

Hunt in a Red October

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Summary: A brutal murder in Centennial Park brings Clark Kent face to face with Dexter Morgan. But when Clark's disappearing act catches Dexter's eye, the killer is sure that the reporter is hiding something, and that he may just be the next kill to satisfy the Dark Passenger.

Disclaimer: I own nothing. I make nothing. I just thought it would be fun to have Clark and Dexter together in a story. All Lois and Clark characters, lines of dialogue, and plot points belong to DC Comics, Warner Brothers, December 3rd Productions, and anyone else with a stake in the Superman franchise. All Dexter characters, lines of dialogue, and plot points belong to Showtime, Jeff Lindsay, and anyone else with a stake in the Dexter franchise.

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Author's Note: This story takes place shortly after the end of Dexter Season 5 and before Season 6. (It WILL contain spoilers for Season 5!) For the non-Dexter fans, all you really have to know is that Dexter is a serial killer who only kills other bad people (mostly other serial killers). He refers to the darkness inside him as his Dark Passenger. During the day, he is a blood spatter expert for the Miami-Dade County Police Department. I have done my best to make both fandoms as accessible as possible for the non-fans. I really did try to capture the dark humor of Dexter.

Also, there's only one or two mildly "bad" words — nothing near what the language is on Dexter.

Metropolis.

A crowded, stinking mass of human beings. Not so different from Miami I suppose. Sure, there are the obvious differences. No palm trees for one. And I've been here a whole five hours now and haven't seen any half-naked joggers dashing down the sidewalks. In fact, everyone here is dressed in thin jackets against the chill wind that is blowing. A rain of red leaves drifts to the ground, shaken loose by the stiff late October breeze. Like a rain of sweet blood.

I hate it here already.

I would much rather be home, in my element. The streets and dark alleys that I know so well. The comforting thought of my boat close at hand for the quick disposal of the evidence of my extracurricular activities. I feel so out of place here, though the cloak of anonymity is a bonus. It's nice to be able to just blend into the crowd. It's somehow even comforting. Right now, I need to clear my head after all that has happened. Rita's death. Harrison's baptism by blood. Trinity.

And her. Especially her.

I need to get her out of my thoughts.

Lumen.

Lumen saw me for who I truly am. A monster in a human disguise. She embraced my Dark Passenger. For once in my life, perhaps for the first time ever, I had truly connected with someone. For the briefest of moments, I felt like I might develop

true human emotions. I felt like I might understand the love that can exist between a man and a woman. And I almost did.

Oh, I cared for my wife, Rita, in the only way that I knew how. But Lumen touched my life in a profound way. But her Dark Passenger vanished when we killed Jordan Chase, the man who had orchestrated the torture, rape, and murders of at least a dozen girls, of which, Lumen was the only one to escape with her life. And when she made that kill and the darkness left her, I was alone again.

Still, after this week, I'll be back home in Miami once more. Back home with my son, Harrison, and my step-children, Astor and Cody. In a lot of ways, I look forward to being back home with them. Even a serial killer like me can have a soft spot. And children are my soft spot. Their innocence — such a stark contrast for the innocent childhood that I never had. It makes me very protective of children.

"Hey, Morgan, if you don't mind, I'd like to get this wrapped up sometime today."

I turn back around to the crime scene, plastering on a fake smile, though I yearn to rip out the man's spleen. Police Chief Henderson is staring at me, his hands on his hips, his eyes obscured by dark sunglasses. I grit my teeth against the scathing retort burning on my tongue and keep my smile under tight control. Now is not the time to make waves. Now is the time to maintain the mask that I wear for all the world to see.

There's a dead body laying in a pool of blood not ten feet from where I am standing. And I want to know who did this. I have to know. My Dark Passenger demands it.

"Sorry," I apologize. "I was just trying to get the lay of the land."

We're in a quiet section of the local park. Centennial Park, as I heard someone refer to it earlier. The crime scene is cordoned off with bright yellow police tape that snaps as the stiff breeze pushes and pulls at it. Beyond the tape, onlookers have gathered, succumbing to the morbid curiosity that we all harbor inside. Police officers are standing all around, only about half of them still working their areas for evidence. Odd, how familiar this sight is, and yet so strange and new. It's a new experience for me to work a crime scene without Sergeant Batista, Vince Masuka, or my sister Deb around. It's even strange to not have the presence of Detective Quinn around, as much as I usually want to drag him off to some convenient, secluded spot and let my Dark Passenger have some fun with him.

