobody has any pics of me from my outings. Nothing to compare to."

She'd been involved in a variety of rescues, preventing huge environmental disasters, starting with the Atco Arctic two years ago. Her so-called "outings." At Kal's insistence, she only flew at night or during extreme weather.

"Still, the less your pictures are out there, the better," John replied.

"Well, today, I've gotta help the other girls. We all need to work together to change those silly rules. I'll try to stay out of any pics. I'll zap a camera with some x-rays if I have to."

Kara was finishing the 11th grade at Port Townsend High, and she'd thrown herself into the insanity of teenage life as thoroughly as any human girl. Her transformation, from an angry fourteen-year-old Kryptonian girl with an accent and a chip on her shoulder who saw Earth as a backward planet, to this confident and

poised sixteen-year-old who embraced everything the 21st century had to offer, still amazed her parents.

The Jeppesen's had decided early on to give her advice, whether Kara wanted it or not, but to also respect her choices. It was vital that she learn to be more responsible than other kids her age. She had the power within her slender body to wipe out any Army. She would someday stand beside her cousin, carrying a very heavy burden on her shoulders.

"Sounds like I'm going to be writing a note to the principal tomorrow," Abigail sighed. "Promising you'll dress appropriately from now on."

Kara leaned over her adoptive mom to give her a kiss on the cheek. "Only if we lose. Wish us luck."

She turned to grab Adam's sleeve as she pulled him toward the door. "Come on, bro. If we run, we'll make the bell with two and half seconds to spare."

Kara was still munching on her toast as she dashed out the door with Adam in fast pursuit, his half-eaten yoghurt cup flying into the air. Adam was on the football team, a wide receiver, and he'd run the 440 in track this Spring. But despite being in superb shape, he already knew he'd be gasping for air when he got to school. Kara always challenged him to run a little faster than he thought he could, which is why he was a star athlete.

She, of course, wouldn't even notice the minor exertion from sprinting a mere eight blocks. Adam had once clocked her running at Mach 2, her sneakers melting and catching fire, during a nighttime sprint across a salt flat in Utah.

Which was nothing compared to how fast she could fly.