

A Little Something Super

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Rated: PG-13

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Summary: Story re-write of “A Bolt From the Blue” with heavy reference to “Chip Off the Old Clark.” Clark deals with a super-powered child, a super-powered man posing as a superhero, and Lois as he searches for an answer to why so many other people suddenly have his powers.

Author’s Notes:

This is essentially a re-write of “A Bolt From The Blue” (season 2), combined with elements of “Chip Off The Old Clark” (season 3). I’ve often wondered what it would have been like to have COTOC’s plot take place earlier on in the series, before Lois knew Clark was Superman. You will notice bits of plots & dialogue taken from both episodes and inserted in this story (so credit where credit is due, yada yada) but the rest is original.

This story was previously published, in parts, on lcficmbs.com under the working title “COTOC Redux.” Thanks to the folks on the Fanfic Message Boards for their feedback and encouragement!

One more note: some names and events have been altered a bit (from what they were in the original episodes.) The mother and son in this story are *not* supposed to be Leigh Anne Stipanovic and her son Jesse. They are different people who happen to have some similarities to those two characters. Later in the story, you’ll meet another familiar character – he *is* supposed to be the same character as on the show, though you’ll note I changed his name (confused yet? Don’t worry. You’ll certainly recognize him for who he is.) Deviations from the actual storyline of *A Bolt From The Blue* are completely intentional. Just go with it.

November, 1994

Lois felt her heart drop to her heels.

“Can you believe that?” Jimmy was saying.

“Superman has a SON!? How cool is that?”

“Jimmy, how many times do I have to tell you? Don’t believe everything you see on TV!”

“Yeah, but Chief — the kid can FLY!”

“That’s just a bunch of fancy shmancy special effects! Now turn that tabloid trash off and get back to work!”

Lois felt frozen. Stiff. Livid. She stared at her computer screen without blinking. One false move and the tears would spill over.

The words from the woman on the television echoed in her head: *Superman and I were lovers. He’s my little boy’s father. At first, I wasn’t sure, but — well, as you can see, there’s really no other way to explain the flying, is there?*

A string of nasty names flooded into Lois’s consciousness. It had all seemed so ridiculous at first, but then — then she’d seen the boy on the TV running across his yard, jumping so high in the air that he looked like a wayward balloon, landing on the roof of his house with a thud, then grinning down at the camera and waving.

Her reporter’s processing unit kicked into overdrive. Sure, maybe it was all a trick. Maybe Hot Topics had staged the whole thing. Smoke and mirrors, strings and harnesses — like Peter Pan on stage. But to fabricate something so fantastical, and to involve a child? That seemed a bit much, even for a trashy tabloid show like Hot Topics.

But the other explanation — the one that woman had given just a few minutes ago, peering into the camera with big, doe eyes — the explanation that seemed to fit more with Hot Topics’s style — Lois would’ve rather handed her Kerth awards over to a herd of stampeding buffalo before believing THAT.

A deadbeat dad? Not her Superman! Er... Superman. Well, he may not be HERS, but she HAD given him his name. She’d been the first to interview him one-on-one. And they’d shared several kisses, including one in front of TV cameras and reporters. Had anyone else done that? Hardly. Superman may not be officially HERS, but he certainly wasn’t someone else’s — and especially not THAT woman’s!

“Wait ‘til CK gets a load of this!” Jimmy was saying. He sounded like this was the best news he’d heard all year. Lois had to suppress the urge to hurl her keyboard at him. “Where is CK, anyway?” Jimmy asked.

“I’m right here,” came Clark’s voice. “What’s up?”

“CK, you won’t believe this! We were watching Hot Topics, and this woman gets on there and she’s all — ”

“JIMMY!” Perry’s raging voice cut through the young man’s words.

Jimmy blanched. “Uh... see ya later, guys.”

Clark looked from Jimmy’s departing form to Lois’s just-saw-a-ghost expression. “What’s going on?” he asked.

“Nothing,” Lois managed to say. “Jimmy’s just going on about something he saw on TV.” She blinked, and quickly slid her hand across her face to hide the evidence of her emotions.

Clark did not miss this action, but before he could inquire further, his superhearing picked up his name — actually, Superman’s name. And it wasn’t a cry for help. It was coming from across the room. Then again — from over there! Why was everyone talking about him? He tried to focus. He heard something about a flying boy. Flying boy? Okay, what was going on?

“So where have you been?” Lois asked, pulling open one of her desk drawers and beginning to paw through it.

“I was, uh... I needed to grab something to eat. “

“At eleven in the morning? You couldn’t even wait ‘til lunch? Did you bring me anything?”

“What? I — uh, no, sorry....”

“Clark, if you’re going to go off and grab food in the middle of a work day, the least you could do is appease me by bringing me a bagel or a donut or something!”

“I’m sorry.”

She looked up at him with a rueful smile. “Well, don’t let it happen again.”

“LOIS! CLARK! IN MY OFFICE! NOW!”

Two heads snapped to attention. Then, without a word, they both made a beeline for Perry’s office.

“Shut the door,” Perry instructed, and Clark did as he was told.

“What’s going on?” Lois asked. “Something big, I hope.”

Perry was pacing back and forth in front of his desk. “Look, kids, I know this sounds crazy, but I just got a call from a source of mine, someone I trust. He says this super-boy thing is legit, and advised me to get some reporters down to Maryston right away. So I want you two on this thing a.s.a.p.”

“Super-boy thing?” Clark asked, bewildered.

“Chief, you’re not serious!” Lois gasped.

“Am I known to tease?” Perry raised an eyebrow.

“No, but(.) Chief, come on — you yourself said, not ten minutes ago, that this was all a hoax. I mean, it has to be! Superman wouldn’t — I mean, he just WOULDN’T —”

“Whatever Superman would or would not do is up to you two to investigate. Here.” Perry handed Lois a slip of paper. “This is the address for the boy’s mother. Her last name’s Driver. I know it’s a bit of a trip, but you two are the best, so go.”

“But... what’s going on?” Clark asked.

“I’ll fill you in on the way,” Lois said brusquely as she stormed out of Perry’s office.

Clark did the only thing that made any sense to him at the moment — he followed her.

“Lois, this is INSANE!” Clark cried. “Look at all these news vans! I can’t believe it, people are actually taking this woman seriously?!”

“Crazy, right? Nothing else going on in the world today, apparently. Ugh, where am I supposed to park? Oh, there’s a spot.”

“Lois, that’s somebody’s lawn...”

“It’s brown,” she said dismissively.

She parked the jeep, and they got out and began walking toward the Drivers’ house. They had to dodge camera and microphone wires and dozens of people. Lois, who had no problem with elbowing, made it to the front porch first, and by the time Clark joined her, she was already involved in a conversation with a tall, bushy-haired brunette.

“You’re Lois Lane?!” the woman was saying. “This is such an honor! I’ve been an admirer of your work forever! I would love it if YOU would tell my story. Won’t you come in?”

Several other reporters, who were crowded onto the porch, were giving Lois dirty looks, but she paid them no mind.

“I’d love to,” said Lois. “Oh, and this” — she had noticed Clark’s presence — “is my partner, Clark Kent. Do you mind if he joins us?”

“No, no, of course not. Come on in, I’d like you to meet my little boy.”

No sooner had the front door shut behind them when Lois and Clark heard a loud, “Look, Mommy! Lookit what I can do!”

Two mouths dropped open. Ten feet away stood a tiny little boy with brown hair, green eyes, and dimples. He wore a flannel shirt, jeans, and socks. He looked like an ordinary 3-year-old boy... except for the fact that he was hoisting an armchair over his head.

“I can lift it REAL HIGH!” cried the boy.

“Yes, Jussie, I know... now put the chair down and go watch your video like a good boy while I talk to the nice reporters.”

“Mommy, the TV got broked when you were outside.”

“Well... just play with your cars, then. Have a seat,” she urged the reporters.

Clark and Lois sat tentatively on the worn-looking sofa, afraid to take their eyes off the small child, who had now plopped himself down in front of a box of Hot Wheels.

“Miss Driver,” Lois said, as the woman took a seat in the airchair the boy had just put down.

“Oh, please, call me Michelle. And that is my son, Justin. Jussie for short.”

“Michelle,” Lois corrected. “I’m sure you know why we’re here.”

“You saw my segment on Hot Topics, didn’t you? Seems like everyone has! Funny how quickly fame can hit you! I want to make it clear, though, that I’m not out for fame. All I want is what my little boy deserves.”

“And that’s what, exactly?” Clark asked.

“Well, the truth, for one thing. I want the world to know the truth. And, well, I just want what’s best for my son, of course. A sturdy home —” she looked upward as she said this, and two other pairs of eyes followed hers to the ceiling, where there was a particularly large hole, “— a good education... what any mother wants, really.”

“Mommy, can I have another cookie?”

“Sure, sweetie...”

Michelle turned from her son to Lois and Clark again. “His appetite is voracious these days! He’s growing so fast. I can’t keep him in clothes. Everything’s just... well, it’s been rough.”

“Miss Dr — er, Michelle... when did you first notice your son had... these, uh... unusual abilities?” Lois asked, as she watched the little boy rip through half a package of Chips Ahoy in less than ten seconds.

“Well,” Michell said, “they all seemed to start a few months back, and all at once, really. I mean, one day he was just going about his regular life, and the next, he

was turning somersaults in the air and setting things on fire with his little eyeballs.”

“And from what I understand,” Lois continued, “you believe this boy to be the son of Superman?”

“Yes. I mean, how else can you explain it?”

“Are you suggesting you had some kind of a relationship with Superman?”

“Some kind of a relationship! It was a relationship, all right. It may have been short, but oh, was it intense!”

Clark had to fight hard to bite his tongue. He wanted to protest. He wanted to exclaim that he’d never seen this woman before in his life! They hadn’t had a relationship! But, of course, he couldn’t. And so he sat there, listening, pained.

“Michelle,” said Lois, “there’s no record of Superman before 1993. No sightings, nothing. And yet you’re insinuating that you knew Superman... more than three years ago? Would you care to explain how that’s possible?”

Michelle smiled. “Well, Superman didn’t go public until last year, I know. But he’s been on Earth for about five years. Most people don’t know that, but it’s true. When he first got here, he didn’t want anybody to know about him, so he had a secret identity. His name was Charles. After we got close, he told me about his powers, and told me that he planned to go public someday, but not until he had sort of scoped out the world first. You know, learned how to speak English real good and figure out the rules of society. He said that’s why we couldn’t be together forever, because he had a purpose, a mission and all that. Well, at the time, I thought, oh well... that’s fine for you, sir... and I just let things be. But after he left me, and I realized I was pregnant — well... now, don’t get me wrong, I’m a strong woman... I was prepared to raise my baby on my own. And things were going fine... until my boy started taking after his daddy.”

Clark’s fists were clenched tightly beside him. His jaw locked. Oh, for the love of... this was too much! Was Lois actually buying this? He dared to glance sideways at her, and tried to read her expression. She looked interested, but noncommittal.

“Do you have any kind of proof that you and Superman were once an item?” Lois asked Michelle. “Mementos, letters....?”

“I’m afraid not,” said Michelle. “After he left, I... well, I’m afraid I destroyed everything. But like I told that other reporter, I am more than willing to take a lie detector test or whatever anyone wants me to do, because I have nothing to hide. All I want is the truth to come out and the best for my boy.”

Said boy chose that moment to leap through the air, landing semi-gracefully on top of an upright piano.

“Well, thank you for your time,” Lois said, standing up quickly.

“Thank YOU,” said Michelle. “And please, be in touch if you have any further questions. I just have to say, your articles on Superman have been such a blessing to me! Even though he and I could not be

together, somehow... reading about him made me feel like he was truly here, with me.”

The ride back to Metropolis was silent for the first twenty minutes. At long last, Lois broke it by saying, “Well?”

“Well, what?” said Clark.

“You know what.”

“I think it’s a... very... strange situation,” Clark said finally. What else could he say? He felt both angry and confused. Angry at the lies the woman was telling, confused at the circumstances. There HAD to be a rational explanation for this unbelievable situation. A boy who had superpowers; that was nuts. But, he thought, in the past year alone he’d witnessed people falling all over each other thanks to a perfume, a suit that could make its wearer invisible, long-dead criminals who’d come back to life, and a group of 11-year-olds who were almost smarter than he was. This super-boy thing was just the latest thing.

“We should talk to Superman,” said Lois.

Talk to Superman? Yes, that made sense. Clark supposed he’d have to come up with something to say. But what? Well, denial, for starters. And then what? Everyone would expect an explanation for how the boy had powers if he was not, in fact, Superman’s child. And he had no idea how to go about providing one.

“Don’t you think so?” Lois pressed.