"Well," I say at last to Chief Henderson. "The victim was standing here, facing this tree when the attack came from behind. Probably stopped to unload some of the drinks he'd been having." He gives me a look that silently asks where that assumption is coming from, so I point to the victim's right hand. "The stamp on his hand looks like it might be from a club or a bar." I'm not sure what 'The Metro' is, so I leave my description vague.

"Killed while taking a leak," Henderson says, shaking his head. "Rough break."

I nod, faking sympathy for the dead young man. "The blood spatter suggests that he was hit with something heavy and broad. He staggered back, away from the trees and then fell to his knees. He was hit again in the back of his head and finally collapsed, right where he's laying now. But he wasn't dead yet. Another strike to the head here, and another one here," I indicate with my finger, "finished him off."

"What kind of a weapon do you think we're looking for?" Henderson asks, nodding and taking it all in.

"Probably a heavy branch from one of these trees. The pattern of wounds are irregular. Like the bark of a tree. I've seen it once or twice in Miami. This probably wasn't a planned attack, and the attacker was very inexperienced."

Henderson nods again, thoughtfully this time. "I appreciate

your expertise,” he says, just as a man and a woman jog up to the scene, waving once at the police chief.

Henderson’s face breaks into a smile, and it’s a wonder that the stony exterior doesn’t crack into a million pieces by the movement.

“Kent and Kent!” he says, waving them over, warmth infusing his gruff voice. Funny, he’s been barking at the rest of us like a pit bull all morning.

“Chief Henderson,” the man greets him, in a voice both grave and warm, smiling brightly the whole time. “Congratulations again, Bill.”

“Thanks, Clark,” the police chief replies, seeming to forget poor invisible Dexter. Not that I mind. Being invisible often has its advantages. Especially for people with my hobby.

“Sorry we didn’t get the chance to speak with you last week,” the woman says. “But that press conference after the ceremony was crazy.”

Henderson laughs, and I almost do a double take at the unexpected sound. “Yeah, you’re telling me, Lois. I wanted to speak with you both also, give you a few exclusive quotes. But the mayor got a hold of my ear and wouldn’t let go. He can talk for hours if you let him. Especially about golf. Anyway, I read the article that you two wrote on it. Thanks for making me look good.” He laughs again.

“Our pleasure. Say, what are you even doing here?” Lois asks. “Shouldn’t you be off in some cushy office?” She grins at him.

Henderson shrugs. “Old habits die hard. Plus, half the station came down with the flu. My entire forensics team is out today. That’s why Morgan here is giving me a hand. Thank God for the forensics convention being held this week in the Lexor.”

“Right. I’m covering some of it when it starts tomorrow.” Clark holds his hand out to me and I strip off my latex glove to shake it. “Clark Kent and my wife Lois. We’re reporters for the Daily Planet. A pleasure to meet you.”

“Dexter Morgan. Miami Metro Homicide. I specialize in blood spatter. I’ve read your work. You guys covered that serial killer what, five, six years ago in Metropolis, right?”

Lois nods. “Yeah. Bret Craig. The Clown Killer. What a freak. Who dresses up in clown makeup to slip into nursing homes to kill old people?”

“Yeah,” I agree. “Some sick people out there.”

And I do agree. Clown makeup is creepy enough, even to a monster like me. Whatever happened to the good old fashioned stalk-in-the-shadows like I am so fond of?

“So, what have we got here?” Clark asks, gesturing to the scene behind us.

A body bag is being zippered closed around the victim. A team of officers begins to lift him onto a stretcher to be taken to the morgue. Another officer comes over to me, and I hand over my borrowed camera and blood kit, the samples neatly nestled inside.

“Male victim, approximately nineteen years old. Hit from behind twice, then from the front. Most likely robbed. We found an empty wallet nearby, nothing but a library card and a fake ID. Name on the library card says Alfred Villanova. Name on the ID says Ray Solace, twenty four years old. Probably drunk off his ass.”

Lois is writing the details down in a small notebook, her dark hair falling before her face as she bends her neck over her task. She tucks the stray locks back behind her ear. “Anything else you can tell us?” she asks, never looking up from the paper.

