

A Small Trap

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Rated: G

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Summary: To catch a small Superhero, set a small trap.

[Disclaimer: The story is mine, but the characters are not. I am merely borrowing the characters from WB, DC Comics, etc. This is a not for profit work. (Incidentally, I borrowed the disclaimer too.)]

Author's note: I originally wrote this a long time ago, but when I posted it to the forum there was a strong sentiment that David's motivation was missing. I kept it on my hard disk and finally pasted over it and made a joke about it too. Comments appreciated at 72570.2264@compuserve.com

Laura was playing in her sandbox. She was building a steep hill of sand over a collection of small toy houses. Soon the 'hill' would collapse and a rockslide would pour down to destroy the make believe town. But that was okay because a superhero would swoop down to save the day. That would be just in time for lunch, the lunch Mama Lois was preparing. Laura licked her lips and stared at the house, wondering if lunch was almost ready. Mama always took longer than Daddy did to cook things, but Daddy was away saving the world.

Laura got out her superhero dolls, a superman and a small girl doll in a tight blue dress that looked sort of like a uniform. Then she knocked over the hill and had superman and his daughter, or at least the dolls representing them, save the day. She dreamed about that, helping her daddy save the world. Someday she would help him. She already had a uniform, Grandma Kent had made it for her, after she'd practically begged for one. And she'd practiced diligently getting into the costume as fast as possible until she'd almost worn out her uniform before getting a chance to wear it. Daddy said she wasn't ready to come along and help save the world yet. Daddy was giving her lessons in using them, but her powers were still developing. She looked at the wall of the house again, wondering if lunch was ready yet, but the aluminum siding was enough to block her young vision powers again.

Laura gave up on trying to see through the walls, some days it worked, some days it didn't. She switched to trying to smell whether lunch was ready yet. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath and let the scents fill her nose, in that part that made her senses special. She smelled the detergent on her shirt, the sand in the box, the dandelion at the edge of the yard next to the road. She smelled Mama's perfume. She smelled smoke. That was odd. Definitely smoke. Had Mama burnt whatever she was trying to cook, again? Laura took a deeper breath. No, it wasn't lunch that was burning, it was wood. Her hearing kicked in, in that special way that

made it hurt if there were nearby noises but could hear a whisper down the block. And she could hear the crackling sound the fireplace made in winter. Fire! These were the scents and sounds of a fire!

Laura opened her eyes. There was a building on fire about a block away, she knew exactly where it was. She could hear fire engines heading towards it but they would take minutes to arrive. She dropped her dolls in the sand and headed inside. "Mama?" she called.

Mama said, "Huh?"

"Mama, there's a fire down the street! I hear the fire truck coming."

This motivated Mama a bit. She came out of the kitchen drying her hands on a towel. 'News' always made her move (it was like she could smell it, and even Laura's half special nose couldn't smell that yet).

"I'm going to see if I can see anything!" Laura said, running up the stairs. Mama apparently figured Laura was going to look out the upper windows and see if she could see anything. Mama apparently wasn't paying very good attention. Laura rushed into her room at the front of the house and she even opened the window, but she didn't bother to look out yet. First she went to her closet and got the big cardboard box labeled private off the shelf. She opened it and pulled out the blue costume Grandma Kent had made for her. She rushed to get into it.

A few seconds later she was floating out the window having set a new record for getting into her costume, though still far slower than Daddy did it. Laura could hear Mama listening to the police/fire scanner. Laura glided north, keeping level with the roofs, unobserved by people who, even in Metropolis, rarely look up. Two blocks north she reached the house that was on fire.

Laura remembered what her father had said about checking a building for victims. She listened carefully to see if there were any heartbeats from within. And used her special sight to look inside. This time she was able to see through the walls and it seemed to turn into a building of glass with opaque wires and pipes. Was she able to see through it because she was trying harder or was this house somehow less opaque?

The fire engine was only a block away and everyone was already out of the house. Not even a trapped dog. While Laura was a little disappointed that she didn't get to rescue anyone she was glad no one would be hurt. She turned and headed back towards home.

She was within a couple of houses of home, at the end of her own block, over the big oak tree, when she saw him. A small boy (about her age) staring up into the tree saying "How did you get up there?"