Clark had to think for a moment to remember her question. “Oh... yeah, yeah, we probably should.”

“At least give him a chance to tell his side of the story.”

“Are you saying you actually believe that woman? I mean, that she and Superman ”

“Clark, I don’t know WHAT to believe. While we were sitting in that living room, we saw a 3-year-old lift an armchair, jump ONTO a piano, and literally inhale a packageful of cookies. He clearly has superpowers!”

“I know, but there could be some other explanation....”

“Like what?”

“I don’t know!” Clark said exasperatedly. “Maybe... he’s a robot? Maybe he’s from the same planet as Superman, but not... well....” Clark doubted that was possible, but he had to say SOMETHING. Anything to get Lois’s mind off the idea that he — well, Superman — had actually been with that woman!

“Clark, I’d be thrilled if that were true. Believe me. Either way, we’re going to get to the bottom of this. And that’s why we need to talk to Superman. I, for one, would love to hear what he has to say.”

The phone was ringing as Clark shut the front door of his apartment. He groaned inwardly. After the day he’d had, he wasn’t in the mood to talk to anybody. Well, maybe his parents...

His parents! Had they heard? Somehow, he was sure they had. After the story broke on Hot Topics that

morning, it had been picked up by TV news stations all over the country.

He felt like crawling under a boulder. It was one thing to talk about, well, reproduction with his parents. It was quite another thing to have it splashed all over the news that he — well, technically his alter ego, but still a part of him — had gotten a woman pregnant and left her to raise her son alone. If any of it HAD been true, his parents would have every right to lecture him from here to the moon, but... it wasn't true. Surely they knew that. Surely they would have nothing but sympathy for him.

Clark edged toward the phone, but before he reached it, it stopped ringing. He fell onto the couch and sighed deeply. What. A. Day. HE knew he wasn't the boy's father, but how to make everyone else believe that? Especially when everyone else could see with their own eyes that this kid could fly, tear down walls, and make craters in his backyard. It was so fantastic in and of itself, it wasn't that much of a stretch to also believe, while you were at it, that the boy was biologically connected to Superman. And with the boy's mother insisting Superman WAS the father....

He closed his eyes and began running his mind through the events of the late afternoon. After he and Lois had returned to the Planet from visiting with Michelle Driver, they'd spoken to Perry about what she'd said. Perry told them to get hold of Superman. Lois said that's what they intended to do. Then both Perry and Lois had looked pointedly at Clark. Clark had sighed, said he'd try to contact Superman, and left. Twenty minutes later, he'd returned to say that he'd spoken with Superman and gotten Superman's take on the matter: "I'm not the father." His exact words, Clark had said.

"What else did he say?" Lois had wanted to know.

"What else do you want?" Clark asked, forgetting himself for a minute.

Now, Clark's phone was ringing again. He reached over to answer it.

"Hello?"

"Clark, honey, are you all right?"

"Hi, Mom. Yeah, I'm okay...."

"What on Earth is going on? On TV — that boy... well, we saw him fly, and —"

"I know, Mom, I know... but I don't know how it's possible. Perry put Lois and me on the story, and we went to the boy's house this afternoon, and he flew and he lifted things and — I don't know what to think!"

"Clark?"

"Hi, Dad."

"You say this boy definitely has powers?"

"Right."

"Could he be from Krypton?"

"Jonathan, he's too young," Martha reminded him.

"Maybe he has a Kryptonian parent here on Earth," Jonathan offered.

"I don't know, Dad," Clark said. "Don't you think if there were other Kryptonians here on Earth, one of them would have contacted Superman by now? Besides, this

woman is claiming she once dated SUPERMAN... not just some random guy with powers, but... well... ME!"

"And speaking of Kryptonians," said Martha. "If there's one thing we know — at least about you — it's that your powers came on gradually. Sure, as a child, you never got sick or hurt, but you certainly weren't doing any of those things they showed this little boy doing on TV! You didn't start to fly until college."

"Clark," said Jonathan, "Do you think this boy could have something to do with that clone of yours?"

Thoughts whirled inside Clark's head. The clone! Of course! If someone had been able to clone Superman, then wasn't it also theoretically possible for them to genetically create a super child? He had no idea, but the thought sickened him. The clone had had a short life. To give a child such a life... who would do that? And for what purpose? If it was simply to create a being with superpowers for nefarious purposes, then why publicize it when the child was so young? Why not wait til the child was grown, til he could do his creator's bidding?

He relayed his thoughts to his parents, who agreed that this could definitely be a possibility, although a disturbing one. Clark promised to pursue that angle, and let them know if and when he had any more information to share.

After they said their goodbyes, Clark checked his watch. It was after 11, so he flipped on the TV to hear the day's sports scores.

Big mistake. There was his image, splashed across the screen.

"I just don't see how we, as a society, can trust Superman anymore," one woman was saying. "He's said he stands for truth and justice, but this? I think this proves otherwise. No man with morals would abandon his own child."

"I always admired Superman's principles. But having a relationship and a child out of wedlock, and then keeping his offspring a secret —"

"— ought to take responsibility for his actions —"

"— an army of Superpeople, out to take over the planet —"

"— poor, innocent child —"

Poor innocent child indeed. Clark snapped off the TV and went toward his bedroom. He needed sleep... if for no other reason than to get a seven-hour escape from this insanity.

Lois closed her eyes and slid beneath the surface of the warm water. She liked the way the world sounded under there. Like outer space. The only sound to be heard, beyond the mild hum of the heater in the next room, was the occasional water droplet sliding off the side of the bathtub and joining the pool below.

The peacefulness was interrupted by the sound of the phone ringing. She stayed put for a moment, unsure if she should bother. After the third ring, she brought her head out of the water. At the seventh ring, she slowly climbed out of the bathtub, wrapped a towel around her

hair and one around her body, and made her way into the bedroom.

"Hello?"

"Did you see it, Lois? Did you see Hot Topics?"

Well, Lois thought, It could be worse. At least it isn't Mother.

She laid down on the bed, already feeling a headache coming on. "Yes, Lucy, I saw it."

"So... are you okay?"

"Of course I'm okay," Lois said irritably. "Why wouldn't I be? Perry's got us covering the darn story, for heaven's sake, and I AM a professional."

"He put YOU on the story? Seriously? Considering your history with Superman?"

"What history?" Lois snapped. "Apparently he'll make history with just about anyone, so why should I care?"

"Ouch, Lois. You aren't jealous, are you?"

"Jealous? Of what?"

"Of that woman. The boy's mother."

"Lucy, I may be a lot of things, but I am NOT jealous. Why would you even think that?"

"Oh, maybe because Superman got close to her, and you've never gotten that close to him, despite being in love with him for HOW long?"

"Superman doesn't — I mean, he —"

"Face it, Lois — you just assumed that if he didn't want a relationship with you, he must not want one with anyone. And now, well, unfortunately, you've seen that he IS capable of having a relationship — just... not with you."

Wow. Lucy was in full-on annoying-sister mode. Lois wasn't going to back down, though... even if it meant this crumbling into a pointless, never-gonna-get-resolved argument. When it came to her and Superman, she wasn't going to let anyone — especially her own sister — get things wrong.

"Look," said Lois. "Despite whatever weirdness the world has decided to throw at us, Superman and I have a connection, a bond, a THING that's just... beyond explanation. It's there, Lucy, I know it. Trust me, life would be a lot easier if it wasn't there, but it is. And that's all I can say about that."

"You still love him," Lucy said softly.

Lois sighed. "I always have."

"Do you think he fathered that baby?"

"I don't know," said Lois. "Clark talked to him earlier, and Superman just denied being the father, and I guess Clark didn't get anything else out of him beyond that, so.... I'd love to speak to him myself, but I have no idea how to get hold of him without, you know, falling off a roof or something. Sometimes he just shows up when I need him, but he hasn't so far. But I don't know... I mean, what could he possibly have to say for himself? I WANT it to be true that he's not the father... every fiber of my being wants that to be true, Luce, but... it's not enough for me to just want it."

"Did you ever even think Superman could even HAVE kids? He's an alien, after all. Well, I'm sure YOU'VE thought about it...." she added with a snicker.

"Lucy, PLEASE."

"Oh, come on... never?"

"No! And I am certainly NOT jealous of that woman, in case you're still curious. You couldn't PAY me to be in that woman's shoes. The last thing I need OR want is a child!"

"Not even if it was Superman's?" Lucy said.

"No, not even then! ESPECIALLY not then! You haven't seen that little boy, Lucy. His whole house is in shambles because he can't keep his powers under control. There are holes in the ceiling, up-ended furniture, broken glass on the carpet, shingles falling of the roof.... Do you think I'd want a child like that on my hands?"

"But what if Superman, like, asked? What if he showed up at your place, flew in the window, and asked you to have his lovechild. Then would you?"

Lois felt her entire body flush. "That... would... never happen. So it's pointless to even consider —"

"But if he DID. IF HE ASKED YOU." Lucy was sounding way too eager. "Wanted to. What if he flew in there and said, 'Lois, I want you. -? Take me, right now!' Say he said that. What would you say?"

"I would ask if he was on drugs!"

"Juuust answer the question."

There was a long pause. "Okay, yes — IF he were to do that — and let's please be clear that this whole scenario is completely out of the question — if he did, I would probably say yes."

"Aha! I knew it!"

Lois rolled her eyes. "Okay, yes, miss smarty pants. Yes. You win, you're right. I'd screw over my entire life for Superman. And the career I've worked my butt off for. AND I'd gain a million pounds and go through labor and all that — for him. I love him. Despite this. Despite everything. I admit it. I love him. And that in and of itself might just make me do something THAT insane. Now, I am hanging up the phone because I am tired and if I don't get some rest, I'm going to have a nervous breakdown. So goodnight."

"Goodnight, Sis. Good luck..."

The next morning, Clark hadn't even had time to get a cup of coffee when Lois accosted him by the elevators. "Clark, call Superman and tell him I want to talk to him."

Clark looked alarmed. "But why? He's already made a statement. He's not this boy's father. Case closed."

"Case NOT closed! You said so yourself that even if Superman isn't the father, there must be some other rational explanation for the boy's superpowers. And one of YOUR suggestions was that maybe this kid's from Krypton! Soooo... it would make sense to ask Superman about that, wouldn't it?"

"Don't you think if Superman KNEW anything about the kid, he would have SAID SO?"

Lois could sense annoyance in Clark's voice. Sheesh. Sometimes it seemed he was more sensitive when it came to Superman than SHE was. She lowered her voice. "Clark, please don't get upset. I know he's your friend — er, our friend. I know you want him to be innocent and perfect, so do I. But either way, there's definitely a story here. There is a boy out there who has his powers and there's a woman out there who could very well ruin Superman's reputation. And it's OUR job to get to the bottom of the whole thing and figure out what's going on!"

Clark was looking at her in surprise. She paused to catch her breath, then said, "So I think we ought to talk to Superman again. What do YOU think?"

"I think... that makes sense," he said quietly.

She was not expecting to hear this. Of course, she'd HOPED he'd agree with her, but somehow she was expecting to have to fight harder. "Well... then okay!" she said. "So you'll call him?"

Clark returned fifteen minutes later. "Superman says he'll talk to you. He'll meet you at Pier 39 at noon."

"Just me? Clark..."

"I do think you should talk to him. You were right. But can you go this one alone? I'm really not feeling too great..."

Lois studied her partner. He DID look a bit pale. Hmm. So maybe that explained why he hadn't argued further with her. He just wasn't up to it. Drat, that soured her victory.

"Yeah, I can handle it," she said. "You take it easy..."

A year ago, this exact thing would have been spoken with sarcasm and contempt. Now she spoke sincerely — she was concerned for him. It was like he was taking the news of Superman's supposed indiscretion worse than she was. She — who had, not six months ago — declared her love for Superman and been rejected. She, who still carried a candle, no, make that a brightly-lit torch, for the Man Of Steel, despite having very little hope.

Clark might have felt guilty for making Lois go it alone, but at least he hadn't lied to her — this time. He DID feel out of sorts. Maybe the stress of everything was finally getting to him. He felt tired. But he couldn't check out just yet — he had an appointment to keep at noon.

"Thank you for meeting with me."

Superman nodded mutely, then motioned toward a bench. They sat. Lois pulled out a voice recorder and a notepad.

"You probably know what this is about," Lois began cautiously, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear.

"I'm sure I do."

"These allegations by Michelle Driver —"

"— are completely unfounded," he finished for her. "I've never seen her before in my life."

"I want to believe you," she said. "Besides, you've never given me any reason not to trust you."

She noticed his eyes flicker away for a moment. "Superman?" she asked.