Henderson nods. “The body was found by a couple walking their two German Shepherds. That was about two, maybe three hours ago. Time of death was approximately...” he glances at me.

“Uh, somewhere between two and four am.”

An odd look flashes in Clark’s eyes. It’s there and gone in

less than a second, but my Dark Passenger stirs sleepily at it nonetheless.

Was it guilt?

Out of the corner of my eye, I sneak a look at the police chief. He doesn’t seem to have noticed. Perhaps the easy familiarity with these two reporters has blinded him to such things. Me, I file the look away in the back of my mind.

I quickly assess the man now. His height and build fit the profile of the teen’s killer. The blood has told me the whole story. How the attacker had to be around six feet tall. How strong he’d need to be to wield the tree limb that took the drunk’s life. Clark has the right height and would certainly have the strength to wield the murder weapon. I felt the power in his handshake and he’s clearly in top physical form.

“Superman was off fighting a brush fire in California about that time,” Clark says thoughtfully.

“He can’t be everywhere at once,” Henderson shrugs. “I saw the footage of him on the news this morning. He saved the lives of hundreds last night.”

Clark nods, and I notice the slightest reluctance to his agreement. “Well, once you have a suspect, I’ll make sure to ask Superman to keep an eye out for whoever it is. I’m sure he’d be more than willing to help out.”

That reminds me. I’m in Superman’s hometown now. I need to be extra careful to keep my Dark Passenger hidden away. Especially when I find the teen’s killer and put him away for good. Can’t have the Boy Scout in the blue tights getting wind of the monster inside me.

“Always appreciated,” Henderson says gratefully.

“Can you give us any more details about the attack?” Lois asks, steering the conversation away from the superhero.

“I’ve got a meeting back at the station in twenty minutes,” Henderson says, checking his watch. “Morgan, you up for giving these folks the details?”

“Sure,” I say, mustering up a fake smile and even faker enthusiasm. I hate the press.

“Great,” Henderson says, his smile gone since the conversation turned to the stiff that we’ve been examining. “Clark, Lois, maybe we can grab some coffee next week and catch up.”

“Sure thing, Bill,” Clark replies, a genuine smile curving his lips.

Henderson turns on his heel in the grass and swiftly walks off, barking a few more orders as he goes. I decide that he’s a good cop, even if he’s lacking in a personality. It makes me long for the big personalities of my Miami Metro counterparts. If I was capable of having true friends, they would be it.

“I really should get the lab work started on the samples though. Mind if I meet up with you later?” I say. “I should have more information for you then.”

“Of course,” Clark says. He hands me a business card with the address of the Daily Planet on it.

“Great,” I say. “Give me about three or four hours?”

“Sure,” Lois says, nodding. “We definitely appreciate this, Mr. Morgan.”

“Dexter, please,” I say as a reflex.

“Dexter.” She smiles and starts to turn away.

“Wait,” Clark says.

He gives me a peculiar look, like he’s seen me before but can’t quite place me. Which is, of course, impossible. I know that I’ve never seen him before in my life, except for his byline photos and Daily Planet ads.

“Dexter Morgan. Miami Metro.” He shakes his head at whatever path his thoughts have taken. “I know you from somewhere.” He snaps his fingers together. “Your department was tracking the Trinity Killer last year. I remember reading about it in the Miami Herald. I’m so sorry about your wife.”

I'm momentarily taken aback. This stranger not only remembers me from an article that he read in newspaper, but there is genuineness to his condolences. He's actually sorry for Rita's murder at the hands of Trinity — a woman that he'd never even met. My Dark Passenger perks his head up in suspicion and I have to force him back down again before I can speak.

"Oh, God, that's right," Lois chimes in, one hand going up to cover her mouth in sincere horror. "I am so sorry."

"Thank you," I say, now thoroughly uncomfortable.

"Frank Lundy was on that case, wasn't he?" Clark asks.

I nod. "Yeah, he was."

"Shame about him," Clark says, remorse in his voice as he refers to Lundy's murder. "He was a good man. I met him a few years ago. He helped the Metropolis PD catch the Clown Killer."

"Yeah," I agree. "He was something all right." Like the man who nearly caught me a few years ago when my former playmates were discovered in the bay.

