

## **Sunshine Tomorrow**

### **Part Two**

#### **A Little Flying**

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### **Chapter One**

#### **Port Townsend, Washington**

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"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 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 family 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 play the Ice Queen all the time.”

Kara was famous at their high school 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 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 since 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 nearly a mile. Adam had once clocked her running at Mach 2, her sneakers melting and catching fire during a nighttime dash across a salt flat in Utah.

Which was nothing compared to how fast she could fly.

## **Chapter Two**

## **Port Townsend High School**

Jason Jones watched as Kara Arnaskynor raced up the long flight of stairs toward the front door, her long, blonde hair blowing in the wind. Actually, it was Kara Jeppesen now, he reminded himself. The Jeppessen's had adopted her after the tragic death of her parents.

Her new brother, Adam, huffed and puffed his way behind her, finally staggering at the top of the stairs to lean over and rest his hands on his knees as he tried to regain his breath. Kara wasn't even breathing hard as she took his arm and pulled him back to his feet and through the front door before the first bell rang.

Adam was a hell of a runner, winning State in the 400 meter dash this Spring while clocking in the high 48's — good enough to draw the interest of the Olympic Selection Committee. The 400 meter dash was considered by many the most difficult running event in all of track and field, yet his sister had just run his legs off without seemingly working at it. It made no sense, especially given that she didn't go out for any sports.

Not for lack of recruitment. Everyone who coached a girl's sport had tried to get Kara on their team, but she always remained aloof, noncommittal. Initially, people had chalked that up to her unfamiliarity with American customs and her strong accent — she'd come here as an exchange student from Reykjavik, which was Seattle's sister city — but she'd been here for two years now and talked and otherwise acted like a native Seattleite.

Kara had a couple of close girlfriends, Alicia McCartney and Skylar Dawson. Alicia was sexy and fun, but also the only openly gay girl in the school, and Skylar was a science geek, intense and driven. She and Kara had worked together to win top honors at the last Science Fair.

It was Alicia who was the paradox. She was a flaming redhead with a hot body that featured strongly in a lot of guy's wet dreams. She'd flirt outrageously with guys, and then when they were falling all over her, she reminded them she was gay and they could never have her. Which made her the worst kind of tease.

She was rumored to take the ferry over to Seattle to hang out with older friends she had there. Supposedly she had a girlfriend at the University of Washington.

Given that Kara and Alicia and Skylar were an unbreakable trio, with Kara and

Skylar sometimes going along on Alicia's "field trips" to Seattle, the rumor-mill said they were all lesbians. Kara hadn't replied to the pointed questions or insinuations one way or the other. The only thing anyone knew was that she didn't date any guys in their school.

Jason was determined to learn the truth, so much so that he'd signed up to be one of their school's representatives on the regional SoundKeepers OverWatch group after Kara joined. SoundKeepers was a very active environmental group that was infamous for their lawsuits of shipyards and fishing operations. It was whispered that some of its members had close links with the Salish Action Group, a radical environmental group that interfered with fishing and oil refinery operations in the Salish Sea, the renamed region that included the Puget Sound and the waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Strait of Georgia in British Columbia.

OverWatch planned to join an environmental rally in Victoria, BC on Saturday, where they were going to help demand that the provincial government establish stricter controls on whale-watching tourism operators. SoundKeepers wanted the guidelines changed to keep tour boats further away from the local resident Orcas to reduce stress on the animals.

He and Kara were the only reps going from the Olympic Peninsula. Everyone else was from Seattle, and they were all taking the Victoria Clipper up from Seattle. Given Port Townsend was halfway to Victoria, Jason offered to take Kara there in his dad's boat, an old Krogen trawler yacht named *WindSong*. It would just be the two of them, puttering along at 7 knots, which meant they'd have to stay overnight in Victoria on the boat.

She'd said yes! He was really looking forward to knowing more about Kara Arnaskynor Jeppesen by the time they returned.

He turned away from the school window as he tried to calm his racing thoughts. Spending two days with Kara in a small boat was either going to be thrilling or miserable. He pushed any negative thoughts away as he headed for his Calculus final exam. Think positive was his motto.

Summer vacation was nearly here, and if his hopes and dreams were realized, it would be a summer spent with Kara cruising at his side. Given his dad was working in South America for the summer, *WindSong* was going to be his boat all summer long.

## Chapter Three

### Metropolis

The TV camera turned to take in two women as they stood on a high balcony. Sunny Metropolis Bay was highlighted behind them. One woman was an extremely tall redhead, her wavy hair cascading below the middle of her back. The other was the diminutive blonde interviewer from Fox News. Despite being very lean, the redhead's large, firm breasts looked as if they were trying to tear their way out of her green dress. Her shoulders, back and arms were tanned and bare, with the ripple of tight muscles very visible.

"This is Gretchen Jones of Fox News. Today we have a most unique guest — Caitlan Fairchild, a former member of the Gen13 team, and best known today for being Superman's supergirlfriend. Welcome Caitlan."

The camera zoomed in on Caitlan's beautiful face to see her green eyes flashing angrily in response to Gretchen's opening line.

"Actually, Gretchen, I would hope your viewers are more familiar with my recent work with the JSA. We've saved thousands of lives in the past few months, especially during the relief effort after the Peruvian earthquake. Just as importantly, we've been handling the new kind of criminals that are on our streets today. Mutants who are too tough for the cops to safely handle."

"Of course," Gretchen smiled, "but I was referring to the buzz that's on everyone's minds after we saw you and the Man of Steel enjoying the sun down in Mexico last week. Au naturale, I might add."

Caitlan glared at her. "Those shots were taken with a stabilized mega-telephoto from a Lear Jet aircraft flying overhead at 50,000 feet. During our supposedly very private getaway. There should be a bounty on paparazzi."

Gretchen's fixed smile barely wavered. Caitlan was proving to be as difficult an interview subject as usual.

"Actually, our viewers are most interested in what its like spending so much time so close to Superman. Is he the same gentleman in private as he is in public? A man without faults?"

"Without faults?" Caitlan laughed. "For Mercy's sake, Gretchen, he's not God. He's a man. Just a very special one."