He had to force himself to meet her gaze. "I realize," he said cautiously, "that still doesn't answer the question of how Miss Driver's son is able to fly. I've been thinking about that, and I may have an answer. I'm hesitant to share my theory — I think it would be wise to keep this off the record — until we know for sure — even if it could clear my name..."

"I won't print anything until we know for sure. What is your theory?"

"You remember when someone used my DNA to make a clone?"

She was quick to catch on. "You think this boy might be the result of a cloning... experiment?"

Superman nodded. "It's possible. I mean, I thought I'd destroyed all the DNA samples out there, but... maybe there was something I missed."

"So... Justin Driver could be your — your clone, but young?"

"No, I don't think so... not exactly. If anything, I think someone could have used my DNA as the paternal element and somehow fused it with that of a... a female." He felt his face grow warm. "I mean, technically, I suppose Justin Driver COULD be, genetically, my son... but I had nothing to do with any of it. The reason I don't think he's a clone of... well, me... is because he doesn't resemble what I looked like at that age."

Superman — as a boy? Lois had to catch her breath. Superman had once been a child? Of course he had. Of course. But she had never thought on it before. Suddenly a thought struck her. Michelle Driver had said Superman had been on Earth for years... but everything she knew about Superman said otherwise. What was the truth?

"Superman," she asked. "When did you first arrive here on Earth?"

"Why do you ask?" he said.

"Well, I'd just assumed you first came last year — when you saved my life on the Prometheus. But Michelle Driver alleges that she knew you — met you — about FOUR years ago. In fact," Lois went on, feeling a bit silly for what she was about to say, "She said you had a secret identity and that your name was really Charles."

Superman raised an eyebrow. "No, my name's definitely not Charles."

"Oh. Well, anyway, I was thinking, if you really did just come to Earth last year, we can just REMIND everyone of that, and then they'll be sure to see that HER story is impossible!"

Superman sighed. "Lois, the public will believe what they want to believe. They'll assert that boys who are half-Kryptonian just age rapidly. They'll latch on to the theory that I've been secretly around for years — whatever's easiest for them to accept. No matter what I do, there will always be people who are against me. If I agree to a DNA test to see if I'm a match with the boy,

and it comes back negative — they'll say Kryptonian DNA defies the testing process or whatever. You can present the public with a ten-volume book of facts, and many will still throw it aside in favor of conspiracy theories. I can say it a hundred times, 'I'm not the father,' and there will still be disbelievers. My best advice is to focus on the cloning angle. And on the boy — who did this to him, or how this happened, or..." he trailed off, his eyes pleading with her.

"I will," she promised. "I'll do that."

"I have to go," he told her.

"Thank you for meeting with me."

He nodded and took off toward the sky.

As she watched him go, she realized... he hadn't actually answered the question about when he arrived on Earth. He'd just denied his name was Charles.

Now THAT was going to bug her.

"How'd it go?" Clark asked.

"Blah," Lois said. She flopped into her chair and swiveled it toward him. "Clark, I hate to say this, but I think Superman has more secrets going for him than we ever imagined. Everything I know about him — everything we've learned since his arrival — I get the feeling it's just the tip of the iceberg."

"Why? What did he say?"

"Oh, well, 'I'm not the father,' of course. And I want to believe him, Clark, I do — but now I feel more confused than ever. There was something he said. About being young. Have you ever imagined Superman that way before? It's bizarre. In my mind, he looks exactly the same, only short. With a tiny little blue suit and cape. And get this — I asked him when he first came to Earth — if it was really last year, or if he'd been here longer, like Michelle Driver had said, and he just, well, he didn't ever get around to answering the question. What's he hiding? I mean, I don't want to pry into his personal life, but — okay, yes I do. I'm curious! Oh well. He did give me SOME information to go on, at least. He thinks the Driver boy might be a clone — at least, the product of Superman's DNA and a human mother."

"That could be," Clark said.

"If only we knew who cloned Superman last spring. That person might know about this."

"What about that doctor we interviewed? What was his name?"

"Leek," she answered. "Dr. Fabian Leek. Funny how my brain can forget to add cereal to my shopping list but it remembers obscure names of sleazy scientist(s). Must be some reporter thing. I don't remember his phone number, though. JIMMY!"

Jimmy appeared promptly.

"Get me the number of Dr. Fabian Leek, would you?"

"Leek?" Jimmy repeated. "Sure thing." As he turned away, Clark distinctly heard him mutter something about "unfortunate."

Ten minutes later, he was back. "Good news and bad news, guys. The good news is, I found him. But the bad news is he's dead. Died back in April. No relatives or anything, either."

"So I guess he's out of the running," Lois sighed. "Unless someone took up his research. Jimmy, see if you can find out who Dr. Leek was working for, or where his funding was coming from. Get me the names of his colleagues and friends."

"On it, Lois!"

"What about Dr. Hamilton?" said Clark. "I'm sure he's been too... uh, busy... to be involved in THIS, obviously, but he does know a lot about DNA. Maybe he knows someone else in the field who might know something...."

"Well, that was a bust," Lois said, as she and Clark left Dr. Hamilton's office later that afternoon. "As helpful as he could be, but no leads on our boy."

"No," Clark said sadly. "Just the confirmation that the cloning theory is possible because... anything is possible."

"Frustrating, isn't it? But I can't fault the man, really — he's been more than helpful when it comes to... well..." she sent a pointed glance in Clark's direction. "I mean, if it wasn't for him — and Superman, too — you wouldn't even be here, now."

"If it wasn't for him, I never would have gotten shot in the first place!"

"Stop being glass-half-empty, Clark, that's my job." He smiled.

"Help! Someone help!"

>From high above the city, Superman honed in on the source of the cries and began to speed toward it. In the middle of Centennial Park, a woman was lying on the ground, seemingly writhing with pain. He landed beside her and asked her what was wrong.

The woman jumped up, to Superman's surprise, and trust a finger at him. "You're what's wrong, you son of a bitch! You JERK, you...."

"I — "

"How could you do that to that poor woman and your SON? How could you just ABANDON them? Oh, if you didn't have all those f-ing powers, I'd get a gun and shoot you in the face!"

Superman gaped. Then, shaking his head, he fought for composure. "Is that all?" he asked tightly. "Because I have more important things to do."

As he flew off, he heard the woman shouting about doing things, all right.

He was done for the night. Done emotionally.

He flew back to his apartment, changed into boxers, and collapsed into bed. This was unbelievable. All of this. Many times before, his reputation had taken beatings, but somehow, this time, it was more personal. He was sickened by the accusations, the jeers, the swears, the outright hostility he was receiving from total strangers. As sorry as he felt for Justin Driver (and, by

default, his mother, for having to put up with the pitfalls of having a superchild) he was infuriated by the fact that this whole situation existed in the first place.

It had been almost a week, and things had only gotten worse. Now Michelle Driver wanted money. She'd gotten an attorney and he'd announced her intentions to seek child support, money for house repairs and reinforcements, and tuition money so that Justin could attend a special school, not to mention a particularly large sum for her "pain and suffering." Entertainment Nightly had reported a possible "Superboy" movie in the works. Clark guessed Michelle Driver hadn't had any trouble finding a lawyer willing to work with her — every attorney in New Troy would probably want a piece of that action.

Meanwhile, the cloning angle had hit a dead end. They hadn't been able to dig up much of anything on Dr. Fabian Leek. His financial records were inaccessible. They had Jimmy working his computer magic, trying to access something, but so far, no luck.

And then there was Lois. She was still fixated on what Superman had said to her — or hadn't said to her — at the pier. She was certain he was hiding something from her. And if he was hiding one thing, maybe he was hiding lots of things. And maybe he knew something about the Driver boy after all. Maybe he'd lied. And if Superman had lied to her, well — needless to say, she was crushed. Clark hated seeing her like this, so disappointed, so dejected. He, as Clark, had tried over and over to remind Lois that Superman was a stand-up guy, that he'd never get a woman pregnant and then abandon her, or ignore his responsibilities like that in any way. But he was beginning to sound like a broken record in a closed-off bedroom.

He needed a breakthrough — and soon. Some vital piece of information that would explain everything. Something that would restore both Superman's reputation and Lois's mood.

He needed a miracle.

Click.

Lois threw the remote across the room. It hit the wall with a satisfying *thwack*.

Her brief time spent at LNN seemed like a distant memory, a bad memory. How had she ever done it? How had she worked for something so vile? TV media was so maddening! Did they ever even bother to check facts before spouting off about the latest "development"? Was "journalistic integrity" even part of their vocabulary?

Lois brought her knees to her chest and began to rock back and forth. She hated them. Hated the things they were saying about Superman. Yes, she herself had had her doubts about Superman's sincerity for a minute there, but never in her life would she have dreamed of saying such hurtful things, like the things they were calling him on the so-called "news" shows.

Superman was strong, she knew, but how much of this crap could he take? Her mind brought forth two

instances in which he'd been attacked publicly: first, when everyone in Metropolis thought Superman was causing the heatwave, and second, when Arianna Carlin's syndicated column had pressed multitudes of people to believe that Superman was evil and had been responsible for the death of Lex Luthor, a "great man." Despite all the criticism and jeers he had received, he hadn't thrown in the towel. He hadn't packed up and left the country. He'd stayed, and he'd helped. He'd saved lives. And yet this is how everyone kept repaying him... with insults, accusations, and contempt.

Why are people so awful? Lois wondered. Can't they look at all the good he's done? Can't they empathize with him? Everyone, she was sure, at some point in their lives, had been wrongly accused of something. She certainly had. It felt terrible. Her heart ached for what Superman must be going through.

She didn't believe a word of it anymore. Superman, she was sure, was not Justin Driver's father. She could just feel it. Sure, Superman had been evasive with her at the pier. And yes, he was clearly a man with secrets. But maybe he had his reasons. Maybe sharing too much of himself would only lead to more accusations and more trouble. Perhaps he wanted to tell her more, but couldn't. Okay, fine. It would drive her a bit batty, but she could handle that.

"I'm going to see Michelle Driver again," Lois announced the next morning.

"Alone?" Clark said.

"Yeah. I have an angle."

Clark raised an eyebrow.

When Lois arrived at the Driver residence, she found the place even more swarmed than the week before. Reporters from all over the world were literally camping out on the lawn, driveway, and sidewalk. Trailers and motorhomes lined the street. She managed to double park two blocks away and make it to the front porch in short order.

She was met with a hulking security guard blocking the door, but she refused to be intimidated. "Lois Lane, Daily Planet. I was here the other day and spoke to Miss Driver at length. Let her know I'm here."

"I ain't her secretary," the man grunted. "And anyways, she's tired of reporters and doesn't want to be bothered."

Forty dollars later, Lois was ringing the doorbell.

A man in a tacky tweed suit answered the door. He opened it just a crack and said, "No one speaks to my client without an appointment. Good day."

"Lois Lane," she said loudly. "Tell Michelle I'm here. I spoke with her the other day."

She was ushered in the door a minute later. "My name is Richard Fennerman," the tweed-suited man said, as he led her toward the living room. "I'm Miss Driver's attorney. I will be overseeing any interview that is conducted."

Lois, Michelle, and Mr. Fennerman sat down. Lois noticed that Michelle looked more tired than she had

before... though there was a glint of something in her eyes that suggested she wasn't totally beat.

"Where's Justin?" Lois asked.

"Oh, taking a nap," said Michelle. "Funny, despite everything, he seems to need to rest just as much as any boy his age."

Lois smiled. "Michelle, I was hoping I could speak with you, woman-to-woman."

"I'm afraid," said Mr. Fennerman, "that isn't possible."

"It would be completely off the record," Lois hurried on. "It's just that, well, your client and I have something in common. She once had a relationship with Superman, and I, well... I guess it's all a wild wish, really, but he and I have had SOMETHING of a relationship, I suppose. I just feel a connection with her, you see... and I just want to... talk!"

"Richard, why don't you go check on Justin?" Michelle said to her attorney.

"I really don't think that's —"

"I'll be fine. You can go."

Looking perturbed, the lawyer stood up and left the room.

"He's so great with Jussie," Michelle remarked, as she watched him go. "And Jussie doesn't like just anybody. I feel very lucky to have found him."

Lois forced a smile.

"So you want to talk woman-to-woman," said Michelle. "Of course, of course. I HAD heard rumors that you and Superman were romantically linked."

"Listen," said Lois. "I'm pretty good about being able to tell when someone's lying. And I know you're lying about your relationship with Superman."

"I —"

"Don't even start. Superman's not the father of your son, and you know it. So we have a problem here. Your lies are destroying a good man's reputation. And for what? Money? Fame? You said the other day you just wanted what's best for your little boy. If that's really true, then maybe you should cooperate with someone who can help you figure out WHY Justin has superpowers. If we can figure out how he got them, maybe we can make them go away."