Then, wanting to be away from this disconcerting man and situation, I excuse myself. "I really should be going now. Some of the tests I need to run are time sensitive. I can do them later, but it's always better to do them sooner. And of course, it puts us that much closer to finding out who did this."

And I really want to know who did this. I have only six more days left here in Metropolis. Six days to try and deliver my own, unique brand of justice to the person who killed that teenager. Six days to stalk my prey, gather my supplies of plastic sheeting and duct tape, and figure out where to dispose of the body. My Dark Passenger is eager for the next kill. It's been over a month since I've last let him take the reins and find a new playmate. Dark, leathery wings shift and flex eagerly within me.

True to my word, three hours later I step into the lobby of the Daily Planet. The ground floor is thick with the scent of coffee of every variety. I stop and purchase a hazelnut brew. I don't particularly want coffee right now, but part of keeping up the mask that I wear is blending in by doing what everyone else is doing. Camouflage. Nature's best defense. And three out of every five people around me are sipping from the plain white Styrofoam cups. At least this place is cheaper than the Starbucks that Masuka is so fond of.

I ride the empty elevator up to the bullpen of the newspaper, sipping absentmindedly on my coffee. The machine softly dings as it comes to a stop and the doors slide open to utter chaos. I'm used to chaos. There's never a dull moment at the police station. But the energy here, in this place, is so very different. The sense of urgency is different. At Miami Metro, the clock starts ticking from the moment we discover a new homicide victim. Here though, the rush is all about beating out the competition, day in and day out.

I look out over the chaos and feel a sort of calm sweep over me. The busier people are, the less time they have to study the stranger in their midst. Later on, they might vaguely remember seeing a new face, but they won't remember his name, or what he was wearing, or the fact that he had a police laminate ID hanging about his neck. They will simply shrug and won't ask questions about who the man was or what his business was.

Like I said, invisible is good.

An older, gray haired man comes storming out of an office near the back of the room, shouting orders in a soft southern drawl. By the way people jump at his words, I'm guessing he's the man in charge. He stops over at a desk to speak with the occupants, and there they are. The reporters that I'm supposed to be feeding information to. I make my way down the ramp and into the heart of chaos. As expected, no one pays me any mind. I'm not a source or a gofer or the editor, so they just don't care.

Lois and Clark are at the same desk. She's typing while he comments, poking the eraser end of a pencil at the screen. They

laugh and share a loving gaze. Then Clark pokes at something else.

"That's not even a word," he protests, laughter on the edges of his words. I can just hear him over the dull roar of the newsroom.

"It is too!" she laughs back.

"Ok, show me where in the dictionary that word exists," he challenges.

"Fine, let's look it up," she says, rising to the challenge.

"Dexter," Clark greets me when he notices me. He slides off of his perch on the edge of his wife's desk.

"Hi," I say, feeling a bit awkward.

I don't usually deal with the press at all. I can usually just direct reporters to Lieutenant LaGuerta or Captain Matthews and wash my hands of the whole thing. But Lois and Clark usher me towards an empty conference room. Clark shuts the door behind us. Instantly the deafening sounds of voices, incoming faxes, and ringing phones ceases. I take a seat across from the two reporters, feeling for all the world like I'm about to be interrogated.

"We really appreciate you coming all the way over here," Clark says, a broad smile on his face.

"Not a problem," I assure him. And I'm not lying. I need to get a closer look at the Passenger that he's hiding within him.

"I'm only in town for the convention, like Chief Henderson said. But that doesn't start until tomorrow, as I guess you already know. I, uh, have to warn you. I usually don't have any dealings with the press."

Lois smiles. "That's all right," she says, and I believe her sincerity. "Just tell us whatever you can, whatever Henderson is allowing you to release to us."

"Okay. Not all of the tests are complete," I say. "But it looks like the kid was completely hammered at the time of death. Henderson's going to be checking out a place called The Metro for serving a minor. We're looking for an assailant maybe six feet tall, give or take an inch, based on the angle of the wounds and the direction of the blood spatter. He was probably hit with a heavy tree limb."

"Any evidence of a struggle?" Clark asks. I can't tell if he's doing the investigative reporter thing or if he's wondering for personal reasons.