At first she was afraid he'd seen her but the leaves should have blocked the view of anyone without x-ray vision. The she realized there was a cat in the tree, looking a little weather bedraggled.

Lara settled to the ground and silently sighed with relief

now that her limited flight powers weren't being taxed. It was really nice to rest. "Got up there and can't figure out how to get itself down?" she asked rhetorically.

The boy didn't even turn around. "Yeah, and I can't figure out how to get up there."

"Well, I can help it get down," Laura said. And she levitated straight up to the branch the little black cat was stuck on. "So there you are. Would you like to get down?" she asked it, as though it could know or answer. She put her hands around the cat and drew it to her chest. The cat tensed as she lifted it. She began to settle back to the ground and the cat twisted, digging its claws into the cloth of her uniform. Fortunately her skin was safe but she didn't want her uniform damaged on her first rescue. "Easy there, you're safe, we'll be back on the ground in an instant." This didn't seem to mollify the cat, but it apparently got into a more comfortable position because it stopped struggling.

Then she was back on the ground handing the cat to the stunned boy. The boy took the cat but was still staring at her. She wanted to get him to relax so she asked the obvious question to ask any pet owner. "What's his name?"

"Ah, he's a she, er, she's a she. This is... Midnight," he introduced the cat to her. "And you're, you must be Super...girl. Wow!"

"Hello, Midnight" she said to the cat. "Stay out of trees unless you can fly," she advised. Then she raised her head and left the ground. "Good bye," she said.

"Thank you," he called after her. She headed in a direction other than towards home and then changed direction once she was out of sight. So that was her first rescue, she thought, getting a cat out of a tree. It was a start.

The next day Laura went outside to play after breakfast. She decided to go for a walk. She wasn't permitted to cross the street yet, and she wasn't supposed to go past the corner at either end of the block yet. But there were four houses north along the street, and five houses to the south, so she had a satisfying amount of space to roam. This morning she headed north and walked all the way to the corner. There she stood and looked up into the big oak tree she'd rescued a kitten from the previous day.

She felt very proud of getting the kitten down. It wasn't because she had found an excuse to use her powers when she was still too young. And while she was proud of rescuing people, somehow she liked the memory of rescuing this kitten better. Dad had always stopped to rescue cats from trees, and he always seemed proud of it. It wasn't a logical thing to be proud of. Surely if the cat could get into the tree then it could get out of the tree. But it still had special significance. Maybe because it was doing something you didn't have to. You had to rescue people from fires and accidents. But when you got a cat out of a tree, you did it just to be nice.

A boy walked out the back door of the house, slamming it with unnecessary force just to enjoy the sound it made. He looked at her, sized her up, and smiled. It was the boy

from yesterday, the one with the cat. He walked a little closer and jammed his hands deep into his pockets. "Hi."

Since he'd started the conversation and since her parents had raised Laura to be polite she responded. "Hi. I'm Laura from down the street," she pointed south. "The white house."

"I'm David, from here, the blue house." Laura thought the house looked gray to her, but she was too polite to say that and too young to have heard of Oxford blue. "We're new here, just moved in yesterday."

"Welcome to the neighborhood," Laura said, remembering what people had said to her when she'd first moved to this street.

"Thanks," he replied cheerfully, he was now used to people saying that to him. He considered. "I'd invite you to play, but all my toys are still in boxes. Want to help me unpack them?"

"O.K." Laura said. It sounded like an invitation to either play or see what toys he had. As long as it wasn't her toys that needed to be put away, it was fine by her.

David quickly moved to a large battered box held shut by lots of tape haphazardly draped across the top (obviously he'd closed it himself), which he started to rip open. Laura moved over and helped pull tape off, careful not to pull too hard and give away how hard she could pull. The box eventually came open and one side split dumping toys over the skimpy grass. Laura had never seen so many toy trucks in her life, but then she didn't know many boys. There was one remote control car at the bottom. It looked like it would be fun to use, especially to have a superhero doll save a pedestrian from being run over by. But that wasn't the sort of game you played in front of others.