It took a moment for Michelle to recover from Lois's speech, but when she did, she raised herself up haughtily and said, "Make them go away? Now, why would I want to do that? We've got a movie deal in the works, I'll have you know! And a toy company wants to make a Justin action figure! He can have the life I've always wanted for him! Why would I want his powers to go away?"

Lois stared at Michelle, dumbfounded. This woman's house was a wreck; her furniture nearly annihilated, and yet she WANTED her three-year-old to be immensely strong? She WANTED a three-year-old who could fly away from her at the shopping mall? Greed was obviously clouding any good judgment she possessed.

"Miss Lane, you have a lot of nerve coming in here and saying these things to me!" Now Michelle's voice had gotten loud. "I suggest you leave!"

Richard Fennerman stepped back into the room. "I'll show you to the door," he said gruffly.

Lois left without further comment. She had a lot to say to that woman, yet she knew it was bound to fall on deaf ears. Michelle Driver was clearly not in her right mind.

"Clark, it was absolutely maddening! She thinks it's great, getting all these movie deals and whatnot. It's like her mind is completely in the clouds. She didn't deny it when I accused her of lying, though. That's something."

"You flat out told her you knew she was lying?!"

"Yes," said Lois.

Wow, Clark thought. "So... then you believe Superman?"

"Clark, I have to. If I can't believe Superman to be honest and trustworthy, then my whole world is just going to go falling to pieces. You might as well tell me the sky is orange and dogs say meow. Superman tells the truth, and that's all there is to it. And if he says he's not the father, then darnit, that woman's a liar!"

Clark was dying to ask how Lois had come to this conclusion, but he held his tongue. No matter how she'd arrived, she'd arrived. He wasn't about to say anything to change her mind. The point was she believed him, now — and that meant the world to him.

"I just wish I could've talked some sense into her," Lois continued. "She's done a complete turnaround since we spoke to her. NOW she thinks having a superkid is wonderful! Oooh, a movie! Ahhh, an action figure! She apparently has no qualms about exploiting her son for profit!"

"Maybe..." Clark began, then stopped himself.

"Maybe what?"

"Well, maybe Superman ought to talk to her?"

"Do you think that's a good idea? I mean, if Superman goes over there, every reporter camped out on that lawn is going to do the hallelujah chorus. It'll be like Superman's flat-out admitting his involvement!"

"Who says he has to go over there?" Clark asked.

"You mean, they could meet somewhere? But where?"

"I have an idea," said Clark.

STAR Labs had never seen anything quite like it. Mobs of people, packing the parking lot. Everyone waiting for the arrival of Superman; everyone eagerly anticipating the arrival of "The Superboy" and his mother. This was it, the big moment.

Superman had agreed to a DNA test.

Superman arrived first. Microphones were thrust into his face and he was sprayed with questions. He held up his hand. When the noise settled, he said, "I'm here today because I want the world to know the truth. For everyone's sake. I believe in —"

"IT'S THEM!"

The crowd bubbled up again and heads turned toward an approaching white limousine. When the car stopped, the door was opened and out stepped Richard Fennerman. Next came Michelle Driver. She was dressed sharply in a black shirt, blouse, and heels. “Come on, Jussie,” Clark heard her say. A minute later, Justin emerged, wearing... a Superman suit.

The crowd loved it. Hundreds of flashes later, the four of them were being greeted inside STAR Labs by two doctors.

“Welcome,” said one of the doctors. “I’m Dr. Murtson, and this is my colleague, Dr. Riley. We’ve prepared a room where we’ll take the samples so we can begin the tests. Right this way, please.”

They were taken to a large room with no windows and a lot of equipment. There was a large metal table and several chairs.

“Before we begin,” said Superman, “I was hoping to have a word with Miss Driver. Alone.”

“I’m afraid — ” Richard Fennerman began.

“Oh, Richard, shush,” said Michelle. “That’s fine by me. But what about Justin?”

“Well,” spoke up Dr. Riley, “if Justin likes rats, we have a very interesting experiment going on down the hall. He’ll have to promise to be careful, but....”

“Rats!” said Justin excitedly.

“Richard, you’ll go with him, won’t you?” asked Michelle.

The attorney sighed but agreed, and they were led away to see the rodents.

“Please,” said Superman, indicating a chair.

Michelle sat and looked at Superman.

“You’re looking good,” Michelle offered.

“Miss Driver, please...”

“Miss Driver! Why the formalities? You certainly never called me that before, silly.”

Superman took a deep breath and tried to keep his voice calm. “You told Lois Lane that you want Justin to continue having powers. That you think, somehow, it’ll make his life better. But I disagree. Please, listen.... I know what it’s like to be different from everybody else. And believe me, it’s not fun. In some ways, it’s terrifying... sometimes humiliating... I have never felt like I fit in, not really. I never know if people really like me, the REAL me, or if they’re just... impressed by what I can do. It’s not the kind of life I’d wish on anybody... ESPECIALLY not a boy who’s only three years old, who has his whole life ahead of him... a life that could be normal, if you’d let us try and figure out how he got his powers in the first place.”

Michelle was shaking. “I’m sorry,” she said. “It’s been so hard, I just... I don’t know what to do! Justin and I NEED the money, don’t you see? It’s hard enough being a single mom.... but having a little boy who’s nearly destroyed your house...! I’ve had to max out our credit cards just to keep a roof over our heads!”

“I want to help you,” Superman said. “But, look, I’m not rich. I don’t have bagfuls of cash sitting around. Everything ‘Superman’ earns from merchandising goes

straight to charity, and... I’m sorry about your home. I want to help fix it, and I want to make things right. And I’ll do what I can. But if you truly want things to get better for Justin, then you have to let us — me, Lois Lane, and Clark Kent, the doctors here at STAR labs, perhaps — help you solve this mystery... and maybe give Justin a chance at a normal life.”

“But how do we do that?” asked Michelle.

“Well... for starters, do you know who Justin’s real father is?”

Michelle sighed. “His name was Steve. Steve Wickers. He was my boyfriend at the time. A real cad, though. He died in a motorcycle accident right after Justin was born.”

“You’re positive he’s the father?”

“Yes!” said Michelle, sounding offended. “Goodness sakes, I’m not THAT kind of woman!”

“Sorry. I just... well, okay. When was Justin born?”

“May 14, 1991.”

“You’re sure?”

“Well, I was there!”

“So Justin was born and... was he a normal baby?”

“Normal, how?”

“Did he ever get sick? Or hurt?”

“What are you suggesting?”

“I’m just trying to figure out if he had superpowers from birth or not,” Superman said evenly.

Michelle looked thoughtful for a moment, then shook her head. “No, Justin was a very normal baby. The superpowers definitely started this past summer.”

“When did — ” Superman started, but was interrupted by Justin, Fennerman and the doctors returning.

“Mommy, they got rats and they’re so cool!”

“That’s great, Jussie!”

“Are we ready to proceed with the test?” Dr. Murtson asked, looking back and forth between Superman and Michelle.

Superman looked at Michelle, silently asking her what she wanted to do.

“Yes, let’s do it,” said Michelle. “Just to be one hundred percent sure, one way or the other.”

“Certainly,” said the doctor.

After taking hair samples from both Superman and Justin, and informing them that the results would be available in four to five months (“four to five MONTHS?!”), the doctors showed them the way out.

“I’d like to keep in touch with you,” Superman said to Michelle as they walked through the lobby.

“Any questions directed toward my client should go through me or my office,” Richard Fennerman said.

“Oh, for Pete’s sake, Richard,” Michelle said exasperatedly. She fished through her purse for a slip of paper and then handed Superman her phone number. “Here you go.”

“Hey,” said Justin, looking up at Superman. “Are you my daddy?”

“You’re not going to believe this,” Lois declared when Clark walked by her desk the next morning.

“What now?” asked Clark.

“You’d better sit down.”

Clark pulled up a chair and leaned forward attentively.

“First off, I was able to get hold of Dr. Fabian Leek’s financial records — don’t ask me how,” she added slyly. “Anyway, it turns out Leek was receiving his funding through none other than Lex L Investments!”

“Luthor!” Clark spat. “Why am I not surprised?”

“Yeah. So whatever Leek WAS working on, it was probably FOR Lex. And if Leek is, in fact, our cloning guy, which I might add we have no proof of, but IF...”

“Then that means Lex Luthor may have commissioned Superman’s clone in the first place,” said Clark.

“Which, considering all we know about Lex NOW, I wouldn’t put past him,” Lois said grimly. “But now that Lex is dead...”

“You know,” said Clark. “I talked to Superman last night, and he’s kind of backing away from the Justin Driver cloning theory, now.”

“What? Why?”

“Superman said he spoke to Justin’s mom yesterday at STAR Labs for quite a bit... I don’t know, I think it just doesn’t add up. Michelle admitted to him that she knows who the real father is... er, was... and that Justin was born in 1991. That doesn’t really work with the theory that Justin was somehow... genetically manufactured... within the last year.”

“Well, she COULD be lying, still,” Lois said. “But I guess if Superman says... well anyway, there’s more. Get this. So last night my phone rings, and guess who it is?”

“Who?”

“Fine, don’t bother to guess. Mrs. Cox.”

“From PRISON? What did SHE want?”

“She said, and I quote, ‘If you’re looking to find out what happened to Lex’s body, try a night visit to Perpetual Pines Cemetery.’”

“Huh?”

“It seems she thinks Lex might be alive.”

“WHAT!? That’s impossible! That’s crazy! First off, how could he be alive... and even if he was alive, what would he be doing hanging around a cemetery?”

Lois shrugged. “Beats me, but hey... it’s been months since his body was stolen, and we haven’t had a single lead. So I figured we should go stake out the cemetery tonight. Hope you’re not busy.”

They arrived at Perpetual Pines at dusk and sneaked onto the grounds, positioning themselves behind two particularly large tombstones. Armed with flashlights and dressed warmly, they waited. And waited. A distant clap of thunder sounded as a chill filled the night air.

“Are you sure about this?” Clark said, looking toward the sky. “I think there’s a storm coming.”

“Don’t be such a baby!” said Lois. “We have to at least try! Don’t you want to know what happened to Lex’s body?”

“Well, actually — ” began Clark, but before he could say anything more, two things happened. First, Lois shushed him. Second, he heard a wail.

“This is the end! I’m done, Mama! Done with this pitiful existence!”

Another roll of thunder. Clark craned his neck to look for the source of the voice, and found it about three hundred feet away. An older gentleman, dressed in a dull gray suit, was standing in front of a tombstone, tears streaming down his face, a revolver in his right hand.

“Clark, I think I see something!”

Clark glanced back at Lois, and saw her crawling in the opposite direction. He was torn — should he follow Lois, or should he keep an eye on the guy with the gun? Gun, he decided. Lois would surely scream if she got into trouble.

He began to inch toward the man. He wouldn’t do anything unless he was sure the man was going to pull the trigger, but he knew that could happen quickly when it did, so he had to be alert. No way was someone going to die on his watch.

“I’ve gone and lost all the money!” the man was crying. “All of it! And now I can’t pay to keep sister in the home past the end of the month, and — I — oh, everything I do just goes up in smoke! I’m useless, just useless!”

“Clark!” Lois was whispering furiously.

Was she okay? Yes... she was just wondering where he’d gone, Clark decided. It was dark. He could just say he’d gotten lost. Right now there were more important things to —

The gun was inching ever closer to the man’s head. Clark knew he couldn’t wait any longer. With a quick spin, he became a blur of red, yellow, and blue, and sped toward the target. His hand clenched around the gun, and at that very moment, a bright flash of light enveloped both of them. He felt a strong jolt. It took him a second to realize what it was. Lightning had been drawn to the gun, or him, or — something. And here he was, in contact with another human being. He held on tight, afraid to let go or else let the man take the brunt of the electricity.

When it was all over, they were both still standing. Superman breathed a sigh of relief. No harm done. After making sure the man was all right, he launched into a speech about life being worth living, bent the gun like a pretzel, and poured out words of encouragement. The man, who did not seem grateful in the least, gave Superman an earful. Superman calmly deflected the insults and, in the end, urged the man to seek professional help. Then he flew off.

A minute later, Clark was back in his regular clothes, crouching behind a tombstone and trying to get a location on Lois through the now-falling rain. He spotted her and began to move toward her. She had

apparently given up on looking for him, or — no, she was fixated on something. He craned his neck to see what she was looking at. There was something — no, someone — standing in the shadows in front of a mausoleum. He could just barely make it out. He made a move to adjust his glasses so that he might get a better view, when suddenly —

“Hey! Hold it right there! What do you think you’re doing!?”

“Just great,” Lois muttered, as she maneuvered the jeep through the rainy streets. “I’m completely wet and freezing, and all I saw was a silhouette of I don’t know what! You WOULD have to go and get us kicked out just as things were getting interesting.”