"That's not how many of us see him."

"Then you are delusional. He grew up on Earth. He thinks and feels like the rest of us. Trust me, he has his faults."

"That's not what the Mutant Brotherhood is claiming. They issued a statement only yesterday that said that all of you who are genetically superior are the first wave of a new kind of humanity. One that will wipe out we lesser beings."

Caitlan laughed. "That's just mutant propaganda, Gretchen. Political bullshit at its best, either that or more of the usual Murdock paranoia you see on Fox. Being stronger and having superhuman powers is simply an extension of the same differences that have always existed among people. A skinny little thing like you could hardly expect to match blows with a professional boxer. Nor could you defeat some hulking bodybuilder at arm wrestling. But you and that boxer or bodybuilder are all human. You all have the same rights. The same expectation of being respected."

"With all due respect, Miss Fairchild, but being bulletproof and flying in space to distant worlds and being strong enough to lift buildings is more than merely extending the boundaries," Gretchen replied. "Some people truly believe Superman is a god. That he completely transcends what it means to be human."

"Transcends? Perhaps, but only in a purely physical way."

"Which opens the question of what it's really like to have a god for a boyfriend?"

Caitlan's fists closed as Gretchen cut her off. Powerful muscles bunched across her arms. "The only people who buy into that crap have a bad case of the God gene, Gretchen. You know, the willingness to worship anyone you feel is superior? Thankfully, most people either lack that gene, or are sensible enough to use their brains instead. Humans have evolved from the primitive days when it was believed that everything good or bad that happened to them was the result of the gods."

Gretchen frowned. She needed fluffy sound bites for the next news update, not discussions of mythology or theology. Something titillating about the man nearly every woman dreamed about. A man of godlike-perfection with a steel-hard body which was presumably super in the most manly of ways. He was, after all, the focus



of a billion feverish dreams for both straight women and gay men.

"Well, you two were certainly photogenic on that beach," Gretchen replied. "Those Mexican pictures, censored of course, are the top hits on our web site this week."

"So what? You've discovered that we're both anatomically correct and that most things scale with size?" Caitlan turned slightly to the side as she took a deep breath, her chest rising dramatically. "Brilliant discovery."

"You both are toned and muscular beyond the boundaries of anyone merely human. Muscular in every way, I presume," Gretchen asked daringly.

"Are you trying to ask if his dick is as big as your feverish imagination?" Caitlan asked bluntly.

Gretchen cursed and gave the cut sign to her cameraman. This interview wasn't working at all. Fox would never air this kind of talk.

"Look, Miss Fairchild, people are really interested in you guys," Gretchen said after the camera stopped recording. "You're bigger than life. So is he. They imagine things. You don't have to be a bitch about it."

Caitlan closed her eyes for a long moment, her fists still clenched, trying to restrain herself. She finally said: "I want to make it very clear that you guys were invading our privacy in Mexico. I resent that, and so does Kal El. If you want to interview me, then I'm going to say that on the air. Right up front. After that, you can ask your silly questions. But not that one. Deal?"

Gretchen sighed. Anything to get some air time. "OK... but privately?"

Caitlan sighed. "He's a super man. Probably more so than you can imagine."

Gretchen smiled. She'd find a way to use that. She turned to signal her cameraman to continue, only to see Caitlan tilt her head as she looked off into the distance. She was reminded that all members of the JSA carried small radio transceivers in their ear canals. They were constantly in touch with their headquarters.

Caitlan's green eyes returned to briefly focus on Gretchen's. "Sorry. Raincheck time. I got a building collapse at 50<sup>th</sup> and Spring Street to deal with."

Gretchen opened her mouth to ask Caitlan to return when she was done, but the tall red-head was already gone.

Drivers in the streets slammed on their brakes as they stared dumbfounded out their windshields as the tall red-head ran down the middle of the street, leaping hundreds of feet with every stride. She soared effortlessly over cars and trucks and even power lines and traffic lights.

People who watched from the sidewalk saw only a blur, for Caitlan's speed was faster than the flicker rate of their eyes could resolve. Dogs barked and cats hissed as their faster eyes perceived the tall woman racing by.

She covered thirty blocks away in less than a minute, skidding to a stop in the middle of a gaggle of cops and construction workers. Her wake and the cloud of debris it carried arrived a moment later to nearly blow the men off their feet.

"What's the situation?" Caitlan asked the cops, breathing deeply from her sprint.

Captain Brett Sondestag blinked away the dust in his eyes to stare up at the tall woman, her exotic-looking outfit frayed from her high-speed run. She was breathing heavily. He struggled not to stare at the way the curving underside of one oversized boob was visible through a tear in her dress. The rest of that perfect breast was trying to tear its way free on each deep breath. He looked down, only to see that her shoes were smoking, her high heels long gone. He swallowed hard as he turned to wave toward a building under constructions.

"External framing collapsed while we were pouring concrete. We got three men under that corner of the building. The concrete retaining wall is holding it for now, but we don't have a way to cut through the concrete to get to them without dropping what's left of the building on them."

Caitlan looked up at the unfinished framework of the eight story building. It was tilting slightly to the right, with one corner resting on a concrete wall about ten feet high. The wall had large cracks running vertically down it.

"Get everyone back in case the rest of the building comes down. I'll get your men out. Somehow."

Another man spoke up. "Miss Fairchild, I'm Peter Buddington, the owner of the

building. I've called for a crane — but its about an hour away. In the meantime, we've been setting up jacks and we've got a couple of front-end loaders bringing these air bags we can use..."

Caitlan shook her head to cut him off. "That junk will just be in my way. After I get your men out, then you can deal with what's left of the building."

"What's left of it? I hope you aren't planning on damaging it worse than it already is?"

Caitlan gave him a disgusted look. "You should be more worried about your trapped men, not your damn building."

She spun around to leap over several mounds of debris to approach the badly cracked retaining wall.

Buddington turned to Captain Sondestag. "As the ranking police officer on scene, you're responsible for both their lives and my property, Captain. If she damages my building..."

