

Skis, Snow, and Secrets

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Summary: Jimmy invites Lois and Clark for a weekend in the mountains and gets the shock of his life. Hopefully not your typical revelation story.

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This is set in January 1996, after “Never On Sunday,” and before the February ARGH wedding/clone/amnesia arc.

“Hey, CK!” Jimmy called out, waving to his friend as he picked his way through the Monday morning hustle and bustle of the bullpen. “I got that data you wanted. The stuff on the leaks at the Metropolis Sewage Reclamation Facility.” He waved the manila file folder triumphantly.

Lois slid to Clark’s desk, munching on a crueler. “They actually find the *real* Godzilla there this time?” she asked with a wink at her fiancé.

Clark chuckled and flashed Lois an innocent smile. “Thanks, Jimmy. I appreciate it.” He took the file from the younger man’s hand.

“No problem.” Jimmy turned to leave, then snapped his fingers as he remembered. “Oh, almost forgot. You guys have three days off this weekend right?”

“Sort of,” Clark said. “We’re covering the Anderson trial. They should be reaching a verdict Friday. I’m guessing we might be done by two o’clock, at least I hope. Why?”

“Oh, well, I’ve got some friends — Alan and Luke Wolf. They’ve got a ski resort up in the mountains about two hours north. They invited me for the weekend, said I could bring a couple of guests if I wanted to, no charge. Alan said one of the family suites is open this weekend. It’s got four bedrooms, a stone fireplace, the works. I thought maybe you guys would want to go. You know, take a break from all of the wedding planning and everything. I can’t imagine how stressed out you guys must be.”

Clark looked at Lois, his brows raised. “I’m game,” he said, shrugging. “What do you say, Lois? Maybe Jimmy’s right. Maybe we need a break.”

“Let’s see. We can spend the weekend here, in which I am *sure* my mother will figure out some way to stop by with that *infuriating* wedding planner, or I can spend time alone in the mountains with you. Gee, let me think.”

Clark and Jimmy exchanged a look. Somehow, Lois had managed to get all of that out in a single breath. Clark often thought of Lois’ gift of gab as her very own, unique superpower. Not that he would ever admit that to her out loud. It never ceased to impress or amuse him though.

“I’d love to go,” she said, smiling.

Jimmy grinned. “All right! Cool! I’ll get you the info on the place and we can just meet up there on Friday.”

With that, Jimmy was off, delivering photos to Ralph and Steve. Lois watched in amusement. Sometimes Jimmy’s perpetual motion rivaled that of Superman. She looked over to her husband-to-be.

“Sounds like a fun weekend,” she said. “Do you know how to ski?”

Clark grinned. “Yeah, I went a couple times with some college buddies a while back. Actually, I should check and see if I still have my ski jacket and pants.” He thought for a second. He was pretty sure he’d left them in Smallville. He couldn’t remember unpacking them at his apartment.

“I’m suddenly really looking forward to this weekend,” Lois said. “Remind me to get Jimmy a thank you gift for saving me from my mother.”

Clark followed Lois with his eyes as she turned and went back to her desk. He sighed contentedly. How had he gotten so lucky to have Lois in his life? Forcing his eyes back to the file on his desk, he began to read. Still, every once in a while, he couldn’t help but sneak a peek across the floor at his beautiful fiancée.

By Wednesday, they’d broken the story at the Metropolis Sewage Reclamation Facility. A couple of corrupt CEOs had been responsible for the leaks in exchange for millions from whoever was in charge of Lexcorp. Lexcorp stood to purchase the facility at a rock-bottom price and appear as the savior of Metropolis. It bothered Clark that they still had no solid leads on the new Lexcorp boss, now that the recently resurrected Lex Luthor was in prison. And it bothered him that the company was rebuilding somehow. By all rights, it should have been dead. Luthor was penniless, or so Clark thought. It seemed that orders were passed through so many channels within the company that no one really knew who or where the orders were coming from. He’d keep at it, but at the moment the identity of the new boss was locked up tighter than Fort Knox.

Thursday they covered the signing of a new education reform in Metropolis, an apartment fire, and a robbery at one of the churches, in which the thieves had stolen a couple of statues and golden chalices. Superman had recovered the stolen property that night on a routine patrol of the city. Friday saw an early verdict in the Anderson trial. Marilyn Anderson was unanimously found guilty of murdering her husband, Jake. She was given a life sentence with no chance of parole. Lois and Clark split the stories between them and edited each other’s copy. By one o’clock on Friday, they’d finished their stories for the week and had Perry’s approval. He let them leave early, glad that they were finally going on a mini-vacation. They’d looked so stressed lately, between work and the wedding planning. Even Clark was beginning to look haggard.