After sorting out the toy trucks into outside toys, that could be left under the porch, and inside toys that belonged in his room, they started carrying the inside toys up the stairs. When they finally got all the trucks in place (and dumped on the floor in the corner of his room) he started to show her what games he had.

Midnight chose this time to come out. He sauntered across the floor towards Laura, slowly, as though he had all the time in the world. When he finally reached her he looked her over then began rubbing her back against Laura's leg.

"She likes you," David announced.

"She has good taste," Laura responded.

David laughed. Laura put Midnight in her lap and began stroking her.

"You're a good cat, Midnight," she told him, giving the cat a hug. Then she looked up to find David staring at her.

"You picked up Shadow but you called her Midnight," David said, confused. "...That's what I told Supergirl..." He stared at her. "YOU'RE SUPERGIRL!" he gasped.

Laura mentally kicked herself but couldn't take time to really do anything. She'd blown it. She'd said something she shouldn't have known to. Alternate explanations whirled through her head: "it was an obvious name... She knew

Supergirl who had told her..." She looked at David and all the explanations and stories drained away. The look on his face showed he knew.

That thought burned a bright streak through her mind "he knew". She was in shock "he knew her secret." She tried to think what to do but all that went through her mind was "he knew". He knew her secret, and Daddy's secret, the secret she'd been told for as long as she could talk that she must never reveal.

She jumped to her feet, scattering poor Midnight Shadow actually. "If you tell anyone," she began, then searched for a threat "I'll...I'll..." She couldn't find a threat. She might be able to throw him through a wall or drop him from a hundred feet up, but she'd never be able to do that to a human being. "I'll never talk to you again in my life!" she threatened and then made a dash for outside.

She bounded down the stairs, barely bothering to step on every fifth tread, flying over the rest. She grabbed the screen door, pushed it open and then slammed it shut behind her. The satisfying bang as it hit the frame was some consolation. The sound of splintering wood as half-kryptonian strength slammed a door was ignored as she pelted up the street, barely holding herself to human speed.

"Mama! Mama!" cried Laura as she ran into the kitchen crying.

Lois came running, hearing her baby crying. "What's the matter, dear?" she asked grabbing Laura in a hug, fearing what could possibly cause this in her super powered daughter.

Laura sniffled, rubbed her nose, and tried to think of how to explain the terrible thing she'd done.

"Mama, there was a cat and I called it Midnight but it was actually Shadow and he knows and I don't know what to do and-"

Lois soothed her child, not even beginning to understand the impressive stream of babble. It took several minutes to get a straight recounting of the story. Then Lois tensed, thoughts rushing through her mind. But she forced herself to relax, for Laura's sake. After she got Laura calmed down again she just hugged her little girl. And finally got a chance to think. This was something she needed to talk to Clark about. But Clark, or at least Superman, was half a world away helping clean up after an earthquake in Turkey. She considered. The young boy in question wouldn't be spreading his discovery to any underworld kingpins in the next few hours. By then Clark would be home.

Clark and she had prepared an emergency plan for the secret being discovered. It started by hiding vulnerable people in out of the way parts of the world. It would make a major disruption. She could start it now just by making a phone call and reciting a coded phrase. She decided to wait for Clark.

Meanwhile, four houses up the street, a young boy was nearly as frightened as Laura was. He'd just learned a

fabulous secret. And simultaneously he'd offended one of the most powerful people on the planet. A person who could easily wipe out him, his family and the entire house to keep that secret. If she wanted to then there was nothing he could do to defend himself.

He didn't know what to do. He considered talking to his dad about it, but then he'd have to tell Dad the secret. The secret that was dangerous to know. He spun around the room staring at the walls wondering what to do, or maybe it spun around him. He sat down and tried to think. The only thing he could come up with was to promise not to tell and hopefully convince them that he meant it. He pulled on his sneakers and tied the laces. Then he walked down the stairs.

Dad had a screwdriver and was looking at the back door, which was cracked. Cracked where a little girl, a little Supergirl, had slammed it. "Looks like the wind caught this a good one last night and cracked the wood. I'll have to replace it but the screen is still good... Ah, David? You O.K.?" asked Dad.

"Yes," said a restrained David. He walked around to the front of the house.