"Sergeant Adams," Sondestag interrupted, speaking to the officer on his right, "get this asshole out of here before I punch him out."

Turning, Sondestag ignored the danger of falling debris as he jogged after Caitlan. He caught up to her near the wall. She crossed her arms behind her back and stretched. He couldn't help but stare at the powerful muscles working across her back and shoulders. He'd never seen a woman with a fraction of her definition.

He tore his eyes from her. "I brought a bore scope. We should figure out where everyone is before you start moving things."

Caitlan turned to smile at him. "Thank you for the offer, Captain. But you really should stay back. I can't guarantee your safety if things start falling."

"We've got men to save."

"Nice to know that at least one of you guys have your priorities straight. Why don't you run the fiber-optic through that crack over there. That looks like the best place to try to get the men out."

He turned on the light and snaked the tube into the crack. "I see a lot of rebar exposed. The crack goes all the way through..." He paused as someone grabbed

the end of the tube and pulled. "OK...got one of the men right here on the other side of the wall."

He leaned closer and shouted into the crack. "Are you men all in one place?"

Caitlan heard the faint reply. *"Three of us. Jimmie is further to the right, to the east, pinned under a beam. He's alive, but I don't know for how long."*

"Tell the men to plaster themselves against the outside wall of the building," Caitlan instructed, "but as far from this crack as they can. "I'm going to try and widen it. If the wall begins to collapse while I do that, this is where its going to settle."

Sondestag shouted into the crack to pass on her instructions.

Caitlan turned to look meet Sondestag's eyes. "I need you to keep an eye on the rest of the retaining wall, Captain. Let me know if the other cracks appear to be growing much larger. I'm going to try and widen this one."

She sat down on the broken concrete, flicking what was left of her shoes away with one fingers. She slipped her toes as far as she could into the three-inch wide crack, then working her fingers into the crack. She looked very awkward sitting there with her hands and feet overlapping.

"That wall is a least four feet thick and full of rebar," Sondestag said.

"Going to take a little muscle then," Caitlan replied as she clenched her teeth and began to pull. "Good thing I've got some."

Powerful muscles flexed to reshape her arms and back, her calves turning to rippling steel as she extended her toes. She leaned her head back, red hair spilling on the dusty ground as she struggled to widen the crack. The wall gave off a deep groan that was accompanied by the high-pitched keen of tortured rebar steel. She lifted her butt from the ground as she strained.

Slowly, accompanied by a cacophony of crunching sounds, the crack began to widen.

The Captain scanned along the wall. "Wait! Its starting to crack and buckle about twenty feet behind you."

Caitlan paused as she lay wedged into the crack, which was barely a foot wide

now. "What about new cracks near where I'm holding?"

He shook his head. "Just crumbling where your fingers and feet are pressing."

"OK...I'm going to really put some muscle into it this time. Once its wide enough, I'll slip through and try to support the building before it falls. You get the men out. You OK with that?"

"You're going to hold this corner of the building up?" he gasped. "It must weigh hundreds of tons."

"Yeah...that's about what I figured. Once I've got it, I need you to crawl through my legs and pull the men out. Can you do that?"

"Ah...yeah, sure," he said hesitantly, his heart pounding as he looked up at the eight stories of concrete that were tilted over them. "Least if it falls on me it'll be over fast."

"You're a brave man, Captain, but I'm not dropping anything on nobody. Here goes."

Caitlan wedged herself back into the crack, and this time managed to slide both feet into the crack. She began to pull it open, powerful muscles flexing again to form deep clefts in her thigh and calf, her arms and shoulders coming alive with steel-hard curves. She clenched her teeth and the building shifted slightly overhead. Several panels fell from the upper floors to crash twenty feet behind them. Sondestag moved closer to Caitlan.

She eased up for a brief second, twisting herself to get her shoulder wedged into the wider crack, positioning both feet against the other side now. She pushed again. This time the ground gave off a deep shudder as steel rebar screamed and the concrete began to crack and pop like gunshots. She managed to extend her legs halfway before the wall began to fall apart. The building sagged dangerously above them.

"Go..." she screamed from between clenched teeth as she rose to reach over her head and grab the solid concrete beam that made up this corner of the building. Her legs flexed with enormous power.

The Captain squeezed around her steel-like legs to disappear inside the darkness behind the wall.

Moments later, a portion of the retaining wall collapsed outward, leaving Caitlan holding all the weight of that corner of the building. She gasped as her arms slowly bent from the strain, the corner of the beam slowly dropping. She leaned backward and let it land on her chest, her soft breasts cushioning the blow. Her pant legs tore down the front of her thighs as her blood-engorged muscles strained harder than she'd ever worked them before. The top of her green outfit tore as the beam scraped lower on her chest. Her shoulder muscles swelled as she struggled mightily to hold it, huge muscles ripping the fabric open.

Sondestag crawled back and forth between her spread legs, dragging three of the men to safety, all of them groaning as their broken limbs grated along the shattered concrete behind him. A group of firemen daringly ran under the tilting building to grab the men and whisk them to safety. The Captain crawled back in a final time to free the fourth man.

"Can't get him out," he quickly shouted back. "A steel beam is trapping his legs. Can you lift it higher?"

Caitlan groaned, unable to reply as she strained with every ounce of her strength. Not only was she unable to lift the beam any higher, but her legs were beginning to shake from exhaustion. She was about to drop the entire building on the brave Captain.

Then, just as she was about to lose it, a blonde head appeared next to her, and powerfully sinewed arms lifted to grab the beam next to Caitlan's hands. Both women strained together, and the corner of the building lifted another foot.

"Got him..." Sondestag cried out. "Hold it there for another moment."

Caitlan felt the Captain crawling outward, struggling to get past two pairs of legs now. He struggled and finally managed to get free, dragging the badly injured workman behind him.

"Everyone's out," he hollered as the firemen picked up the last victim and they all ran to safety.

"This thing is fucking heavy..." the blonde groaned.

Caitlan took a deep gasp of air, thankful that the strain had been reduced enough that she could breathe. "Who are you?"



"Cassie. Cassie Sandsmark," the blonde said.