The truth was, Clark had responded to nearly fifty calls for help in the span of two weeks. Most had been routine rescues: among them, he’d stopped three muggings, one attempted bank robbery, two bomb threats, six fires and even rescued a little girl’s tabby cat from a tree. Then there had been the bigger rescues: a mudslide in California, an earthquake in India, an erupting volcano in Hawaii, and disabled plane that had nearly crashed in the Andes, among others. It was like the world had gone haywire in the last two weeks. To make matters worse, a lot of the rescues had been at night and most of the days had been cloudy and snowy. So he hadn’t gotten as much of a charge from sunlight as he needed. Normally, he would have just spent some time floating above the clouds to get at the healing rays, but he simply hadn’t had the time between rescues, chasing stories, and mind-numbing meetings with the wedding planner. He’d had to go short on sleep in order to have enough hours in the day to fit it all in.

Clark hesitated as he double checked his luggage for the weekend, a Superman suit dangling from his fingers. He wasn’t sure if he should pack it, just in case. He chewed his lower lip in thought. No. He’d leave it home this time. He knew he was in no condition to help anyone this weekend. He simply wasn’t firing on all cylinders. This weekend would purely be about having fun. He needed the time to recharge both physically and mentally, and to spend time with Lois. Work and wedding planning had been

the only times in two weeks that he'd seen her. And many times, he'd had to rush out on her. He felt like a truly terrible fiancé. Three times now, he'd needed to cancel dinner plans with her. No, this weekend, he was going to focus on Lois. She deserved it.

He hung up the suit in his secret compartment, then checked his toiletries. It was all there, down to the shaving kit that he kept around as a cover. He laughed to himself. He'd purchased that right before he and Lois had gone undercover in the honeymoon suite at the Lexor. The memory of it still brought a smile to his lips as he remembered being confined in the room with her for a few days, sharing a bathroom, knowing that she was sleeping so close to him with only a door as a barrier, and of course, that amazing kiss he'd given her when the maid had walked in. His motive might have been a cover, but that kiss had been completely real. And Lois had responded to it. Even without his super powers, he'd known what effect he'd had on her.

A knock at the door pulled him out of his reverie. He dashed up the few steps to the landing and opened it. Lois stood there, dressed in a pink and black ski jacket, a pair of jeans, Timberland boots, and a pink fleece top. Clark's heart gave a start at how good she looked. He kissed her as soon as she stepped inside.

"Ready?" she asked.

"Yeah. I was just double checking everything. I feel like I started and stopped packing at least a dozen times since Monday." He gave a final look at his bag, then packed an extra pair of glasses as an afterthought. "Okay, looks like I got it all."

"Might want to put on a warmer shirt," Lois observed.

"Right," Clark said with a laugh. He'd forgotten that he wasn't in appropriate snow attire.

Clark was in jeans and a Buffalo Bills t-shirt. He pulled off the t-shirt as he walked to his bedroom. Lois' eyes were riveted to his retreating form. She never could get enough of his perfect body. He reemerged in a black turtle neck sweater that was both warm and which hugged his body in all the right places. Lois growled her approval.

Clark chuckled at the reaction and mentally counted the days until he'd *finally* be married to the incredible woman before him.

Too many days, he thought. *Even if the wedding was tomorrow, it'd still be too many days.*

"All set," he said as he shrugged into his black and ice blue ski jacket. "Want me to drive?"

"Not a chance," she smiled at him. "You look exhausted. I'll drive and you can rest."

"Okay," Clark relented as he grabbed his bag, slung it over his shoulder easily, and turned out the lights on the way to the door.

They conversed lightly as Lois drove, swapping stories and remembering times they'd shared. They both studiously avoided talking about work. Lois pressed Clark for stories from his childhood and teasingly threatened to call his mother for stories if he didn't cooperate. Clark happily obliged, knowing that at least this way, he could avoid some of the more embarrassing tales of his childhood. After a while, they grew quiet. Clark's eyes fluttered shut against his will. He reclined the chair slightly and allowed himself to sleep. Lois smiled and snuck a glance over at Clark. She loved the moments when she got to catch him asleep. Only in sleep did all of the daily stresses and worries fall from him. Sleep brought him a look of innocence and peace. It allowed her to catch glimpses of the little boy he'd once been. She turned the radio off and drove in silence.

Clark slept soundly for better part of an hour. He awoke about five miles from the ski lodge. The brief power nap had done wonders for him. He felt better than he had all day. He stretched as well as he could in the enclosed space, pulled off his glasses and rubbed his eyes.

"Feeling better?" Lois asked as she caught his movement out of the corner of her eye.

"Yeah. Thanks. You have no idea how badly I needed that." He replaced the frames onto his face.

"Well, you woke up just in time. We're almost there."

"Great."