His father wondered why his son was so quiet, but it reminded him of when he was in love. Kind of young for that. He went back to removing the hinges from the door.

David walked down the street, four houses, until he got to the white house. He gulped. "They live here," he thought.

Lois had just sent Laura up to her room, with a cookie to make her feel better. It wasn't a very good cookie, Lois had baked it herself, but it was a cookie and it was the thought that counted. She was still toying with the idea of making the phone call and using the code phrase when she heard a very soft knock on the door. She looked through the screen and saw a small boy peering in. Maybe the smell of baking cookies had attracted him. Of course, they were slightly burnt. It could happen, she told herself, maybe he has a cold and can't smell them properly; he certainly looked miserable enough. "Hi," she called, "want a cookie?" She picked up a cookie and stepped out onto the porch.

The little boy moved to the far side of the porch, almost pressing his back against the railing, as though he were scared of her. She held out the cookie. "They're not too bad, if you eat around the burnt side."

Upstairs, Laura heard Mama talking and looked down through the floor with her X-ray vision. And froze, there was the boy who knew her secret, and Mama was talking to him.

David stared at the pretty dark haired woman who was offering him a slightly singed cookie. "Are you Laura's mother?" he asked through a dry mouth.

"Yes, I am. Do you know Laura?" Lois asked, surprised.

For a few seconds he didn't say anything, then he started to talk very fast, almost running words together "Yes, I-know-her, and-I-promise-not-to-tell and please-don't-hurt-me!"

An inkling started to penetrate Lois' mind. She moved

over and sat on the top of the steps. "I'm not going to hurt you... my cookies aren't that bad." She broke the cookie in half, nibbled the more charred half and offered the remaining half to David. She patted the floor next to her. "Sit down and tell me what's bothering you."

David was almost paralyzed with fright. This was Supergirl's mother, Superman's wife, she must be a power in her own right... though he didn't remember ever hearing about her. On the other hand, he didn't want to offend her, so he sat down where she indicated. And he took the half a cookie she offered. It seemed a little hard, but otherwise fine.

David took a deep breath to settle his thoughts. "I don't know why I did it, but when I met your daughter I set a small trap for her. It wasn't much of a trap, and I didn't mean any harm. I just told her something no one else would know. Today I caught her when she used the fact that only she knew." He swallowed, then began speaking very fast, "I haven't told anyone else" (that would protect Dad and Mom) "and I won't ever tell anyone," (that might protect him). He stared up at the pretty little woman. "Please don't hurt me," he begged.

Lois was a little put back by the 'don't hurt me' request. "Why do you think I'd hurt you?"

David shuddered. "To keep your secret. You could kill me just by looking at me so I don't reveal Laura's secret, and your secret and Superman's secret..."

Lois put her finger up to her lips and softly shushed him. "I won't hurt you. And you're overstating my ability to hurt you."

"But you're Laura's mother, married to Superman, you could kill me by looking at me-"

"You're right about my being Laura's mother, and about my husband. But I'm human. It's kind of why we have to

keep it secret, Laura and Clark can take care of themselves, I'm vulnerable."

David stared up at her. There was an idea that had never occurred to him.

"We would never hurt you just to protect a secret. But I have to tell you, warn you, that there are people who would want that secret and would be quite willing to hurt you to get it. So you want to keep it secret even that you know this secret."

"Yes, Ma'am, I understand. I won't tell anyone."

"It's going to be harder than you think right now," she warned. "You're going to want to tell people. I'd appreciate it if you'd resist. The more people who know the more danger people are in." She looked down at the little boy, then moved her head closer to his and said, conspiratorially, "I'm kind of glad that Laura has one friend who knows, I worry about her."

David looked up at her in wonder, why was she worrying about Supergirl?

"It's a mother's prerogative to worry," Lois explained with a smile. "...but tell me, why did you set a 'trap' for Laura?"

"Well... that's what all my Batman comic books say you're supposed to do when you meet a superhero. You set a trap for him... or her. And... well, I kind of thought telling a superhero that you named your black cat Shadow just sounded dumb. Frankly, I never thought the traps from the comic books would ever work..."

"Neither did I," she said with a grin, thinking back to before her marriage.

THE END