"There was some blood under the victim's fingernails," I confirm, closely studying his reaction.

I'm confused at the reaction that I get. I'm expecting a blank stare or maybe panic or at least some curiosity. But the strangest look passes over Clark's face. Like he's not listening anymore. Like he hears something within his own mind. His gaze shifts to someplace far away. In a second, he's snapped back to reality. Most people would have missed it. But nothing gets by deeply perceptive Dexter. Within me, the Dark Passenger unfurls his wings and stretches.

"Uh, Lois. I completely forgot. Mrs. Kowalski asked me to pick up her cat from the vet's office today since she can't get out. I better go before the office closes. Can you finish up here?"

"Right. Her broken hip. Don't worry, I've got this. See you later."

She's covering for him. Her tone might fool others, but not me. It's clear that she's used to covering for him. But covering for what? A quick glance at the wall clock tells me that it is only one in the afternoon. Far too early for any vet's office to be in danger of closing.

"Thanks again, Dexter," Clark says, shaking my hand firmly but fleetingly before rushing off into the thick of the bullpen. He has one hand to the knot of his tie as he does so, and there is a look of concealed urgency on his face.

I finish giving Lois the information that I have on our dearly departed drunk. I don't really register what I am saying. My mind is fixed on the vanished reporter. He's definitely hiding

something, that much is clear to me. Most people might not notice it, but I'm not most people. The question is: what, exactly, is he hiding? And more importantly, does it warrant him a trip to my table?

Whatever it is that Clark's hiding, Lois knows what it is. Could a double play date be in my future?

My Dark Passenger is having a strong reaction to this man. Stronger than he's ever reacted to any other villain in disguise. My mind is made up. My focus has shifted to this man. I need to know what he is hiding and if he meets the Code of Harry — the set of rules that I follow when choosing my victims. If he does meet the code, my Dark Passenger will finally get his playmate. I start compiling a list of things that I'm going to need, should I find out that Clark Kent will be the next person on my table.

Lois walks me back out of the conference room once I run out of information to give her. She thanks me profusely as she neatly tucks her notes under one arm. We're just passing Clark's desk when the editor yells out to the reporter next to me.

"Lois! Staff meeting in ten! Where in blue blazes is that husband of yours?"

"Picking up our elderly neighbor's cat, Chief. He should be back soon though."

"Judas Priest!" the editor bellows. "I swear, if he wasn't one of the best damn reporters on my staff..." He lets his voice trail off. "Jimmy!" And with that, he's moved on again.

The momentary distraction is all I need to quickly study Clark's desk. It's painfully neat. A few folders, presumably of research notes, are stacked to the left of his computer monitor. A few framed pictures showcase Lois and Clark with three smiling children, two boys and a girl. There's nothing else of note, except for a half empty Pepsi bottle and an empty Tupperware container, still smeared on the inside with what looks like barbecue sauce.

But the short conversation has given me another piece of evidence to weigh. Apparently, Clark makes a habit of vanishing. My Dark Passenger cracks his knuckles in anticipation of the hunt. Soon, I promise him. Very soon.

Night.

The perfect time for the hunt.

Unfortunately, the Code of Harry demands irrefutable evidence of wrongdoing before I can go for the kill. It helps me to stay safe. And it helps to keep innocent people off my table.

So here I am, sitting in my darkened hotel room, smelling the scent of the cleaning products that the maids have used during the day. Half a pizza sits cooling in its box on top of the extra bed in the room. Cracking my knuckles, I start my research. Using my access to the police data base, I run a search on Lois and Clark.

Hmmm, that's interesting. It appears that Lois was arrested years ago and stood trial for murder. She was found guilty but then acquitted when it was proven to be a set up. The gun was rigged to shoot when triggered remotely. I pull up some news articles that covered the trial and aftermath, some clearly condemning her, others sympathetic to the accused newlywed. Nothing here that I can use.

I move on and research Clark on the police database. Zip. Zero. Nada. Not even a parking ticket that I can find. That's fine. I'll just have to dig a little deeper. The internet can sometimes be my best tool anyway.

Hours of researching later, and all I've come up with is a model citizen. Eight time Kerth award winner, three of which he shares with his wife. Husband and father of three. Regular benefactor to some of the local charities — an orphanage located in midtown and a homeless shelter down in Hobb's Bay, the decidedly more seedy part of town. Valedictorian in each of his schools. Even returns his library books on time.

