

[David Lance POV]

As Darkseid prepared his army to destroy Brainiac, I was left alone to plan how to deal with the entire situation, and by that, I truly meant how to kill them both.

Both Brainiac and Darkseid were threats of immeasurable strength, threats that this universe wasn't ready to face, not by a long shot. Especially not after my war with Superman, that while short-lived, had removed many of the big guns this universe had to offer.

The point was that both Brainiac and Darkseid had the universe in their grasp.

Darkseid specifically.

Brainiac was a threat, sure. But Darkseid, well, he was a different story altogether. His power, the real length of his reach went beyond simple words.

He couldn't be killed.

Not permanently, at least.

Brainiac could, you just need the right tools and a good plan.

In Darkseid's case, what made him dangerous was that you weren't fighting the real him, but an avatar with but a fraction of his power.

In a battle of might alone against his avatar, I wasn't entirely sure what the outcome would be. Darkseid's avatar was strong, very strong, not only he had superhuman strength and stamina relatively similar to mine, but on top of that, he had a regeneration factor stronger than mine, according to scans I have done with my rings, so, combined with his nigh invulnerability, well, it all makes him practically immortal.

That still didn't mean I was outmatched, just that going against him as I did against Superman, wouldn't be the wisest of ideas.

In fact, If I could have it my way; I would honestly prefer it if I could avoid direct confrontation with him. Not all fights had to be dealt with personally, or directly.

But, regardless of my preferences, I had to prepare. Just like I had to prepare against Brainiac.

I had two problems, two enemies, each one requiring a different approach.

"Kitty help?" Dex-Starr asked, hovering next to me. His black tail swished from side to side.

I smiled before extending my hand to pet him, eliciting a purr on his part. "Don't worry, kitty will help when the time comes."

I honestly had no idea how to approach my situation, it was... hard to think of a reasonable solution as both problems seemed out of my reach. Perhaps I wasn't giving it enough thought, I mean, it was hard to think of anything right now.

I suppose the fact that Raven was here was to blame for how troubled I was.

That, and the fact that Lucifer was somehow invested in all of this, someone who I had no hope of defeating, or getting rid of. My best bet was to bore him.

Though to be fair, Lucifer barely occupied any space in my mind.

It was Raven who bewitched my every thought, her presence always there, like knowledge refusing to be forgotten. And how could she not invade my every thought? Now that I knew she was here, I wanted to talk to her, and tell her how sorry I was for everything, even though I considered what I did to be right.

I wanted to hug her.

To feel at home for the first time... in a long time. But, I begrudgingly admit I was afraid to face her, to discover her eyes didn't look at me the same, I was afraid to see if my time here had changed our friendship.

I honestly didn't understand my own feelings right now. I wholeheartedly believed that what I had done was right, yet, I was ashamed to face her. It made no sense.

"Friend anxious?" Dex-Starr asked, tilting his head to the right as his ears lay flat on his head.

"That's... very accurate," I replied with a nod. "Any advice?"

Dex-Starr purred, rubbing against my hand before sitting on my lap. "No need to worry, friend not alone. I good kitty, good kitty help you."

I smiled at his answer and nodded my head in agreement as I extended my hand to scratch behind his ears. "In that case, I can't be anxious can I?"

Dex-Starr purred even louder as he closed his eyes in contentment, "I help, I purr."

I suppose there was no other way to deal with this than the old-fashioned way, ripping the bandaid off and seeing what's what.

I had to face Raven eventually, and delaying our meeting would solve nothing. I just hope what Lucifer said was right, otherwise...

I shook my head to drive away those dark thoughts and stood up from my chair. "Let's go to earth, Dex-Starr."

Without any delay, I took the course to Earth at full speed, with Dex-Starr following close by my side. My heart was heavy, and my emotions were a mess. I didn't want to go back to Earth, not fully at least. I was afraid of... well, losing Raven, but regardless of how I felt, I had to deal with this... now.

For better or for worse, I had to see where I stood.

I sighed, closing my eyes. No sense in giving all of this too much thought.

Without another thought, I continued flying through the abyss that was space, each second bringing my destination closer. The planets around me shone in the darkness, beautiful and distant like a forbidden dream.

Immune to the vastness and magnitude of that which surrounded me, I silently streaked towards my goal, unfazed by what lay ahead. Within moments, the earthly atmosphere began to embrace me and I readied for my arrival with no time for hesitation.

With a deep breath, I steeled myself as I descended toward Earth.

"Friend is okay," Dex-Starr said, his voice comforting and reassuring. "Good kitty here, good kitty help."

His innocent words relieved my anxiety somewhat and allowed me to keep going despite the emotions that threatened to consume me in their unforgiving embrace. With a newfound sense of courage and determination, I continued my descent until I was near enough to put my feet on the ground.

Well, time to find Raven.

However, before I could take a single step, the air switched around me.

And without any time to react, I was taken aback as a very familiar portal opened right in front of me, shimmering in the early morning sun. Watching the portal open felt like an eternity, my heart pounding in anticipation of what lay beyond that hazy opening.

Through it, the one I was looking for came Raven, her violet-blue hair cascading around her face like a river of stars, glowing brighter than the sun that I had seen moments before. Her presence alone froze me in place, as I found myself unable to react in any way.

My heart hammered against my chest in a turmoil of emotions, I was scared so very scared, and excited all at once. More than anything, I wanted to run up to her and hug her tightly. But would she return my hug?

I could hardly process any rational thoughts as I remained completely paralyzed in place until without a warning the warmth of her embrace slowly lulled me into a state of peacefulness. I could hardly believe my eyes without realizing it, she had pulled me into a warm embrace.

Her touch felt like the warmth of the sun after a long, unforgiving winter.

"Why did it take you so long to get here?" Raven muttered between breaths, her face buried in my chest as she held me tightly, tears streaming down her cheeks into my body.

I said nothing, simply hugging her back and gently stroking her hair, my own eyes filled with tears I hadn't even noticed were there until they started dropping on her head.

"You really thought I would hate you?" Raven asked, stepping back to look me in the eye.

I nodded weakly, unable to reply in any other form as I tried to swallow a lump of emotions that had been stuck in my throat.

"Good to know you're still stupid," Raven replied, her voice still trembling between the tears but with a hint of laughter in it.

"I'm afraid to inform you that I could never hate you."

~Good to know,~ I signed with a weak smile on my face.

"Now let me burn my sappy feelings away in silence," Raven said, wiping her tears before embracing once more.