Clark rolled his eyes. So the cemetery security guard had seen him first; it’s not like he had made a big scene and attracted the guard’s attention on purpose.

“We’ll just have to try again another time,” Lois decided. “Maybe I’ll just go by myself next time. And where were you, anyway? One minute you were behind me, and the next, it was like you’d fallen down a hole.”

“I, uh, thought I saw something,” said Clark.

“So you went to investigate it without me? Nice, Clark. And what you saw — was it anything?”

Just a guy with a gun Clark wanted to retort, but instead, he just said, “False alarm.”

A few days later, Lois and Clark were walking to work, discussing the Driver case. They didn’t have any new leads or ideas, and things were still far from ideal. Despite Michelle’s admission to Superman at STAR Labs, she had not yet retracted her statements to the press... and would she ever? As far as the world knew, Superman was the boy’s father and he’d taken a DNA test to try to deny it.

Clark couldn’t help feeling frustrated. The night before, Clark’s parents had called, and the three of them had talked for nearly two hours. It had felt good to receive their support, as usual, but they couldn’t fix the problem itself. Somehow, he would have to find a way to clear his name and make all this go away if he ever wanted to lead a normal life — well, as normal as it had been before Miss Driver hit the airwaves. Which, he mused, wasn’t very normal at all, but at least it was preferable.

Lois and Clark stopped at a coffee stand across from the Daily Planet to get their morning coffee.

“One half-caf mocha,” the barista said cheerfully, handing Lois her drink.

As Clark waited for his beverage, Lois continued to spout off about Michelle Driver. “The nerve of that woman! I mean, to sit there one minute and say that all she wants is the truth and blah dee blah, and to now just continue the charade? I doubt she wants the truth at all. I bet it’s all about the money for her!”

Clark did not bother to argue as he was handed his coffee and they made their way toward the crosswalk.

All of a sudden, they heard the screeching of tires and saw a vehicle barreling toward the curb where they were standing.

There was no time to change into Superman. Clark shoved Lois out of the path of the car. Her coffee went flying and she tumbled toward the pavement. He was about to use his superbreath to brake the car, when there was a flash of turquoise and orange in front of him and something — somebody — was stopping the car with its bare hands.

Somebody... else.

He watched, stone-still, as this... this PERSON... brushed off his hands, then bent over to help Lois up off the ground.

“— What happened?”

“— Who is HE?”

“— Another superperson!?”

“— They’re taking over!”

A crowd had gathered at the street corner where the once-out-of-control-car was now still. People were buzzing with excitement and confusion. The driver was apologizing profusely from the front seat. But none of these things mattered to Clark. All he could see at that moment was his partner... who had just narrowly escaped major injury... being carried by... well, somebody who wasn’t him.

The newcomer was dressed in an orange hooded sweatshirt and blue sweatpants. A cloth mask covered the top half of his face.

“Well, you’re just about the prettiest thing I’ve saved so far!” the masked man told Lois, as he set her on her feet. “But the day is young, and my experience is somewhat limited.”

Clark gasped. That voice! It was the man from the cemetery! The man who’d... holy cow... now HE had SUPERPOWERS?

“What’s your name, missy?”

“Lois Lane... D-Daily Planet,” she managed. “And who are YOU?”

“That’s for me to know and you to find out, little lady,” said the man, and with a sly grin, he took off for the sky.

Clark had to fight to find his voice. “Lois, are you okay?!”

“Huh? Oh, Clark. Yeah, I am... thanks to... whoever that was! I can’t believe it — another person with superpowers! What do you think this means?!”

Clark just shook his head.

“Well, I’ll tell you one thing,” Perry said, as he peered at a photo someone had snapped of the orange-and-blue-clad Superhero. “THIS guy sure as heck ain’t Superman’s son!”

“It was the most incredible thing, Perry. I mean, one moment, my life is flashing before my eyes, and the next, I’m encountering THIS!”

“Thank goodness you weren’t hurt, hon. Where was Superman when you needed him this time?”

Clark bristled at this comment. He would have stopped the car! And besides, he'd pushed Lois out of the path of the vehicle, so... she would have been okay! It was he who'd been in actual danger... well, sort of. Okay, not really.

"It's not like he follows me around everywhere, Perry. Superman can only do so much. Thank goodness this — whatshisname — was there, though!"

"Ms. Lane?" A messenger was at the door to Perry's office. "This just came for you." He held out an envelope.

Lois took it and thanked him. She opened the envelope, pulled out a sheet of paper, glanced it over and then let out a yelp.

"What's wrong?" Clark said.

"That jerk! It's a BILL! He's CHARGING me for saving my life! \$29.95: 'A small price to pay for being plucked alive from the snapping jaws of certain death.'"

"Incredible!" Clark shook his head. Inside, he was fuming. He'd saved that man's life the other night, and now this guy'd saved Lois's — and he had the nerve to bill her for it!

"Kids, do you think you can handle running with both stories?" Perry asked. "I mean, this is BIG... a grown man with Superpowers... a kid with Superpowers... it's like there's something in the water."

"We're on it, Chief," said Lois.

"You know," said Clark, as they left Perry's office, "up until this morning, our best lead was the idea that the boy was some kind of genetic creation, and that's how he got Superman's powers. Which, you know, wasn't that solid of a lead anyway. But now that this older guy has powers, too...." He stopped short. He couldn't very well tell Lois everything that had occurred that night in the cemetery. Yet it all seemed to be clicking, and he longed to share what he knew — or thought he knew.

Fact: the man from the cemetery now had Superman's powers. How had he gotten them? The answer was obvious to Clark, yet it seemed so crazy — and so simple — he could scarcely believe it. The lightning! They had been physically connected when the lightning had struck and... the powers must have transferred. Amazing. Bizarre. How very... Kryptonian.

But if his powers were transferable, then maybe — somehow, some way — his powers had, also, been transferred to little Justin Driver. But how? When? Sure, he'd been struck by lightning before — many times. But never when touching someone, to his recollection.

He longed to tell Lois all the things that were going through his mind. If only he could say, "Hey Lois, I'm Superman and I accidentally transferred my powers to someone else the other night, and now I think I know how Justin Driver got to be a superkid, can you help me figure out where and when?" But of course he couldn't. It was so hard, sometimes. Lois was a sure bet when it came to figuring out tough problems. And yet he couldn't divulge this, because he couldn't.... She couldn't know....

Maybe someday things would be different. Perhaps someday he'd tell Lois everything. And maybe, if she didn't run screaming (or, more likely for her, run AT him screaming), they could work together on things like this.

For now, he would have to just go to her having "just talked to Superman." Like usual. Someday, maybe, things would be different. But until then, this would have to do.

The new superhero, who was now calling himself Wonderman, was all over the news. The tabloids were in heaven. Rumors swirled. Were Wonderman and Justin Driver related? Were they part of a superhero army, sent from Superman's home planet? Were there more like them?

If things had been bad before, they were downright terrible, now — at least for Superman. He couldn't make a single rescue without being hounded for information — and not just by reporters, but by every person with a working larynx. Women who didn't outright hate him were begging him to father their children. Others were convinced he knew how to bestow his powers on other people, and would he share? And if not, why not? How selfish he was to keep his powers for himself! It wasn't fair!

And there was yet another problem. Wonderman — though he called himself a superhero, wore a colorful costume, and did indeed save lives — was quite the opposite of what a superhero ought to be, as far as Clark was concerned. Charging people money for having saved their lives? Tacky. Telling people upfront that he would not put out the fire in the burning home and save their puppy unless they paid first? Horrible!

To make matters worse — at least in Clark's mind — Wonderman had taken a shining to Lois. One evening, he showed up at her apartment and brought her flowers, and even offered to take her out on a date. Clark arrived at Lois's door with a timely knock, and Wonderman eventually left. Lois told Clark she'd only played along because she was hoping for an interview. But alas, Wonderman wouldn't divulge anything for free. She was not able to find out who he was, where he'd come from, or how he'd gotten his powers. But she was determined to find out.

"I may be able to help you out with that," Clark said, as he made himself comfortable on her couch. "I just came from talking to Superman, and he thinks he knows how Wonderman got his powers... and maybe Justin Driver, too."

"TELL!" Lois said, unable to hide her excitement.

"Lightning."

"What, now?"

"Remember the thunderstorm we had last week? Superman says he encountered Wonderman that night; saved his life, actually. Only he wasn't Wonderman, he was just an average, middle-aged guy trying to do himself in. While Superman was stopping him, they got

struck by lightning. Superman was afraid the man would be hurt, but he was fine.”

“And then, a few days later, the guy shows up with superpowers!” Lois gasped. “So... Superman’s powers can be transferred via electricity?”

“Powerful electricity, anyway,” said Clark.

“Did Superman say that’s what happened with Justin?”

“That’s just it,” said Clark. “Superman says he’s never met Justin before in his life, not that he remembers, anyway. Besides, he said he’d remember if he’d been in a direct lightning encounter with someone before, but says he hasn’t — that the other night was the first time that’s ever happened.”

“Clark, you told me that Superman said that Michelle said Justin’s powers first started appearing this past summer. If we could get an exact date — ”

Clark looked at her excitedly. “Lois, I just remembered, I — ” He caught himself just in time. He had been about to tell her about the time he’d landed a plane in a lightning storm back in July.

“You what?” asked Lois.

“I, uh, remember... that... Superman told me about landing a plane in a lightning storm this summer. He said he was struck by lightning!”

“Was he touching the plane when he was struck?” Lois asked.

“Yeah! Well, I mean, I assume so... if he was trying to land the plane, he’d be touching it, wouldn’t he?”

“What are the odds that Justin Driver was on that plane?” asked Lois.

“I guess we’ll have to find out.”

“But even if he was, why would only HE get Superman’s powers? Why not everyone on board the plane?”

“Maybe he was sitting in the seat closest to Superman at the time?”

“Maybe,” Lois said thoughtfully. “Well, either you or Superman is going to have to ask Michelle about that — I highly doubt she’s ever going to want to speak to me again, not after our little conversation the other day.”

“The only thing is, if that’s indeed how Justin got his powers, does that mean he’s stuck with them forever?”

“Well, I don’t know... maybe there’s a way to transfer them back,” said Lois. “Once we find out for sure Justin was on that plane, I’ll get in touch with STAR Labs and see what they say.”

The next morning, the Daily Planet newsroom was in an uproar. Every TV was tuned to a different news station, and they were all airing the same story:

Justin Driver had disappeared during the night. Richard Fennerman, Michelle’s attorney, was nowhere to be found. The FBI had been called in.

“This is all my fault!” Michelle sobbed into the TV cameras. “I trusted him! Oh, my baby!”

All thoughts of Wonderman, lightning strikes, and paternity issues were pushed aside as Lois and Clark took on this latest crisis.

“Why would someone take him?” Lois asked, as her eyes fixed on one the TV screens. Though she didn’t have children herself, she felt an aching in her chest for what Michelle must be going through. She knew what it felt like to have someone you cared about ripped away from you. She knew what it felt like to deal with the idea of never seeing that person again. She had felt it all too recently, with Clark.

“Ransom?” Clark suggested. “Extortion? Maybe someone thinks they can get money out of Superman. Or maybe somebody wants a super-child....”

“Surely someone must have seen something!” said Lois. “I know it happened during the night, but with all those reporters camped out in front of the house, how could anyone have possibly sneaked off with him without anyone noticing?”

The answer to this question came about half an hour later. It was reported that around 2am, a car had pulled out of the Drivers’ garage and driven away. Several reporters noted that the driver looked like that attorney, Mr. Fennerman. They hadn’t noticed anyone else in the car — but perhaps Justin had been lying in the backseat. The next unusual thing that had happened, said witnesses, was that Michelle Driver started screaming around 6:30am, upon the realization that her son was not anywhere in the house.

“We’re going back to Maryston,” Lois told Clark.

On the drive to Maryston, a thought struck Lois. “Clark, what if someone else figured out how Superman’s powers can be transferred — and what if they kidnapped Justin, thinking HE can somehow transfer powers to THEM?”

“That’s a long shot, Lois. Sure, a lot of people seem to think it CAN be done, now, but nobody knows HOW, do they? We haven’t printed anything, and I doubt Superman told anyone else, so....”

“I know, but I was thinking — what if someone was there the night Superman saved Wonderman? What if someone witnessed what happened, and put two and two together?”

“Someone in the cemetery?” Clark asked, before he could stop himself.

“It happened in a cemetery?” Lois asked.

“Uh... yeah. Superman told me that’s where the lightning struck.”