No matter. Just because he's not in the system doesn't mean anything. Hell, I'm not in the system. On paper, I'm also the

model citizen. I hold a respectable job. I'm on the department's bowling team. I even pay my rent on time, every time. I just happen to kill people on a fairly regular basis. The closest they've ever come to catching me, the "Bay Harbor Butcher," they thought it was someone else, the late Sergeant Doakes.

The most curious thing about Kent is his work history. It seems that in his youth, Clark was a well traveled man. He's got news articles in papers all over the world. Italy, France, Nigeria, Australia, New Zealand, Borneo — the list goes on. But never more than a few months of articles at a time.

What was he hiding that forced him from country to country?

The Dark Passenger growls at me from the darkness. He's eager for the hunt and frustrated at how little we've accomplished tonight.

It's late. Tomorrow, we begin the hunt.

There's a thrill of excitement each time I go hunting. The tenseness in my muscles, coiled and ready to strike. The pounding of my heart. The cold comfort of the shadows that cloak me. Having my prey so close that I can almost taste the kill; that sweet satisfaction that engulfs me when I sate my darker desires.

But not tonight.

I still need my evidence. That's why I'm sitting here in my cold car, sipping the last of a lukewarm hot chocolate, outside of the news building. Waiting. Waiting to see what I can find on the elusive Clark Kent. A million theories have gone through my mind since he first caught my eye yesterday.

Drug dealer. A secret affair. A secret family stashed someplace. Hired gunman. Member of the mob. Serial killer.

His mild-mannered exterior would easily cover any and all of those possibilities, except maybe for the mob member theory, if The Sopranos is anything to go by. And it would hide so many more possibilities.

I intend to find out what dirty little secret he is hiding, if I have to go to the ends of the Earth to do so. I'm convinced that he is up to no good.

My Dark Passenger whispers to me, embracing the possibility that he is a killer. It would certainly explain his erratic world travels in his post college days.

Clark's on the move now — walking home alone from another day at the office. A day in which I've witnessed him leave the office without his wife three times since lunch. Off to a story? I doubt it. Not without his writing partner. I've followed him each time, but somehow he's managed to elude me. Does he suspect that he's being followed? I doubt that too. He's made no attempt to try and stop me so far.

I keep my car half a block behind him as he walks. Several times, he stops and chats with people and I am forced to drive on and circle back. A woman unloading her groceries from the back of an SUV. A man finishing the last bit of raking and bagging the fallen leaves. A couple walking their Rottweiler. Nothing particularly threatening or strange about this walk home. After a while, he makes it to his front door and I set my car up on the opposite side of the street.

The window shades are open and I can see right in as the lamps are turned on against the encroaching darkness. I pull out my binoculars and settle in for a long stakeout as I bite into a vanilla frosted donut. I can see him standing in the living room, playfully lifting a small girl into the air, a child of seven or eight. They are both laughing while two older boys try to tackle Clark to the ground. He lets them, as soon as he's put down his daughter, and a wrestling match ensues.

Ah, the happy family. Not that it sways my Dark Passenger. Arthur Mitchell, aka the Trinity Killer, had a seemingly normal family life as well. And he was one of the more disturbed killers that I've retired.

Three hours after the lights of the house go out for the night, I call it quits and head back to my hotel room. Tomorrow is another day.

Two days later, Chief Henderson calls my cell phone. Most of his forensics team is still out sick, so I am needed on the scene of another death. I'm starting to feel like I should be on the Metropolis PD's payroll.

I pull up to the apartment building, where a resident called in a gunshot. When the officers got there, they found the apartment unlocked and the body of a young man laying in the bathtub. I flash my police ID to the officers outside, then ride the elevator up to the tenth floor and find my way to the correct apartment. It's not hard to find, what with all of the cops lingering in the hallway.

I'm greeted by Henderson when I arrive. Great, just who I was hoping to avoid. I pull on a pair of latex gloves and silently hope that this isn't a complicated crime scene. I don't need complicated right now. Every moment spent here is a moment that I can't spend watching Clark Kent.