"The former...WonderGirl?" Caitlan asked.

"Don't even... call me that. How about... we try to get... the fuck out of here instead?"

"OK... lets drop and run on three. One...two...THREE!"

Both women released the building, only to jam up against each other as they tried to get back out through the crack in the wall.

The building didn't wait for them to sort out their confusion. The lower floor crashed down on them, flattening them face first to the ground. The earthshaking impact sent a shock wave upward to set off a chain reaction. The entire structure failed progressively as all eight stories of concrete collapsed.

The men raced further away from the collapsing building as a huge wall of dust blasted outward to knock them off their feet, the ground shaking so badly they couldn't have stayed on their feet in any case.

And then it was over. The eight story building was just a pile of rubble. The rescued workmen just stared, knowing the women who'd just saved their lives were buried beneath it all. Helpless moments passed before some of the other men raced toward the mound and started clawing uselessly at it with their bare hands. The fire crew began to spray the rubble with high-pressure water to knock down the dust.

Captain Sondestag shouted for them to stop. "Just listen! We have to locate them. To know where to dig." The men did as he said, and seconds later they heard the crunches of concrete. Then the pile shifted slightly.

"Get back..." Sondestag called out. "They're coming out."

The men backed away twenty feet as one of the massive beams rose. It lifted higher and higher until they could see Caitlan holding it high over her head with one hand, her large breasts standing high and firm on her powerful chest. Her clothing was gone, but she was so covered in dust that it didn't matter.

Another woman appeared, the blonde, also coated in dust. She was dressed in a torn pair of low-cut jeans, her midriff bare. Her blouse was shredded to reveal a red and yellow bustier that was adorned with the wings of an eagle.

Caitlan walked forward, dropping the huge beam behind her with an earth-shattering thud. The fire hose briefly sprayed her, washing away the dust to reveal her nakedness. Then they turned the water on the blonde.

While Caitlan didn't seem to notice the cell phone cameras that people were pointing at her, the other blonde turned and ran, leaping over the forty foot high mound of wreckage as if it was a mole hill.

After she disappeared, all eyes returned to Caitlan.

"Any injuries, Captain?" she asked.

Sondestag stared at her, briefly unable to raise his eyes above her chest. She had the best boobs he'd ever seen. It took an effort of will to lift his eyes to the green of hers. There wasn't a scratch on her, just a lot of dust sticking to her sweaty skin. He tried to make his mouth work. "Ah...no, I mean yes, just broken legs and arms. Except for last man. He's in bad shape."

"At least he has a chance to fight for his life. Now if you'll excuse me, I'd like to get out of here before the News cameras arrive."

"Who was that other woman? The blonde we saw run in after you?"

Caitlan shrugged as she started to turn away. "Haven't a clue. But without her, you and that last workman would have died."

She'd barely taken a step toward the street when the three men she'd rescued called out to her, thanking her. Caitlan paused to walk over toward the ambulances, still seemingly unconscious about her nudity.

"My wife and kids...they thank you," the first man said.

"I thought we were goners," another said. "Thank you."

Caitlan beamed at them as a fireman draped a blanket over her shoulders. She didn't bother to close the front as she leaned down to let the men kiss her cheek. Thanks was the only reward she ever needed. "Any time, gentleman. It's why I'm here."

The third man just stared up at her, too overwhelmed to speak at first. He finally coughed up some dust. "You know..." he started to say in a hoarse voice. "They say that goddesses are merely part of our ancient mythology. Our collective fantasies.

That they never existed. Just fanciful imagination. Well, now I know they're all wrong."

He blushed wildly as he forced his eyes down to her feet and bowed. "You are my goddess. Forever."

## **Chapter Four**

**Superman's city fortress, a reinforced factory building on the lower east side, later that day**

"He really said that. You are my goddess. Forever?"

"Well, I'd just lifted a building off him and I was standing there naked, towering over him. Some men are easily impressed."

Caitlan was stretching as she sat in one of the chairs in his recently remodeled gym. He felt his blood stirring as she sat suggestively in one of their favorite sexual positions, her right legs resting on the arm of the chair. Normally it was his strong arms that held her legs that way.

She wore a pink top and leggings along with silver ballet shoes, but otherwise was nude, her red hair billowing in the breeze that blew through the room. He was reminded that very few of their favorite sexual positions were even possible for humans. And in this particular position, she usually placed her feet against a steel wall as he supported her legs and took her from behind with all his power. By the time they were done, her footprints were usually imbedded in the three-inch thick steel wall.

"Well, he's dead wrong," Kal chuckled. "Terribly, certainly, definitely wrong. Because, you see, you're my goddess, Caitlan."



After all those years with Lois, having to be so careful, it was wonderful to just be himself. Even with Cassie, he'd had to hold back a little. He loved the fact that he could love Caitlan with complete abandon. He didn't even have to withdraw and turn away at the last minute to save her life like he'd had to do with Lois.

Caitlan could handle all of him. All of his power. All of his excitement.

He thought it was amusing that while the rest of world saw Caitlan as the Woman of Steel, she felt so soft and delicate and feminine when in his arms.

His impulse now was to scoop her up in his arms and take her right there, but instead, he couldn't resist asking: "So, Cassie was there, huh?"

"Your old girlfriend?" Caitlan said icily. "Yeah. She kind of saved the day."

Kal cursed silently. Why had he brought Cassie's name up? Caitlan had a jealous streak in her that she couldn't control. All that red hair.

"Then why didn't you capture her?" he asked, knowing he was already in hot water.

"As I said, she saved the day for the last victim, Kal. I was losing it. That building was so heavy it would have been a challenge even for you."

"But you know that we haven't seen Cassie for over a year. Last time was when she worked for the JSA. But now she's gone rogue."

Caitlan smirked. "In a Robin Hood kind of way. Steal from the rich, launder the money and then give to the poor. Some people think she's a hero."

"She's on the FBI's Top Ten wanted list, Caitlan."

"Just shows that justice isn't always an absolute. And often not on the side of the poor."

"You're defending her?" Kal asked, raising one eyebrow. "Last time we talked about her, you gave me the green-eyed jealous routine."

