

LS - A Matter of Some Gravity

by Kala Lane Kent

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Rating: K+

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Kala pumped her legs, leaning back and forth to get higher and higher with each swing. It was a lovely spring day out; the temperature was the perfect balance of warm and cool, a slight breeze blowing. Perfect weather for the daydream that had pervaded the little girl's thoughts for most of the day. The chains holding her seat hummed, and the whole swing set creaked with the force she was putting on it. But Kala at seven years old didn't worry about such things; she just needed to get the swing as high as possible.

Grinning with excitement, she decided that she had finally reached the point at which she could get it to go no higher, and did what she'd set out to do from the first moment she'd seen the swing set. At the height of the swing's motion, just before it started to pendulum back down, Kala made a brief wish before she braced herself, let go of the chains and leaped with all her heart set on her goal. She held her arms out in front of her and straightened her legs, soaring through the air just like Daddy...

...for about two seconds.

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Kal-El was on his way back to the office after briefly intervening in a bank robbery when he heard Kala scream. His heart clenched as he banked in midair and shot off toward the sound of her voice, flying at top speed. It wasn't until he landed beside her at the school playground that he realized he'd reacted a little *too* quickly.

Two teachers and a whole group of children stared up at him in shock. *Way to preserve your identity, Overprotective Dad*, he thought to himself as he strode toward Kala. His daughter was sitting up near a swing set, sand all in her hair, tears rolling down her cheeks, one arm pressed protectively against her chest. The look of misery on her face was just heartbreaking, although her expression did lighten a bit when she saw it was him. One glance, and he saw the arm was broken, a clean snap of the radius. "I'll take care of this," he said to the teachers, adding by way of explanation, "Her mother is a friend of mine."

Kala just sniffled as he picked her up and she cuddled in against his chest, cradling her injured arm gently. He took off before she could accidentally call him 'Daddy' in front of her school, and flew with her to the hospital. The tiny whimpers she made and her continued tears tore at him worse than any bullets. As fearless as Kala could be, she often forgot that she was just as fragile as any other child. Maybe more so, despite being Superman's daughter. "You'll be okay, sweetheart," he whispered, kissing her temple. "The doctors will fix you right up."

Another sniffle from the huddled form in his arms. "Hurts," Kala moaned, shivering with shock and pain. "Want Mommy."

"I'll get her," he said softly, and took extra special care when they landed at the emergency room moments later. The staff had grown used to his sudden arrivals over the past year since his return, and none of them suspected when they took the child from him that this was slightly more personal than most. Although it was impossible to mistake his concern. He saw the protesting look of Kala's face, her mouth opening for a minute, but she only watched him go sorrowfully. "I'll be right back with her parents," he told the nurse on duty, tossing the girl a reassuring look before he dashed out again, hating to leave Kala alone for even one second.

Fortunately for him, it turned out Lois was out of the office at that moment, crossing Concord Avenue for her afternoon Starbucks coffee constitutional. He simply zoomed down and snatched her, her scream of surprise making pedestrians look around perplexedly. "I'm taking you to the hospital," Kal-El said quickly, his expression serious while Lois was still too shocked to swear. "Kala broke her arm."

The words were enough to change her expression from furious to shocked, hazel eyes going wide. "*WHAT?!*" She clutched his arm then, her own expression growing somber. "Then fly faster, dammit!"

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Kala had only just realized she was *alone*, in the big white room, with lots of people looking at her and a nurse telling her to hold still, it would all be okay - in that tone of voice they used to say shots wouldn't hurt. The little girl's lip trembled, and she backed away dubiously from the offered wheelchair, clutching her wounded arm. "Now sweetheart," the nurse started to say, and Kala protested loudly.

"No!" she yelled. "I don't wanna shot! Want *Mommy!* Right *NOW!*"

There was a sudden loud tapping noise behind her, growing closer by the second. "It's okay, baby. I'm here," Mommy's voice came from behind her, and Kala instinctively wheeled to leap into her arms. That, of course, made her arm hurt, and she yowled in pain. Mommy had kneeled down in front of her, kissing her forehead as she murmured, "Kala, you can't do that. Remember when Nora tripped running up the hall at your Nana's two summers ago?" Pouting her lower lip and trying not to cry, Kala nodded. "Well, you may have hurt your arm the same way. These nice people want to make it stop hurting, okay? You're going to have to be brave. And we both know you can do that, don't we?"

The next few minutes were a blur, Mommy stroking her hair to soothe her, the nurse and Mommy coaxing her into the wheelchair, and then Daddy showing up again, this time dressed in his usual gray suit instead of the uniform.