I walk into the bathroom, where an officer awaits me with the forensics kit. Blood and brains are spattered on the white tile to the side of the dead man. A gun is laying just outside the tub on a fluffy white and blue striped bathmat. I take up the camera that the officer holds out for me. I snap off the shots that I need, then examine the blood patterns and the bullet holes in what's left of the man's head.

Henderson walks up behind me, but I don't turn to him.

"Suicide," I say, still facing the body. "No signs of a struggle. No blood under his fingernails. He definitely shot himself."

"You're sure?" Henderson asks and I bristle a little at the question.

"The blood never lies," I reply evenly.

"Why?" the other officer asks. I glance over and read the name Rick Tavares on his ID.

"Could be anything," Henderson sighs. "Financial stress. Depression. Family issues. Who knows?"

I shrug and continue to examine. Something catches my eye. The breast pocket of his shirt seems a bit thick, like there might be something inside. With great care, I reach in and pull out a folded sheet of paper. I open it up and peruse the contents.

"None of the above. Well, now we know who killed the kid in the park," I say, handing Henderson the man's handwritten confession/suicide note. Now that I've seen that, this body would definitely fit the killer's profile. I proudly point out this fact to Henderson.

Henderson takes the note and reads it to himself, then blows out a sharp breath. "All right, we're done here if you are."

"I am," I say, standing up from where I've been kneeling beside the tub.

Time for me to get back to the hunt. And although this man is beyond my reach now, Clark Kent is still alive.

The rest of my week in Metropolis passes and I can turn nothing up on whatever secret Clark is hiding. He's good, very good. A worthy opponent. He plays the game well, but so do I. Part of me wonders if I was mistaken. But my Dark Passenger knows otherwise. And I've learned that it is best to listen to him. So I have kept up my watch on the innocent-seeming reporter.

I've followed him several times over the course of the week. Most times, he's met with what I can only assume are sources and people to interview. Twice, I've witnessed him handing over bulging bags of take out to the same man. After that, they'd talk, with Clark marking notes on a small pad of paper. It looks like bribery to me the first time I see it. The next day, I stop into a Radio Shack before I go hunting and buy a spy ear — a small microphone device that I can point in Clark's direction to pick up

what he's saying. It's a waste of a purchase, as I soon find out. The second time he meets with the man, a Bobby Bigmouth, I realize that the food is in exchange for the snitch's leads.

The rest of the time, he manages to lose me as I track him. I don't know how. I guess he's faster than he looks. Once, I'm even positive that he's turned down a dead end alley, only to find the alley empty when I get there. Each time he vanishes like that, I detect a sense of urgency to him. When he returns, he's once again calm. I briefly consider that maybe he isn't a killer but a drug addict rushing off to get his fix.

The monster within me grows restless.

I'm running out of time. I have to leave for Miami in the morning. I can't extend my stay just to humor the Dark Passenger. If something doesn't turn up tonight, I'll be forced to back off the trail for now — until I can find an excuse to come back to this city.

It's another late night for Clark. It's nearly eight at night when he leaves the Daily Planet building for the last time. I don't know how many times he's left work on his little excursions today. The convention that I'm here for went far longer than I anticipated today. And, unfortunately, I couldn't sneak out. I was presenting along with some officer from the New York City Police Department.

But now, I think my chance has finally come. He's heading down an alleyway between a pharmacy and a used book store. He tosses a glance around before heading down the narrow passage between the two brick buildings. Even from this distance, I can see in the light of the street lamp that his hand is at the knot of his tie again.

I slip out of my car, my black leather gloves already in place. I pat my pants pocket, feeling the familiar bulk and weight of the syringe full of M 99. I've put slightly more of the powerful animal tranquilizer into my needle this time. Clark's not a huge guy, but there is strength and power in his frame. I can't afford to make mistakes. If I screw this up, there may not be a second chance. And if he catches me, it's game over for Dexter. I slip the needle out of my pocket, take off the cap and tap out the air bubbles. No sense killing him before I'm ready.

The shadows offer me their cold, comforting embrace. I loosen my hold on my Dark Passenger just enough to let him propel me forward. I still need to be in control. I can't just go and make the kill, though I've found an abandoned warehouse down by the docks that would be the perfect place to deliver justice. I've got eighty yards of plastic sheeting and three rolls of duct tape in my trunk, waiting for the evidence that I need. Evidence to support Harry's Code. Evidence that Clark is a monster, just like me.