"She didn't have to help me back there, Kal. She chose to save two lives. I might be getting all the credit for that rescue, but she's a hero too."

"Laws are made to be absolute, my dear. Criminals don't get bonus points for good intentions. She's a thief, and based on that burglary that went wrong six months ago, she might be a murderer. We've got a responsibility to bring her to justice."

Caitlan laughed. "You can take the man out of Kansas, but you can't take Kansas out of the man. No wonder she dumped you."

Kal frowned. They'd had this discussion before. It hadn't gone well the last time either.

"Everything is relative, Kal," Caitlan continued. "Cassie is helping thousands of people by bruising a handful of fat cats who've got too much money to begin with. People who ripped off the little people to get their wealth. Sounds a lot like justice to me. And I don't buy into that murder charge."

She unhooked her knees from the back of the chair and stood up to stretch the other way, bending backward until her head touched the floor as she held her ankles, very aware that Kal would be staring at her nakedness. This was normally a part of their sexy game — her showing off her amazing flexibility. Between that and her strength, it opened the door to some very erotic positions, not the least for the fact that Kal could fly.

Unfortunately, instead of responding like any sane man, Kal couldn't resist adding: "Caitlan, justice isn't negotiable. Not for us. We of all people have to follow the strictest definition of the law."

She straightened back up to glare at him, her bubble of desire disappearing as fast as it had come. "Well, what isn't negotiable is that you aren't getting laid today, big boy. I was horny when I walked in here. Now I'm just pissed off. You and your stubborn self-righteousness."

She spun around to stalk toward the door of the warehouse. She paused as she reached it, her back to Kal, waiting for him to ask her to stay, to apologize, but when he didn't, she scrunched her fingers into the thick steel and pulled the door inward, angrily ripping it completely off its hinges. She tossed the quarter-ton slab of steel behind her, forcing Kal to duck as it crashed down behind him with a deafening CLANG.

By the time he stood back up, Caitlan had exited into the night... and with a flex of her long, strong legs, she was gone, leaping high over the rooftops.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Port Townsend Boat Haven**

#### **The next morning, Saturday**



Jason Jones tossed his large duffle full of clothes and gear over the rail of his father's Krogen trawler before climbing on board to unlock the doors. He left the doors open to air the boat out as he went below to check on Miss Perky, the boat's old Perkins diesel engine. He found the fluids were good and all the belts were tight. He opened the primary Racor filter to draw diesel from the right main tank.

He went back upstairs and turned on the navigation computer, firing up the Nobeltec software as he tuned the radio to the local marine weather channel. "Small-craft warning for south-easterly winds this afternoon, 20 to 25 knots."

Not ideal, but *WindSong* was a sturdy, blue-water boat. She could handle that kind of following sea. He laid in a course on the Nav computer that would take them directly from the Point Wilson Lighthouse to the entrance of Victoria Harbour, located on the southern end of Vancouver Island in British Columbia. They'd be in by early afternoon, and their demonstration wasn't going to start until Sunday morning. Plenty of time to join Kara and the other OverWatch folks at a club for music and dancing. Despite being underage, there were places they could go in Victoria. He was really looking forward to that.

He lifted his head from the instruments to see a tall, slender blonde heading down the dock with a duffle bag slung over her shoulder. Despite the bag's huge size, she was carrying it easily.

Her path took her past a big white 76 foot yacht called *Bling-Bling*. As she approached that multi-million dollar yacht, the sun came out from behind the morning clouds to illuminate the marina. Kara's blonde hair burst into a brilliant shade of gold, her skin seemingly taking on a deeper shade of tan.

Jason swallowed hard...there was something about seeing Kara standing in the sun that made his mouth go dry. She seemed to glow from inside.

The crew on the big yacht saw the same thing, and two crewmen rushed down the gangway, assuming she was one of their expensive guests. She looked like the kind of girl you'd see on a fancy yacht, perched high on the bow, sunning herself in a bikini.

Except that Kara wore a torn pair of jeans and a loose sweater.

The men talked with her for a moment, and then one of them pointed at Jason's old boat, a questioning look on his face.

Jason couldn't hear what they were saying, but Kara just shook her head and continued down the dock. The crewmen watched her go, obviously not quite believing that such a beautiful girl was planning to go out on an old, beaten up trawler like *WindSong*. He scrambled down from the pilot house to meet Kara on the dock, very aware that the entire crew of the big yacht was watching them. He couldn't resist giving them the finger.

Kara saw him and laughed, her smile radiating a thousand watts.

"So glad you made it past *Bling-Bling*," he gushed as she reached him. "They think every pretty girl belongs on their boat."

"That gas hog? It probably burns more diesel getting out of the marina than we'll burn going back and forth to Victoria."

Jason chuckled. "You're probably right. But unlike them, we're going to have a bit of bounce going over today in *WindSong*. You OK with that? Don't get seasick or anything."

"Don't know. Never been out on a boat like this before. Tell me about her. Name sounds like it belongs on a sailboat."

He grabbed her duffle bag and swung it into the cockpit as he started untying the lines. "Let's talk underway. Can you untie the bow and stern lines once I get these springs off and get back on board."

"Sure. What's a spring?"

"These lines, tied longwise along the side. We pull the boat against them when docking, thus the name spring."

"OK," she said without understanding.

He tossed the two spring lines over the railing and clambered back onto *WindSong*. He cranked the wheel a half turn to the left and leaned out the pilot house door. The 10 knot breeze was starting to blow them off the dock. "OK, let go the lines. Bow first. Just toss it up. Then the stern and then get on before we drift too far from the dock."

She untied the front line from the cleat and tossed it up on the high bow, then scampered down the dock to undo the stern, jumping lithely onto the swim platform as if she'd done this a hundred times.

Jason eased the throttle forward a bit, then back, working engine and rudder to back and fill the boat to turn it around in the narrow fairway. Moments later they were putting down the fairway toward the breakwater entrance. Kara danced up the stairs to the bow and secured the bow line, then worked her way aft to secure the spring lines and finally the stern line. Then she pulled his fenders up and stored them in the cockpit. She finally joined him in the pilot house.