Kala couldn't do much more than whimper, and before she could think to ask Daddy why he'd brought her here and then left her alone, a doctor came and gave her a shot that made her feel all floaty. It didn't even hurt when the doctor moved her arm around, and some other docs took her into a dark room and took special x-ray pictures of her so they could see inside her arm. "Like your friend Superman," they told her, and Kala giggled. They didn't know Superman wasn't her friend, he was her Daddy, and he was right outside the room!

Soon she was lying on a funny bed that could go up and down, with Mommy and Daddy sitting beside the bed and talking to her. The doctor came in and gave her another shot, which she didn't mind at all, and he did some stuff to her arm that ended with him wrapping it up in a cast. Bright purple, since she got to pick the color. She waited in the lobby with Mommy while Daddy went and got the car, and then they drove home, the motion of the car soothing Kala to sleep.

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"We have to stop by the school," Clark said, turning in his seat to look at Kala.

"Why? I think they all know Kala's going to miss the rest of the day," Lois asked absently, glancing in the rearview mirror. Her little girl was snoring, thoroughly medicated. The next few weeks would be interesting, dealing with the aches in the arm and the itches from the cast, but for right now, Lois was just relieved that her daughter was comfortable and on the mend. The sound of her voice, crying out in pain, had rocked Lois to the core of her soul.

"Well, for one, we have to explain what happened and give them a reason why Superman stopped by to take her to the hospital," Clark said. "And we probably ought to pick up Jason, as well. I've been listening in to him, and he's upset - he doesn't know what happened to Kala, and he's been temperamental and disruptive since she left."

Lois winced, feeling the sudden urge beat her head against the steering wheel. Of course Jason would freak out. If she'd had her head in the right place, she would have called Lucy to pick him up, since Richard was still at work and Lana had her hands full with baby Kristin. As it was, there had been no one to tell him what was going on with his twin. "Poor thing. You know he's not going to let her out of his sight for the rest of the day," the reporter sighed, shaking her head, then casting him a grateful smile. "Well, since you swooped in to save her, hero, how did this happen?"

"She fell off the swing." It made Lois' heart ache to see how carefully he watched their child. It was as if Clark were on high alert still.

It seemed that he hadn't hit the mark with his explanation, though, because then a little voice piped up from the back seat. "Didn't fall," Kala protested sleepily. Her eyes were closed, and she yawned hugely before adding, "Jumped."

Both parents shared a look of disbelief. It had been an awful surprise to the both of them when they had thought it was an accident, but this... "You *jumped*?" Lois asked incredulously.

Another yawn from the back seat. "Tryin' t' fly like Daddy. I did it for a minute. Up, up, an' 'way."

Lois' jaw dropped, staring at the small girl in the backseat with shocked horror. How could they not have known that their inquisitive little girl wouldn't try something of this nature? Then again, how many kids talked about doing this sort of thing, but never actually *did* it? Although, to be fair, how many other children had the motivation? Rolling her eyes, Lois gave a gusty sigh. Thank God she hadn't tried jumping off something higher ... like out a *window*...

"Honey, I couldn't fly until I was much older," Clark was telling her, also looking at his own daughter in consternation. "What made you think you could fly now?"

Kala stretched just a bit and wrinkled her nose sleepily, her head resting against the window. Her voice trailing off again, she managed to reply matter-of-factly, "Wanted to," before falling asleep again.

The calm and certain way the little girl said this just made Lois and Clark look at each other with incredulity. They had known they would have issues from time to time with the twins' heritage and what it would mean to them in the long run, but never this early. "Oh, my God," Lois sighed, fighting back amazed laughter.

Looking decidedly unamused, Clark just looked at her and crossed his arms. "She gets this from *you*."

Lois snorted amused laughter. "How do you figure that, hero?"

"*How* many falls have I rescued you from?" Clark retorted. "My debut was your

unfortunate exit from a helicopter. Later, you twice tried to prove my identity with falls: jumping out of a sixtieth-floor window one day and into the rapids below Niagara Falls the next. Shortly after I came back from Krypton, my very first day back in Metropolis, I catch a falling jet with you on it. And let's not talk about the time that crooked developer pushed you out a window, or the bridge incident, or..."

"All right!" Lois exclaimed, mildly embarrassed at the memory of some of those events. "But how does that all relate to Kala? It's just bad luck."

"*Luck?*" Clark chuckled incredulously. "It's far beyond luck, Lois. Heights are your personal kryptonite... and it seems like Kala's inherited *that* from you."

Lois scowled at him, but Clark only smiled and took her hand, kissing it. That charmed a laugh out of her, and Lois teased, "And just like me, when she falls, Superman comes running to save her. Not a bad trait to inherit, I think, though *you* have to work on your timing - you generally catch me *before* I land."