“Sheesh, was EVERYONE hanging around cemeteries that night?” Lois asked. “Well, whatever, say someone saw Superman get struck... and then realized that the guy he’d been touching later became Wonderman, so they realized, oh, okay, Superman’s powers can be transferred. And what if they thought, if Superman can transfer his powers to one person, maybe THAT person can transfer their powers to somebody ELSE!- ? But instead of going after a middle-aged guy who’d probably be too smart to fall for it, you go after a little boy by offering him candy or a new puppy or what have you, and then somehow figure out a way to get the powers from him?”

“Lois, that’s so far out — ”

“ — that it might actually be true!” Lois finished for him. “Either way, I think we can safely assume the Drivers’ attorney is involved somehow. Now, whether he’s after the powers himself, or if he’s just working for somebody else, I don’t know.”

This time, Lois had to park six blocks away from the Driver residence, and she found herself unable to get anywhere near the front door. She was just about to instruct Clark to create a diversion so she could sneak her way in, when she overheard some other reporters talking.

“ — house is empty, except for some FBI guys — ”

“ — they’ve had her down at the police station for hours — ”

“Great!” Lois said to Clark. “Michelle’s not even here!”

“Let’s just... look around for a bit,” said Clark, who had his own agenda in mind. “Just mingle and hear what we can hear.”

Lois had to admit this was a reasonable idea, so they split up.

Clark x-rayed the house’s interior, but wasn’t able to find much of anything of interest. Justin’s bed was tussled, like he’d slept in it the night before, but there didn’t appear to have been any kind of major struggle. He also noticed sleeping pills in the medicine cabinet, and wondered if they had been consumed the previous night — perhaps there had been a reason why Michelle hadn’t been aware of her son being taken.

After about twenty minutes, the team found each other and Clark told Lois what he knew about Justin’s bed, attributing the information to a reporter he’d overheard. Lois had acquired the make and model of the car Richard Fennerman had been driving. “It’s Michelle’s car,” Lois said, “So I’m guessing he stole it. It’s a dark blue 1993 Mazda Sentinel, license plate — ” she checked a notepad she was carrying “ — RMT 396. I had to give that awful Blake Mezzington from the Metropolis Star \$20 for that information! But maybe it’ll do us some good. We should let Superman know about this... maybe he can help search from the skies.”

Clark agreed to contact Superman as soon as they could find a phone. Lois suggested they make their way to the police station and see if they could talk to Michelle. After making some queries, they learned the police station was only half a mile away, so they decided to cover the distance on foot.

Reporters were staked out in front of Maryston’s tiny police station as well. Clark x-rayed the building, looking for Michelle, and found her sitting in a tiny office, being questioned by two FBI agents. Her face was red and tear-stained, and she looked like she’d just crawled through hell.

“Lois, I’m going to go find a phone,” Clark said. “To call Superman.”

“Okay, I’ll see if I can get in the building,” she replied.

Clark took off, looking for a place to change. He knew that FBI agents were unlikely to stop right in the middle of what they were doing to let a Daily Planet reporter talk to their subject. But maybe they’d be more open to....

“Superman!”

“It’s Superman, look!”

Superman landed near the front door to the police station and, as calmly as he could, entered the building. He gave the receptionist quite a start at first, but once she realized who she was looking at, she immediately went into action. He told her he’d like to speak with Michelle Driver. She told him she’d see what she could do.

The FBI agents very well could’ve told Superman to beat it, but instead, they allowed him into the tiny office. With four of them in the room, there wasn’t any room to turn around.

“Superman, we’ll have to ask you to keep this brief,” said one of the agents. “Normally we wouldn’t allow interruptions, but considering your connection to this case — ”

“He’s not the father!” Michelle burst out.

“Excuse me?” the agent said.

“Superman’s not Justin’s father. It was all a lie... I just... I just thought if Superman could help us, everything would be okay.”

“I can still help you,” Superman said gently.

“Michelle, I may not be Justin’s father, but I still care about what happens to him. I’m going to do whatever I can to make sure he comes back to you safely. If there’s any information you can give me, please... let me help.”

Before he left, Superman was given the details about the car Fennerman had been driving (which he already knew) as well as Fennerman’s last known address, place of employment, and connections. He thanked everyone profusely, made one last promise to Michelle to find her son, and left through a back door.

“Where’ve you been?” Lois asked, when Clark had changed into his regular clothes and returned to the front of the building.

“I was, uh...” Clark nodded toward the gas station across the street.

Lois rolled her eyes. “Well, I assume you called Superman, because he showed up and they let him inside. Not sure if he’s still in there.”

Clark heard his pager go off. He held up the device and glanced at the number. “It’s Jimmy,” he said. “I’ll be right back.”

>From the gas station pay phone, he called Jimmy.

“CK, I’ve got something. Someone sent Lois a package about half an hour ago. The security guys opened it, and found... what looks like a pair of Superman pajamas, kid sized. There was a note, too. It said - ‘Tell your boyfriend we want \$1 million, or his kid dies.’”

“WHAT?!” Clark yelled. He tried to wrap his brain around this new, disturbing information. Someone had sent Lois a package, meant to be a message to

Superman... a ransom note? One million dollars!? And they were threatening to kill Justin? But how? He was invulnerable! Unless they had Kryptonite...?

Clark felt sick. It didn't seem to matter what the truth was, anymore — whether people believed Justin had gotten his powers from his father, or through a bolt of lightning — none of it mattered right now. All that mattered was that a little boy was in danger... because of him.

After hanging up with Jimmy, Clark found Lois as quickly as he could, and relayed the information to her.

"What do we do?!" she asked.

"Go back to the Planet," Clark instructed her. "See what you can dig up on Fennerman. I'll wait for Superman to come out and let him know what's going on."

Lois took off toward her jeep, and Clark sighed deeply. What a mess this had turned out to be.

Lois couldn't sleep. She paced her apartment in her pajamas, every once in a while glancing toward her window in the hope that Superman might arrive to give her some shred of information or hope.

Justin had been gone for nearly twenty-four hours, and so far, no one had been able to locate him. Whoever had sent the ransom note was demanding his money by noon the following day. Would Superman show up? Would he pay the ransom? Would Justin come home safely?

"Hello there, missy!"

A voice at the window nearly sent Lois through the roof. She had been hoping for Superman; she certainly wasn't expecting... HIM. Maybe leaving her window open wasn't such a good idea anymore, not with all manner of Superbeings flying around Metropolis these days.

"Mind if we talk for a bit?" he said, stepping into the living room. "It's a lonely night."

Lois swallowed hard. "Wonderman... um... actually, I'm really tired, so maybe this could wait —"

"Oh, I suppose," Wonderman said, looking forlorn. "But I have some information for ya!"

"What kind of information?" she asked, her reporter's curiosity piqued.

"About that little boy. I think I know where he is. Or, at least, where he was."

"Where?" she cried.

"Now, wait a minute," Wonderman said. "You don't think I'm just going to give it away, do you?"

Fury colored Lois's face. With anger swelling inside her, she barely trusted herself to speak. "You — RAT!" she hissed. "A child is in danger, and you won't even help unless I... I don't know... PAY YOU? You're SICK! Get OUT!"

"Well, now, I didn't say I wanted MONEY," Wonderman said, holding up his hands. "I just thought, a pretty little lady like you... a revered bachelor like me...."

"You thought wrong!" Lois said.

"Hmmp!" he said. "Well, I can take a hint!"

Wonderman stepped toward the window, ready to fly out, but he was stopped by something solid.

Lois was sure she was dreaming, now. Here she was in her pajamas, and not one but TWO supermen were standing in her living room. This was a bit too surreal.

"Superman!" she exclaimed.

Wonderman looked from Lois to Superman, then rolled his eyes. "All right, y'all, look... I wasn't gonna just give it away, but I can see I'm outnumbered here. I have some information about that little boy."

"We're listening," said Superman.

"Well, see, now, I was visiting my folks earlier... well, payin' my respects, like I do when I feel the need, and I heard a child's voice. Wasn't sure where it was comin' from, but I heard it."

Lois looked annoyed. "A child's voice? That could have been anyone!"

"Well, now... I'm right certain I heard a woman sayin' the name 'Justin,' and I know that's the name of that little boy who's missing. Of course, she also called him 'little brat,' which kind of put me on edge, see, 'cause I don't think anyone should be talkin' to kids that way, no matter how naughty they are."

"And where was this?" Lois asked tiredly.

"Perpetual Pines. Kind of on the northeast end."

"But you didn't actually SEE Justin?" said Superman.

"No, but I tell ya, we need to have us a talk about this whole x-ray vision thing, because I can't seem to get it to work right half the time!"

"Did you call the police?" asked Lois, rolling her eyes. "Or the FBI? Or anyone?"

"Sure I did!" Wonderman said. "But...."

"Let me guess," said Superman, "You tried to negotiate a deal out of them."

Wonderman looked indignant. "So maybe I did! And I would've got one, too — except by the time the police got down to the cemetery, I guess they couldn't find anyone."

"I'll pay a visit to Perpetual Pines and see what I can see," Superman said. "Maybe the police missed something. You should try to get some rest," he said to Lois. "And you," he said to Wonderman, "come with me."

"What for?"

"I want you to show me exactly where you were when you heard those voices."

"Oh, all right," Wonderman said. "Though you ought to know the place — it's the same place where we were struck by —" he stopped, glancing at Lois, wondering if he was giving a bit too much information away.

"By lightning?" Lois finished for him. "Wait! That happened at Perpetual Pines?! Clark and I were there the night of the thunderstorm, too! And I saw somebody that night... near that big mausoleum. Also, there were guards on duty that night — maybe one of them witnessed what happened to you two. Maybe...." Her

head was spinning with all this new information. “I want to go with you,” she said.

“I don’t know....” Superman said.

She tilted her head to the side and gave him one of her sweetest looks. “If you don’t take me with you, I’ll just end up driving down there anyway, so....”

“Well....”

“We’re wasting time!” she urged.

As they flew toward the cemetery, Lois mused that if anyone’s eyes were trained toward the skies at that very moment, they would witness a very strange sight indeed. Two Superheroes, one red, yellow and blue, one turquoise and orange, and a reporter in her pajamas, all out for a late-night flight. Then her thoughts turned back to Justin Driver, and she scolded herself for becoming distracted. She needed to focus.

They landed near a group of large, ornate headstones. “This is it,” said Wonderman. “This is where I heard the voices earlier.”

Superman put his mind to listening. He had to tune out the sounds of wind, late-night traffic, and an owl hooting nearby. “Nothing,” he said sadly, after a few minutes.

“Me either.” Wonderman looked around. “Well, I guess I’m sorry to have brought y’all out here. My, but I’m hungry. There’s an all-night pub just down the street... anyone up for a drink?”

Identical glares were sent in his direction.

“Well, sorr-ee,” he said.

“I’m just going to make sure we’re not missing anything,” Superman said. “Stay here, and I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

As soon as he took off, Wonderman grinned at Lois. “Looks like it’s just you and me now, little missy.”

“I’m going to check out that big mausoleum over that way,” Lois said quickly. “Tell Superman where I went, would you?” She hurried off.

The nearly-full moon was casting an eerie glow over the cemetery, but Lois was grateful for the light it provided, anyway. She mentally kicked herself for not bringing along a flashlight. Still, she could at least take a look and see if there were any shadowy figures hanging around the mausoleum again tonight.

As she came upon the structure, a particularly cold breeze hit her head-on and chilled her to the core. Something about this place gave her the creeps. Oh, the cemetery itself was fine, nothing to be afraid of. But this particular section — something was not right, here.

Something propelled her forward, and without stopping to consider the consequences, she went for the mausoleum door. It was unlocked. She pulled it open and stepped inside a chamber. Blackness engulfed her.

What am I doing? she thought. This was crazy. This was probably home to a family of skeletons, trying to rest in peace, and here she was, disturbing them. Besides, what did she hope to accomplish in the dark, anyway? She backed outside quickly and shut the door carefully. She stood there for a few moments, just staring at the building. There was something about this

place that was tugging at her. She decided then and there that as soon as the whole Justin Driver case was solved, she would come back here to do some investigating — with a flashlight. And maybe with Clark, too.

“Lois?”

She let out a yelp. “Oh, gosh, Superman, you startled me!”

He didn’t bother to remind her that he’d asked her to wait with Wonderman. It didn’t matter; he knew her too well. “What are you doing here?” he asked.

“Oh, I just thought — well, never mind. Did you find anything?”

“No,” said Superman. “I know it’s morbid, but I checked all the fresh graves, just in case.”

“Oh gosh,” said Lois. “I never even considered that he could be....”

“Yeah, but nothing. I think I should take you home and keep searching the city.”

It was nearly 4am, now, so Lois agreed. Back at her apartment, she managed to nab about two hours of sleep before she was up again, showering, eating breakfast, and getting dressed. She arrived early to the newsroom, and was pleased to see Clark already there.