"I thought you hadn't done this before?" Jason said appreciatively. "You seem to be an expert."

"I watched someone doing it yesterday. I just don't know the words for things. Everything on a boat has a funny name."

"But you're a quick study. I like that."

"So how long will it take us to get there?"

"About five hours. Wind is supposed to rise behind us, blowing hard this afternoon, so it might get bouncy after halfway across."

"I'm just hoping to see some orcas today. Been a while since I swam...I mean, since I've seen them."

"They all have names, do you know that? The experts can tell them by their markings."

Kara nodded. "I think its cool that they are a matriarchy. Males stay with their mothers until they mate with a female from a different matriline, and then he stays with her for life."

"Yeah, except they don't practice sexual fidelity. They might only bear young with their bonded mate, but they play around. Even have orgies sometimes."

Kara laughed. "That I didn't know. Not much different than humans then, are they?"

"Guess not," he shrugged, feeling his face burn, wondering why he'd tossed that strange fact out so quickly. "At least based on what I see from our parents and movies and so on. I haven't really had a serious girlfriend or anything like that."

"Neither have I. Nor a boyfriend."

"So, you hang with Alicia. Haven't seen much of her lately."

Kara looked at him, smiling. "Are you asking me if I'm gay? You don't waste time, do you?"

"That wasn't what I..."

"Bullshit."

"OK, yeah, I was pushing it. Sorry. You're kind of a mystery since you don't date anyone."

Kara said nothing for a long moment as she leaned out the pilot house doorway, enjoying the breeze as they chugged out toward the shipping lanes beyond Port Townsend.

She finally pulled her head in and looked back at Jason, windblown blonde hair covering her face. "Yes and no."

"What does that mean?"

"I just don't think it makes much sense to limit yourself. But since guys seem to go whacky around me, not a turn-on, trust me, and Alicia has a girlfriend, its all mostly hypothetical at this point."

"You're bisexual?"

"I suppose so. I mean, I can imagine myself with either a girl or a guy. Maybe both."

"That's hot." Jason felt himself rising, his mind filling with a fantasy that involved Kara, Alicia and himself in the same bed.

She leaned out the door and turned to look behind them. "Is that big ship supposed to be this close?"

Jason blinked his sexy fantasy away as he turned to look back out his door. A huge container ship was overtaking them, moving at nearly three times their speed, a white bone in its teeth as it closed within a half mile of their stern. He gulped and spun the wheel to move left out of the traffic lanes. "Thanks. Should've been looking back. Lots of traffic right here."

Kara hung out the door, her long hair blowing in the wind. "I'll be your lookout then, spotting ships and whales. I've got really good eyes."

“And logs,” Jason added. “Lots of logs in the water here at times.”

They were fifteen miles out of Port Townsend when the Dahl porpoises appeared. Two black and white torpedo-shapes raced up from behind them to cavort in their bow wave, crossing over in front of the boat as they leaped out of the water. Kara laughed and ran forward to lean over the bow, scaring Jason when she hooked her legs on the stainless bow rail and hung inverted below the bowsprit, her long hair nearly reaching the water as she waved to the Dahls. They responded by leaping even higher.

Soon the two speedsters raced off to join their pod, but within minutes, they came back with a dozen of their brothers and sisters. *WindSong* was suddenly surrounded by the large porpoises, all of the racing to and fro to leap through their bow wave.

Kara raced back to the pilot house, her eyes ablaze with excitement. “Stop the boat. I want to go swimming with them.”

“What! The water is cold as hell. Barely in the 40’s.” He’d never heard of anyone willingly diving off a boat in the middle of the cold Strait of Juan de Fuca.

His objections faded as Kara pulled her sweater off as she faced away from him, revealing she didn’t wear a bra. She started to squirm out of her tight Jeans, blowing his mind as he saw that she didn’t wear panties either. He found himself staring at the tightest and cutest butt he’d ever seen.

Shocked and astounded and thrilled, not to mention more than a little turned on, he pulled the throttle to idle and killed the engine. By the time he looked up again, Kara was executing a perfect dive over the side of the boat.

He ran forward to the bow to see her clinging to the back of one of the larger males, which probably weighed twice what she did. The Dahl porpoise raced around in a wild circle, and then leaped high into the air with Kara still hanging onto its back. A half dozen other porpoises joined in what appeared to be a wild, thrashing dance, with Kara in the exact center of their circle.

He’d never heard of such a thing, and he’d read everything he could find on Dahl porpoises for years. For all he knew, he was seeing something completely unique.

That's when he thought of his camera. It was downstairs, still in his duffel bag.

He raced down to get it, only to find the battery was missing. He scrambled around, looking for a spare, but couldn't find one. He gave up and raced back up on deck just in time to see Kara leap up onto the swim step and quickly dash through the cockpit and down into her stateroom. The porpoises milled around the boat for a few more moments, seemingly waving goodbye to their new friend, and then took off toward the north, moving at great speed.

He sat down hard in the helm chair, shaking his head, disbelieving what he'd seen. The flash of her firm breasts as she rose out of the water to land on his swim step was burned into his mind. She was even cuter than he'd imagined.

And then there was the whole thing about swimming in that cold water and riding on the Dahls. Bottlenose dolphins, yes, but there was nothing in the literature about anyone riding on the sleek, fast and elusive Dahls.

He was still lost in wonder when Kara came back up into the pilot house, a blanket wrapped around her. Her eyes were sparkling and her skin looked warm and flush. She should have been white and freezing from the icy water.

"I'm...I'm not sure I just saw what I thought I saw," was all he could say.

"Swimming with the Dahls? That was so much fun. They're very playful, even if they don't hang around long."

"Nobody swims out here. And I've never heard of Dahls behaving that way."

She shrugged. "Learn something new every day. Hope I didn't shock you too much with my skinny-dipping, but there wasn't time to go and get a swimsuit."

"Shocked doesn't begin to cover it."

She laughed. "Hang around me and you're in for more surprises. I'm a bit impetuous, or so my parents tell me. I just like having fun. Act first, think later. That's my motto."