There must be a reason why he's chosen this alley to walk down. I've been by here during the day. The alley is a dead end. It's not like he can use it as a shortcut to someplace else. Curiosity duels with the darkness, urging me forward. Dark Dexter drifts from dark shadow to dark shadow, deftly stalking his prey. Just as Clark may be stalking his. The Dark Passenger hopes that we'll catch him in the act of picking up his victim. Proof doesn't come more easily or as doubt-free as that.

Clark seems distracted as he walks. He's holding himself back from running into the alley, I can see by the way he carries himself. Suddenly, he stops. I duck behind a dumpster at the mouth of the alley, just as he tosses another careful, cursory glance around. I'm confident that he hasn't seen me. But I'm confused. Other than Clark and myself, there is no one remotely in or near this place. There is a whoosh of sound and a disturbance of wind. I chance a peek out just far enough to see Clark start to spin.

I mean really spin. To the point where he becomes nothing but a blur of swirling colors. At first, the mini-twister that he's become is made up of the drab charcoal gray and dark green of

his work attire. But suddenly they shift to a vibrant blue and red, with just a splash of yellow thrown in. Somewhere, in the back of my brain, I am dimly aware of the fact that I am witnessing something that no human being can accomplish. But it is just a ghost of a thought floating there with no real connection to the rest of my twisted mind.

When the blur stops, I get my first good look at the man standing at the end of the alley. A bright light near the rear entrance of the book store bathes him in light. I take it all in, piece by piece. The tight blue suit. The long red cape. The matching boots and briefs. The famous shield emblazoned across his chest. I can barely see his face from this distance, but I do know that there was no one in the alley when Clark Kent entered it.

And in an instant, I know his secret.

There is no Dark Passenger in this man.

Clark Kent is Superman.

I have less than a second for that knowledge to sear through my mind like a jagged bolt of lightning. SuperClark streaks off into the night sky, a sonic boom resounding overhead as he tears through the air. Numbly, I replace the cap onto my syringe full of M 99. I walk back to my car, start it up, and fiddle with the radio. WLEX has the news that I am looking for. Superman arrives just in time to save a jumper on the Metropolis Bridge. Minutes later, he diverts an off course plane from hitting another jet in midair. After that, he ends a standoff between police and an armed killer in a bank someplace in Delaware.

As I listen to the reports, I realize something else about Clark.

The disappearances. That's what he was up to.

He wasn't killing people after all. He was saving them.

My Dark Passenger is unusually silent. For the first time, he's badly misjudged a person. Fully and completely misjudged the secret burden in another person.

Alone in my car, listening to the news, I start to laugh. Really laugh, for the first time in what feels like a very long time. I can't say that I've ever experienced a true, completely honest, unforced, belly laugh before this moment. I laugh until tears wet my cheeks and my sides ache with the effort. I laugh at the absurdity of the whole situation; stalking the Man of Steel and thinking that he was a killer.

Instead of stalking a killer, I've stalked the most innocent man of all.

I really must be more careful in the future. I can hear Harry's voice in my head, chiding me, even through my laughter.

"Nice going, Dex. What did I teach you?" he says to me. "You never stalk a victim until you're one hundred percent sure of his guilt." I can hear the anger and disappointment in his voice. "You're lucky that Clark was distracted when you decided to stalk him tonight. What would you have done if he'd zeroed in on your presence? How would you have explained why you were there with a needle full of tranquilizer in your hand? Huh, Dex?"

"Harry," I say, my laughter finally quieting down enough so that I can form words. I speak to the air where I imagine my deceased adoptive father to be sitting in the passenger seat next to me. "You have to admit, I was right about him. He is harboring a secret life. Just not the life that I expected."

I pull away from the curb, feeling my Dark Passenger recede into the innermost parts of me. He's sulking, embarrassed at having misjudged Clark's secret and over Harry's remonstration. And as I drive, it suddenly occurs to me, the power of the secret that I now hold. It's almost overwhelming. But for now, his secret is safe with me. After all, I above all others understand how one little secret can ruin a life. I won't expose his Light Passenger, and I won't destroy his family. Just as I want my Dark Passenger to remain a secret and my family to stay intact.

THE END