“Have you heard anything?” she asked him.

He shook his head sadly. “Not yet.”

She told him about her late-night adventure with Superman. He seemed interested, but looked disappointed when she told him they hadn’t found a thing, despite the possible lead from Wonderman.

“I just feel so awful,” she said. “We have no leads, nothing to go on... I mean, I know the police and FBI are on the case, but it just seems like WE should be able to crack this....”

“Lois Lane?” A messenger had just arrived, and was holding out an envelope. “Would you sign here, please?”

“What’s this?” Lois asked.

After signing for the object, Lois ripped open the envelope. “Oh!” she exclaimed, when she saw what was inside. There was a piece of paper with a typewritten message on it. “Clark, another note from the kidnappers! ‘Four hours to go. Tell Superman to listen for our signal. We look forward to doing business with you.’”

“We should tell the police,” Clark said grimly.

“And we should get in touch with Superman and let him know about this latest note.”

“Yes,” agreed Clark.

“You know, Clark,” Lois said thoughtfully, “it would probably be a good idea if you weren’t the only one who could contact Superman... however you do it. Really, how DO you do it? You call him, don’t you? Some kind of secret phone number? Well... what if something happened to you? How would I get hold of him then?”

Just scream, Clark thought tiredly. “Listen, right now, I think we need to focus on the case. You call the police, I’ll contact Superman, okay? And we’ll talk about... that... later.”

“Fine,” Lois said, reaching for her phone. “Later.”

He hoped she wouldn’t really hold him to that, but knowing her....

As the noon hour neared, Lois began to feel fidgety. Clark had said he’d contact Superman, but how would things turn out? Would Justin be returned safely? Would his kidnapper(s) be caught? And where was Clark, anyway? A survey of the newsroom showed no sign of him. If he was off getting donuts again, she’d kill him. Or at least lecture him. She knew he had a sweet tooth, but sheesh. When things settled down, she’d have to set him straight. Chocolate bars in a locked desk drawer — THAT was the way to go.

She started as the phone rang. She snatched it up. “Lois Lane.”

“Wishing well. Centennial Park.” The voice was deep and robotic.

“What?” she said.

“The boy is there.” Click.

The boy is — WHAT? What boy? Did they mean Justin? Was this some kind of joke? Joke or no, she felt compelled to follow the lead.

“Jimmy!” she called. “When Clark gets back, tell him I went to Centennial Park. I’ve got a tip.”

“Okay, Lois!”

As she drove toward the park, she wondered what the heck she was doing. Was she walking into a trap? It wouldn’t be the first time. Then again, who would dare attack her in broad daylight in the middle of a city park? Okay, there WERE people who would do that... in fact, if she had a dollar for every time she’d been attacked or kidnapped in broad daylight.... *Oh, for heaven’s sake! Just focus on the task at hand!*

She pulled into a small parking lot near the playground and began to jog toward the wishing well. Thank goodness she was familiar with this park. When she got to the clearing where the wishing well stood, she began to search for some sign of Justin. She saw a few joggers, a woman pushing a stroller... but no little boys.

Lois sighed with frustration. Then a horrifying thought clutched at her. Had the caller meant that Justin was IN the well? She raced towards it and peered down. “JUSTIN?” she called. “Is anyone down there?” She didn’t hear anything. Just as she was about to yell for Superman (darn Clark for not telling her a better way to do it!), she caught something out of the corner of her eye. A sneaker. A tiny sneaker attached to a leg, sticking out from behind a hedge.

Lois ran toward it. Her heart thumped wildly in her chest. She prayed he was only sleeping. She bent down and touched the leg. It twitched. She got on her hands and knees and looked at the figure in the face. “Justin?” she said.

“Mommy?” the little boy mumbled.

He was alive! Groggy, but alive. His eyes focused on Lois and widened. “Where are we? Where’s my mommy?” he cried.

“It’s okay, Justin. I’ll take you to your mommy. Do you remember me? I came to your house one time. My name is Lois. Come on, let’s get you home, okay?”

Justin extended his arms and Lois took him in hers. He leaned his head against her shoulder as she carried him toward her jeep. She set him in the passenger seat and reached for her car phone. “I’m going to call for help,” she told Justin. “Just sit tight.”

“My head hurts,” the little boy moaned.

She started to dial the police, but then stopped and punched in the number for the Daily Planet instead. She tried Clark’s extension, but when he didn’t answer after three rings, she phoned Perry. “Perry, I’ve found Justin Driver. I know, I know... I had a tip, and he was right where they said. No, not yet. I will. Centennial Park, near the wishing well. Okay.”

Next she dialed the police. Within minutes, they were there. As Justin was checked over, Lois was questioned. She told the officers everything she knew, and when they asked why she hadn’t alerted authorities when she’d gotten the tip in the first place, she was quick to point out that she was a reporter... she got tips every day... most of them didn’t pan out... why bother the police? That answer seemed to satisfy them.

What a story! It was incredible, yet so very baffling. Why had someone sent the ransom notes, demanding so much money, and then just... let Justin go? And why had they taken him in the first place? Lois was dying for answers.

Back at the Daily Planet, Lois had just sat down at her desk when she saw her partner approaching.

“Clark!” she cried, standing up. “Where have you been!?”

“Covering Superman,” Clark said glumly. “He was supposed to meet the ‘kidnappers’ at noon. But it was a ruse, they didn’t have Justin. They’re in cust — ”

“Clark, Justin’s been found!”

He stared at her, not comprehending.

“Seriously, Clark... he’s fine, he’s safe. But get this — his powers are gone.”

“Gone!?” Clark’s jaw dropped.

“Yes.”

“Was he hurt? Was he okay? Where did they find him?”

“I got a phone call just before noon. They said I’d find Justin in Centennial Park. So I went, and he was there.”

Clark broke into a smile. “You,” he said, “are incredible. This is great! Where’s Justin now?”

“With his mom,” said Lois. “Or at least on his way to her.”

“So somebody just... left him in the park? Do they know who?”

“The police weren’t able to get much out of Justin. They think he may have been drugged. He was acting a bit loopy after I found him, but he did give the police a vague description of the kidnapper. Apparently they’re

now looking for a tall, “mean” lady with short blonde hair.”

“A lady?” Clark said. “But I was sure... I mean, what about that attorney?”

“Fennerman? I don’t know. So far nobody’s been able to locate him.”

“Wow,” said Clark. “So someone takes Justin, then just — returns him? Why?”

Lois shook her head.

“And how could he have lost his powers?” Clark continued.

Lois shook her head. “I’d love to know.”

Michelle Driver’s happy reunion with her son was all over the evening news. Though Michelle had declined to give any interviews, Lois and Clark did hear that the Driver home would be guarded by police tonight and that all members of the media were being asked to clear their property. Maybe now — especially now that Justin’s superpowers were gone — the family could get some peace. At least, Clark hoped so. He vowed to visit Maryston within the next week, as Superman, to help make repairs to the home and, with any luck, help the Drivers move forward with their life.

But there was still the problem of Wonderman. And the day after Justin was reunited with his mother, that problem got a bit worse.

Superman had just finished putting out a warehouse fire near Hobbs Bay when he heard a whooshing sound, a thud, and then, “Superman! SUPERMAN!”

Wonderman was there, waving his arms frantically.

“What’s wrong?” Superman asked.

“My sister! My sister is GONE!”

Superman stared at Wonderman in confusion. “What?”

“My sister, Wanda Mae! She’s a patient at Meadowlark Park. At least she was ‘til this mornin’! They called and said she’s... gone! She wasn’t in her room and they have no idea where she is! And someone called my 1-900 number and left a message sayin’ they’ve GOT her. They’ve got Wanda Mae!”

“Calm down. Do you have ANY idea who could’ve taken her?”

“No, I... wait! Yeah, I do! I bet you anything it was her! That... that WITCH! Why, when I find her, I’m gonna...”

“Hold on a second. Who? Who was it?”

“The other day, as I was comin’ out of that bakery over on Schuyler, this woman came up to me and told me she knew who I was. I told her I didn’t right care if she knew who I was. Then she said she could make me rich beyond my wildest dreams. I told her I could do that all right by myself! But she wouldn’t take no for an answer. She went on to say somethin’ about sharin’ my powers, that she knew,” he lowered his voice, lest anyone overhear him, “how I got YOUR powers. She said she was a scientist and that she could...”

somethingorother about duplicating the formula for transferin’ it to herself. I told her to go fly a kite.”

“Why do you think SHE took your sister, though?” Superman asked.

“Because!” he cried. “I told her she had no leverage! That’s what I said to her before I flew away! I mean, I certainly wasn’t going to let her take my powers for nothin’! And don’t ya see? If she really did know who I was, then she could’ve easily tracked down my sister... and taken her! Taken her so that I would do what she wanted!”

“Do you remember what this woman looked like?” Superman asked. “Do you think you could describe her in more detail?”

“Sort of pretty, but not really my type. Mid-thirties, maybe. Thin. Blue eyes, short blonde hair.”

Short blonde hair? Superman thought. Justin Driver’s kidnapper, according to the boy, had been a “mean” lady with short blonde hair. Could it be the same person? It was possible. If this so-called scientist indeed knew how Wonderman had gotten his powers, and knew how to transfer them, then it would make sense that she’d need to kidnap — or coerce — someone with superpowers in the first place. First she’d kidnapped (with the help of Richard Fennerman?) Justin Driver, but something had clearly gone wrong. Justin’s powers had gone away. Had they disappeared before, or after, she’d tried to acquire them? Or had she succeeded? Apparently she had not, because she was now needing Wonderman’s “help”.

“Look,” said Superman, “If this scientist person wants you, she’s going to have to contact you somehow and tell you where to meet her. When she does, I want you to alert me immediately. Call Clark Kent at the Daily Planet. He knows how to get hold of me. Can you do that?”

Wonderman nodded numbly. “I wish none of this had ever happened!” he said miserably.

“It’ll be okay,” Superman said.

He just hoped it would be.

“Hey Lois, where’s Clark?” Jimmy asked.

“Isn’t that the \$64,000 question?” Lois muttered, not looking up from her computer screen. Her trusty partner had disappeared yet again.

“He’s got a phone call....”

“I’ll take it!” Lois said. “Line one?”

“Yeah,” answered Jimmy.

Lois snatched up the phone. “Clark Kent’s desk, Lois Lane speaking,” she said into the receiver.

“Hey, Miss Lane... this is Wonderman. I was told to call and ask Mr. Kent to call Superman. Could you tell him that witch called me again? She says I’m s’posed to meet her at the big mausoleum at the northwest end of Perpetual Pines if I ever want to see my sister again! So, uh, well, tell him I’m gonna head on over there, would ya?”

“I’ll contact Superman as soon as I can,” Lois said, her heart pounding. Though she had no idea what she

was getting into, Lois knew that if this had something to do with both Wonderman and Superman, she was going to be there. Besides — the mausoleum? She KNEW there was something to that place, and now she was going to find out exactly what!

She reached for a post-it, scrawled a quick note to Clark, stuck it on his computer screen, and grabbed her purse.

Clark stepped out of the elevator and surveyed the newsroom, hoping to see Lois. When he couldn't find her, he asked Jimmy.

"Oh, she took off a few minutes ago," Jimmy said. "I don't know where she was going, but she looked like she was on a story. Oh... and right before that, there was a call for you, but she took it."

"For me?" Clark said. Ack, what if it had been Wonderman? He had tried to get back to the Planet as quickly as possible, but there had been a huge wreck on the freeway, and he couldn't just let those people die.... "Do you know who it was?"

"No idea," said Jimmy. "He had a kind of southern accent, though. He asked for you, that's all."

Great, thought Clark. "And you're saying Lois took the call, and then left?"

"Yeah."

"Jimmy, do you have ANY idea where she might have gone?"

"No... sorry, CK."

Clark sighed. Now what? If Wonderman had told Lois where he was going to meet his sister's kidnapper, then Lois could be walking right into the line of fire. And where that was, Clark had no idea. He began to loosen his tie. He was just going to have to find them on his own... somehow.

This time, Lois came prepared with a flashlight. She always kept one in her jeep, and thank goodness the batteries still worked. But as she opened the door to the mausoleum, she was quick to notice that something was different about the place today. The other night, the interior had been pitch black. Today, it was lit with... candles? Yes, there was some kind of candelabra on the wall, and it was glowing, casting an eerie spell on the inside of the small room.