Jason started the engine and put the boat back into gear, throttling up as he headed back toward Victoria. "Well, next time, give me some warning. I was about to toss the life ring to you."

"I can swim really well. And this water doesn't bother me. I'm an Icelfander, after



all. We cut holes in the ice to go swimming in the winter.”

“Viking stock, huh? No wonder your ancestors rowed across the North Atlantic. And they had the gall to call that big block of ice Greenland.”

She winked at him. “Yes, a Viking. You better be careful. I’m very fierce.”

Two hours later, they were approaching Victoria Harbor. As predicted, the winds had built and the last hour had been very bouncy. Kara had pulled her jeans and sweater back on after she dried off. She didn’t seem to mind *WindSong*’s motion as the waves picked up the starboard aft quarter of the 42 foot Krogen, the boat corkscrewing slightly and then rolling strongly as each big wave passed under.

They dodged several logs coming into Canadian waters, thanks to Kara’s sharp eyes. She spotted them well before Jason could make them out.

Once they were inside the Victoria breakwater and following the yellow buoys that marked the small boat channel to the inner harbor, Jason radioed for a slip assignment. They stopped at the Customs dock to check in, and then motored over to their assigned spot on the docks just below the Empress Hotel. They’d no soon tied *WindSong* up than two older members of SoundKeepers met them on the dock. They introduced themselves as Amy Shultz and Peter Grant. They were post-grads in Marine Biology at the University of Victoria.

“We were supposed to send two people up to Robson Bight up on the north island this morning to help in identifying Orcas up there. But we’ve got a few folks down with the flu and we’re short two people. You guys want to fill in?”

“It would take days to get up there in *WindSong*,” Jason replied.

“We’ve chartered a seaplane. Right over there.” Amy pointed to the seaplane terminal a couple of hundred yards to their west.

“You mean right now?” Kara asked.

“Engine is already warmed up. We’ll get *WindSong* checked in with the harbormaster and take care of her. You guys just grab your gear and run. They’ll have you back down here in Victoria by Sunday night.”

Jason looked at Kara, who nodded, her blue eyes sparkling with excitement.

“OK. Lets do it.” He rushed below and grabbed both their bags.

Fifteen minutes later, they were climbing out of Victoria Harbor in an old radial engine DeHavilland Beaver from the 1950's, one of the workhorse bush planes of the Pacific Northwest. The big engine shook the plane as they slowly turned above the city, heading northward.

Kara and Jason were the only passengers in the six-place aircraft. The pilot was an old man who looked like he'd been doing this for at least forty years.

It was too loud to talk over the engine as they climbed, so they glued their faces to the windows and enjoyed the view. Snow-capped mountains were on the left and the wide, blue Strait of Georgia was on the right. Ahead of them, they could see clouds building across their path. The seaplane descended as they approached the clouds, flying low over the water to keep visual contact with it, paralleling the shoreline.

They'd been flying that way for about an hour when the plane's engine began to cough. The pilot played with the engine controls, got it to run smoothly for a bit, and then it began to cough again.

“We're going to have to set down,” he hollered over his shoulder. “Not a big deal,” he said reassuringly. “We'll just find a calm, little cove and drop in for a spell.”

Minutes later, the pilot was aiming the big Beaver and its coughing engine toward a small cove. “We're almost to Campbell River,” the pilot said. “Someone will come down and pick you guys up in another plane while I figure out what's wrong with my plane.”

Jason nodded nervously as they swooped low, preparing to fly over a narrow isthmus of tall trees before dropping onto the calm water beyond. They were still over the water, almost to the isthmus, when the engine gave off a much louder cough and began to rattle and bang. The propeller came to a sudden stop.

“Shit!” the pilot cursed. He tried to milk his glide, hoping to make it over the trees. Unfortunately, as was the nature of cool forests, the air over the trees was sinking fast. The nose came up as he stretched it too far, and the plane began to shudder, nearly stalling. The pilot pushed the nose back down and aimed for a gap in the trees.

He'd almost made it when the right wingtip caught a treetop and the plane spun wildly to right. The pilot raised his hands in front of his face as the windscreen filled with trees... and then everything went crazy. The plane seemed to stop in mid-air. The pilot's head hit the unpadded dash hard, knocking him out.

Jason was thrown forward into his harness hard enough to have the wind knocked out of him. He saw the rocks and grass on the ground pivoting directly ahead of the windshield, but instead of crashing into them, they moved further away. The plane was moving backwards, and then sideways before leveling out to touch down on its floats with barely a bump.

Jason looked over at Kara, his eyes wide, only to see that one of her hands was buried in the headliner, the other in the floor. She was holding two of the heavy aluminum tubes that made up the cabin structure, the tendons of her wrists and neck visible as she clung to the airplane with great strength.

Strangely, she didn't look scared as she leaned forward to check on the pilot. Her eyes flashed a brilliant blue.

"He'll be OK. Maybe a concussion."

Jason felt as if his heart was going to burst from his chest it was racing so fast. He couldn't get his breath. He opened the door and undid his harness with panicked fingers and threw himself out on the ground. He stared up at Kara as she slowly undid her harness.

"What the fuck! What the fuck just happened back there? Airplanes don't stop in mid air like that!"

Kara slowly got out of the plane to stand on one of the floats as she reached back through the front door to lay the unconscious pilot down across the front seats. She turned back to face Jason.

"Told you weird stuff would happen if you hung around me."

"I mean, that was like Superman stuff. Like he'd caught the plane and carried it to the ground."

Kara shrugged. "Maybe he did. He doesn't stick around sometimes. Busy man."

"No way. He's got way more important things..."

He paused as he remembered the way Kara's hands had been embedded in the ceiling and floor. He looked back inside to confirm what he thought he'd seen. The floor was made of thick, strong aluminum, designed to handle the cargo loads these planes often carried. A ragged hole the size of her hand revealed a partially crushed aluminum frame tube beneath it.

He turned back to stare at her hands, noticing that the tendons on the back of her hands looked unusually strong.

"No... wait a minute... you did that!"

She laughed. "Me? I'm just a girl."

Jason, like everyone else, was familiar with super powers. He'd grown up in a world with Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman and a handful of other superhumans running around. But this was Kara, just another kid in his school. And then the full force of reality hit him. The fact that she could outrun her brother. The swimming in the icy water. The way she looked so unnaturally beautiful when she stood in sunlight.

"You're...you're one of them!"

"Them?" she asked innocently.

"Superhumans. Aliens. You know."

"Yes, I do know. You going to be OK with that?"

"Holy shiiittt..." he cried as he spun around, holding his head in his hands. He stopped to face her. "For real?!"

"You're alive. That's pretty real."

"But who...what...you're what, an Amazon, like Wonder Woman?" He remembered her hanging out with Alicia, who was a lesbian. All Amazons were lesbians.

"Nope. But I've been there. Where they live, I mean. Trained for a few weeks with Diana and her sisters."

"Then...oh my God, are you, like, Superman's daughter?"

She shook her head. "Try cousin."

"But...he's like three times your age."

"Not exactly. He was a baby when I was fourteen years old."

Jason head began to hurt. "But how...?"

"A time warp thingy. I was...delayed in getting here."

Now his head really began to spin. He had to sit down a rock, holding his head in his hands. "Holy shit. Who knows about any of this? I mean, about you?"

"Not many people. My family. Alicia and Skylar. Obviously my cousin. Now you. That's about it. I'd like to keep it that way."

He gestured toward the airplane with the damaged wing. "But...how do we explain that?"

Kara turned to look at the plane. "I actually don't have that figured out yet. I didn't think this thing through. Just acted. Like I said, act first, think later. Now I guess we have to come up with something."

"We?"

"Assuming you agree to keep this quiet and be my friend."

"Quiet? Friend? Of course. My lips are sealed."

"Good. Then I don't have to kill you."

Jason looked up at her, unsure if she was joking or not. Everything about her suddenly made complete sense. The otherworldly beauty, her fantastic fitness. She was a Kryptonian. A member of a super-race. His heart swelled. God she was beautiful. And not just because she'd just saved his life.

"So I'm part of your posse now?" he asked daringly.

She nodded. "Once you know about me, it comes with the territory."

"Cool." He looked at the plane and then the thick woods all around them, putting his brain into gear. "So we gotta make this look believable...hmmm...no way we can explain landing in this clearing without us being hurt."

"I don't think anyone saw us go down," she added. "This area is pretty remote and there weren't any boats in sight. I've got perfect recall and I've gone back

through the last minutes before we crashed. Nada.”

“Then we ditch the plane in the water and hang out on the shore waiting for someone to rescue us.”

“Yeah. Probably work. I was looking at one of the marine charts in the pilot’s bag, and the water is very deep close to shore here.”

“How did you...? Oh, yeah, x-ray vision.”

“I’ll dump the plane just outside the cove — water is about 700 feet deep. I doubt if they’ll try to retrieve it given we all survived. But that means we have to go swimming. All of us.”

“But the pilot...he’ll remember.”

“He hit his head hard. We’ll convince him he’s confused. Concussion and all.”

“I don’t know, Kara. He’ll know.”

“But he’s alive and he shouldn’t be. He’s the type that’s been around, Jason. Seen stuff. I suspect he won’t push it.”

“I can hear everything you’re saying,” a gruff voice said from the front of the Beaver.

Kara walked over to climb on the float and smile at the pilot. “How’s your head?”

“Hurts like hell. When you stop an airplane, you don’t mess around.”

“Sorry. I’m not very experienced at this stuff yet.”

“So...if your cousin is Superman, does that mean we call you Supergirl?”

She glared at him. “Not if you value your life. It’s just Kara.”

“OK, Kara, I gather we’re going swimming. That’s gonna hurt. Water’s damn cold here. And as far as the plane...make sure you don’t just drop it. Fly it down to the water at 70 knots and then have the floats dig in and flip it. That’s how a bad water landing ends. Never know if they’ll pull it up or not.”

“Fine. Can you walk?”

The pilot climbed gingerly out of the plane to stagger over and sit on the rock

with Jason, who was suddenly feeling a little sore. He didn't like the way the pilot had taken control of the situation. Nor did he like the way he was staring at Kara.

Kara didn't seem to notice as she ducked down between the floats and lifted the plane as if it was weightless. She pushed off gently to soar up and over the treetops. Both men craned their heads to follow her until she was gone.

"Interesting girlfriend you got here," the pilot said. He held out his calloused hand. "Name's Jack Straite, by the way."

Jack winced as the man held him with a punishing handshake, which made him feel like a kid. "She's not exactly my girlfriend. This is the first time I've been out with her."

"You're with those environmental freaks, right?"

"SoundKeepers. Yes."

"As I said," the old man said gruffly. "I gather from what I heard that you didn't know no more about her than I did before now. Other than the fact that she's a real looker. I gather you really like her."

"Except she doesn't date any of the guys from our school. Hangs out with a couple of girls. One of them's gay. Maybe both."

"Be a real shame if she was too. But it seems like we're all into something a bit sticky now. If she's like her cousin, she could vaporize us with those eyes of hers and nobody would know nothing."

"No way. Kara wouldn't hurt a fly. She's really sweet."

"And you're sweet on her." The pilot rose stiffly to his feet. "Good luck on that one, buddy. The stories of humans falling in love with gods, and we got stories about that for thousands of years going back, are nothing but train wrecks. It never works, you know."

"She's not a goddess."

"Well, my son, as I always say, if it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, hell, even flies like a duck, odds are its a duck." He turned and started walking off into the forest, heading toward the beach.

Jason waited for a few moments, trying to digest what the old man had said, and

then rose to run after him.

The two of them were standing on the beach ten minutes later when Kara rose from the freezing waters to walk toward them. Her clothes were half torn away, presumably from the collision with the water, and what was left clung to her shapely form. She squeezed the water from her blonde hair as she slowly walked up the sloping beach toward them, looking like a vision out of a teenage fantasy.

Jason just stared, his jaw falling.

The pilot leaned closer to him. "As I was saying, son, you're in a heap of trouble."