Lois looked around. She saw a coffin in the center of the chamber, ornately decorated. The walls were made of stone, and there were various decorations and embellishments scattered about. Was this it? There had to be something more to this place! Maybe there was something in the coffin itself. She pressed on the side of the lid, but it wouldn't budge. Next she began to slide her hands along the designs on the wall. As she was doing so, she bumped the candelabra, and heard a sound. She had moved it — slightly. And it was making something happen. She pressed it further. The coffin was sliding to the side! And underneath it, a passageway leading down into the earth was beginning to be revealed.

Her heart was pounding. There was a light coming from below. She leaned forward to look down, and just as she did, she heard another sound. A thud. The mausoleum door had somehow shut behind her.

"There's no way out," came a voice from below. "So you may as well join us."

Lois looked down again, and this time she saw a blonde woman in a white lab coat. In one hand, she appeared to be holding some kind of remote control. In the other, she held a pistol.

Instinctively, Lois backed up. She tried the door, but it wouldn't budge. She was trapped. She couldn't leave. So she could either stay up here in this dark little space, or go down and find out what was below. And join the woman with the gun. Hmmm, that didn't sound like a good plan.

Suddenly a noxious smell hit her senses, and she began to cough. It took her a minute to realize that one of the gargoyles on the wall was emitting some kind of gas. Now she really had no choice. Still choking, she went for the passageway and began to descend the stairs. The air was cleaner down here — stale, but at least not lethal.

When she reached the bottom of the stairs, she looked around. She was in some kind of laboratory. There were machines and computers and all manner of wires and buttons. In one corner of the room was a glass box that looked to have some kind of figure inside it. And in the very center of the room, standing on a metal plate and looking very upset, was Wonderman.

"Miss Lane!" he exclaimed. "Oh my, you weren't supposed to come!"

The woman in the lab coat pointed her gun at Lois. "Yes, if it isn't little miss Lois Lane. I have just the place for you... right this way..." She motioned toward a darkened corner of the lab, where a cage stood. Lois looked from the cage (where a woman she didn't recognize was already imprisoned) and the gun, then back to the cage — where she then saw a myriad of explosives attached to the bars.

Superman will save us, she thought. Just do what she says, and try not to get blown up! If she lived through this, it would make one hell of a story.

"Well, hello there!" said Lois's cellmate, as the cage door shut behind Lois. "My name's Mary Todd Lincoln. And how may I address you?"

Lois stared at her. Who WAS this? On the phone, Wonderman had said something about his sister. Was this his sister? She did have a similar accent. But why would she introduce herself as Mary Todd Lincoln? What on Earth was the matter with her?

A buzzing sound in the laboratory snapped her attention back to Wonderman. She could see the blonde woman fiddling with various controls on a machine. She'd push a few buttons, then wait. Lois deduced that the woman was trying to make some kind of connection between Wonderman and... wait, was that on the other end of the device? A small cage? She couldn't quite make out what was inside.

“For heaven’s sake, what IS it that you expect that rat to DO?” Wonderman suddenly exclaimed.

“SHUT UP!” the blonde woman hollered.

Oh, a rat. Ew. Lois shuddered.

“Tad got his powers from Superman,” the Mary Todd Lincoln-wannabe was saying. “And now Tad’s going to give his powers to the nice little mousie. He always did like to share.”

“Tad?” Lois repeated.

The woman nodded toward Wonderman. “That’s my boy.”

“I see,” said Lois. *Oh, Superman, where are you?*

The blonde lady was now throwing a tantrum. Seems she just couldn’t get her device to work. Lois hoped it would stay that way.

It was all making sense to Lois, now. This woman must’ve witnessed the lightning strike in the cemetery and figured out how Superman’s powers had been transferred. Now she wanted them for herself.

Why on Earth this woman lived in a cemetery underneath a mausoleum, Lois had no idea. Clearly, she was currently surrounded by some very strange people.

“Ma’am, I have a question,” Lois called.

“WHAT?” the woman yelled.

“Did you kidnap Justin Driver?”

“That little brat? For all the good it did me, yes! I had him brought to me by a good friend of mine, but he was useless.”

“How did he lose his powers?”

“I DON’T KNOW!” she shrieked. “JUST SHUT UP, I’m TRYING to work here!”

“Wonderman,” Lois called, “You can’t let her do this! Don’t you see? Any havoc she wrecks after she gets your powers will be on your hands!”

“I knowww,” Wonderman said, wringing his hands. “But if I don’t do what she says, you and Wanda Mae will surely, surely die!”

“You may have to risk it!” Lois said.

Click. “One more word out of you, and I WILL shoot you,” the blonde woman said, as she brought her gun right up to the bars of the cage.

Lois decided to keep quiet. For a while, anyway. *Superman, could you hurry it up?*

The woman fiddled with the settings on her machine, then pushed a lever and watched as a stream of electricity went from Wonderman to the rat in the cage.

“I think... I think so....” she was saying excitedly.

Lois barely had time to process what happened next. She heard a loud sound and then... there was a hole in the ceiling. And... a hole in the rat cage. The rat was gone. The rat had gone through the roof.

“YES!!!” the woman shrieked. “IT WORKS!” She pushed aside the rat cage and stood in its place. It was her turn, now. “This is it, Lex!” she called. “Everything we’ve worked for! This is IT!”

“Lex?” Lois dared to speak.

The woman turned to Lois with narrowed yes. “That’s right,” she said, pointing across the room to the

glass box Lois had noticed earlier. “Lex Luthor. The only REAL man left in Metropolis. You married him and destroyed him all in one day, but *I* will bring him back! And when I do, we will OWN Metropolis!” With that, she pushed the lever on the machine.

Superman flew over Metropolis, trying desperately to pick up any sign, any sound, that would point him toward either Lois or Wonderman.

Just then he saw something. A small, dark object, coming right at him from the earth below. It whizzed past him at an alarming speed. What WAS that? Where had it come from? He looked down, and was surprised to find himself directly over Perpetual Pines. He flew in for a closer look. There was a hole in the roof of the old mausoleum. He peered down it. He could make out something moving below.

And then he heard her.

A quiet, almost indistinct, “Oh, my god.”

He burst in.

Before he could even take in the details of his surroundings (a bunker... a laboratory...?) he heard a woman’s voice say: “You’re too late!”

His eyes swept the room. Lois and another woman (presumably Wanda Mae) were in a jail cell, which was wired with explosives. Wonderman and a blonde woman were standing near each other, next to a machine. And said blonde woman had her hands on her hips and looked extremely smug.

Too late for what? Superman wondered, but before he could say a word, he was being punched in the gut. Hard. He stumbled backwards. What was happening? The blonde woman. She was coming at him again. She was kicking him. He tried to block her kicks. How could she be so strong? Had... oh no, no... had she gotten his powers, too? Had she somehow gotten them from Wonderman? He WAS too late!

She was laughing, now. Superman stood up and stared at her. She grinned. “Go on, hit me!” she said.

But he couldn’t. It just seemed so wrong, somehow.

He felt a blow to his face and, having been caught off guard yet again, he found himself on the ground.

“You sap!” the woman said. “You can’t do it! You can’t hit a woman!”

“Howdy,” said Wonderman, coming up behind her and slugging her hard.

She went sailing across the room and hit the glass box, knocking some of the wires loose. A shrill sound emerged. The woman gasped. “Nooooo!!!” she screamed.

“Superman, you can reverse the transfer if you get her on the other plate!” Lois cried.

“Get her!” Superman instructed Wonderman.

Wonderman hauled the woman toward the plate he’d been standing on before. Superman stood on the other one.

“Push that big lever!” Lois called.

He did so.

“You idiot!” the woman was screaming at Wonderman, as she struggled against him. “If I lose them, so do you!”

“As I recall... you were going to make... me lose them... anyway!” Wonderman said through clenched teeth.

When it was all over, only one person in the room had superpowers. The blonde woman was furious. She tried to punch Superman, but ended up hurting her hand. “You’ll pay for this!” she yelled, reaching into her jacket pocket for a remote. She aimed it toward the cage. “Say goodbye to your girlfriend!”

But before she could push a button on the remote, Superman had snatched it away from her. “I’ll take this,” he said.

The woman threw another tantrum.

“Wanda Mae, are you all right?” Wonderman asked his sister.

“Tad, can’t you get us out of here?”

“Superman, if you touch the cage bars it’ll activate the explosives,” Lois said. “But there’s a keypad on the cage door. I think if we punch in the right code, we can get it to open.”

Superman began to work at the keypad, and within a minute, he’d found the right combination. The door opened. Lois breathed a sigh of relief as she stepped out. Wanda Mae followed behind her.

“Are you all right?” Superman asked.

Lois nodded. His eyes showed so much concern for her. She felt all warm and fuzzy inside. “Now, where do you suppose that nice blonde lady went to?” Wanda Mae asked.

They all looked around. She was nowhere to be seen.

“This is one heck of a story!” Perry exclaimed. “Lois, how is it you always seem to end up right in the thick of things?”

“That’s what I’d like to know,” Clark said. Boy, did his partner have a knack for trouble. But he wouldn’t ask her to change for anything in the world.

“Someday, I’ll teach you all my tricks,” she said playfully. “In the meantime, I think you owe me one of yours.”

“I beg your pardon?” said Clark.

“You promised me you’d tell me how to get in touch with Superman,” she said. “Remember?”

“Oh boy, I’ll let you two work this one out,” Perry said, as he clapped Lois on the shoulder and went back to his office.

“Lois, I should really make sure it’s okay with Superman before I give that information to someone else,” Clark said.

“Oh, come on!” she said. “I’m much closer to Superman than you are! He trusts me! I know he wouldn’t mind.”

“Maybe he’s worried you’ll start calling him ALL the time.”

“I will not!”

“Miss Lane?” A voice interrupted their conversation.

Lois and Clark turned to see Michelle Driver standing beside them. Justin was clutching her hand and smiling shyly.

“Miss Driver!” said Lois. “How are you?”

“Oh, just fine, just fine... we both are. I just wanted to thank you.... They told me you were the one who found Justin in the park. Thank you so much for helping bring him back to me. And I wanted to apologize for some of the things I said to you the last time we spoke. I may have been a little harsh.”

“That’s all right,” Lois said, genuinely surprised.

“And thank you both,” she said, her eyes darting to Clark, “for the articles you wrote about... well, everything. Never once did you say anything horrible about me or my, well, parenting abilities, the way some other reporters did. Especially the ones on TV. You were very... oh, what’s the word... neutral? Fair? I just want you to know I really appreciate it. I don’t think you’ll have to worry about writing any more about us, though... Justin and I are more than ready to be out of the spotlight... for good, I hope.”

“You’re welcome,” said Lois. “And I’m so glad everything turned out all right.”

“I can’t fly,” Justin spoke up. “I used to. But not anymore.”

“Uh, that reminds me, Miss Driver,” Clark said. “We promise not to print anything more about it, but we just wanted to ask you about something. Did you and Justin take any flights this past summer?”

Michelle looked at Clark strangely. “Why, yes, we did — we flew to Michigan to visit my sister.”

“In late July?”

“Yes... why?”

“Just... wanted to clear up a detail from earlier,” Clark said quickly. “Oh, by the way, I talked to Superman and he said he’s going to help with the repairs to your house. So expect a visit in the next few days.”

Michelle beamed. “Oh, thank you! I know I hardly deserve it, after everything... I mean, I know I didn’t exactly make his life easy there, for a while... I do feel bad about that. It was so silly of me, really. I just — ”

“I’m sure he understands,” Clark said.

Michelle smiled. “Well, we better go. Thanks again for everything!”

“Of course,” said Lois. “Bye Justin!”

“Bye-bye!” the little boy said cheerfully.

Lois and Clark smiled as they watched them go. Once they were out of sight, Lois turned to Clark. “Well, I’m glad that’s over with. All of it.”

“Same here. In fact, I think I may be ready for a lonnnng vacation.”

Lois smiled knowingly. “I still have so many questions, though. Like, do you really think that woman had Lex’s body the whole time?”

“Your guess is as good as mine.”

“What kind of a person keeps a body frozen like that?”

“Someone who’s having a hard time getting a date?”
Clark suggested with a grin.

She rolled her eyes. “Well, at least now we know Lex is definitely dead. When that woman knocked those wires loose, I saw everything go flatline. And now the police have the body. And, I mean, it’s not like he’s suddenly going to regenerate himself, right?”

“Let’s hope not,” said Clark.

“And that woman’s powers are gone, now, and so are Wonderman’s and so are Justin’s. Which leaves just us with one superhero in Metropolis.”

“As it should be.”

“And speaking of Superman...”

He raised an eyebrow.

“We were talking about how to get in touch with him, remember?”

“Uh... could you excuse me for a minute? I just remembered I have a, uh, appointment with... someone.... I’ll be right back!”

She stared after him. Again? He was running off in the middle of a conversation AGAIN?

Well, as long as he remembered to bring her donuts this time....

THE END