Soon enough, the ski lodge came into view as they rounded a bend in the road. A lighted sign proudly proclaimed that they had arrived at the *Wolf's Run Ski Resort*. It was a sprawling complex. The lodge was foremost as they drove up the long driveway and found a spot in the vast parking lot. Behind the lodge, the mountain and ski trails glowed orange in the sunset. Clark grabbed both of their bags and they made their way to the resort. Lois shivered a little. It was a lot colder up in the mountains than down in the city. She was glad that she had packed the absolute warmest clothes that she had. Her breath puffed in little bursts of smoke as she inhaled then exhaled the clean mountain air. Clark did the same, reveling in the smell of pine and smoke from what he assumed was a fireplace in the resort's lobby. As he entered through the sliding glass doors, he saw that he was right. A massive two sided fireplace stood with a merry blaze in the center of the lobby.

They checked in and headed to the elevator bank, rode it to the top floor and let themselves into the family suite. It was a beautiful suite, much nicer than even the one they'd shared in the Lexor. A sunken living room greeted them as they stepped inside. Against the far wall, they had a large bay window overlooking the slopes. To the right was a stone fireplace and to the left were two overstuffed armchairs, a couch, and a coffee table. Behind those, a kitchenette stood. And in the four corners of the suite, bedrooms stood with a bathroom in between.

"Wow," Clark breathed. "It's incredible."

Lois nodded.

They wasted no time in choosing the two bedrooms on the left side of the suite. Lois insisted that Clark take the one that faced the slopes. It was a corner room and therefore had an extra window. They unpacked quickly and then went in search of Jimmy. It was clear that he was already there. When selecting their rooms, Clark had opened the door to the disordered mess that signaled that his friend had chosen his room.

They went back down to the lobby and explored. There was a casual dining restaurant, a quick snack shop, a pool and hot tub (at the sight of which they both wished they had brought swimwear), a full gym, and an arcade. Clark ducked into the arcade, dragging Lois with him, and found Jimmy deep into a game of *Gauntlet* with two men of about the same age.

"Geez, Alan, thanks for stealing the food!" Jimmy was complaining.

"Wizard needs food badly," the machine droned over and over. "Wizard needs food badly."

"Oops, sorry, Jimbo," replied the taller of the two dark haired men. "Didn't realize it."

Jimmy groaned in frustration as the three men's avatars were killed by a giant monster on screen.

"Hey, Jimmy," Clark greeted him as Jimmy dug in his pocket for another couple of quarters.

"CK! Lois! You made it!" Jimmy broke into a grin. He looked at his watch. "What, did you guys fly here or something? It's only four o'clock."

"The Anderson trial wrapped up quicker than we thought."

Jimmy nodded. "Clark, Lois, these are my friends. Alan and Luke Wolf. We were suitemates in college."

Clark shook hands with the two men. "Hi, nice to meet you. Thanks for inviting us up here for the weekend."

"Anything for friends of Jimbo," Luke assured him.

Lois shook hands with the brothers as well. "It's a beautiful place," she added.

The two brothers fairly beamed with pride. "We've always wanted to open a place like this," Alan explained. "And it's been

so long since we've seen Jimmy."

"Yeah, it's been, what? Four years now?"

Luke nodded. "Thereabouts."

The group made their way out of the arcade and to the snack shop. Alan and Luke treated everyone to a round of coffee. They sat around one of the tables and chatted. Lois and Clark learned a lot about the two young owners of the resort. Their father owned a ski resort in Vermont and their mother was a top level stock broker in New York. Their stepfather was a software developer and had done very well for himself. The brothers hadn't needed to borrow much in the way of setting up their own business. And they had been doing well in the year since they had opened.

Clark sat in the booth with his arm around Lois, chatting easily with the two younger men. He could make friends with just about anyone. They swapped a few stories with the Wolfs; the men knew them to be friends of Superman. Clark threw a few Superman stories into the mix to humor them.

At length, Alan looked at his watch. It was nearly six thirty.

"Oops, I didn't mean to eat up so much of your time. Come on, Luke, we've got a video conference with the builders in half an hour."

"Builders? This place seems pretty complete to me," Lois said.

"We've got a second site in the works about a mile up the road," Luke explained. "We're building an indoor water park. *Wolf River Water Park*." He was grinning widely. It was obvious that he was excited about the project.

"Please, enjoy your stay. Maybe we can meet up again tomorrow for lunch, Jimbo? Say around one?"

"You got it," Jimmy said.

"Great. See you then," Alan said and the two men walked off, discussing the finer points of the wave pool they wanted to build.

Clark treated Lois and Jimmy to dinner that night. Then they retreated back to their suite, got a fire going in the wide fireplace, popped open a bottle of merlot that Lois had smuggled in her luggage, and played *Scattergories* until they laughed so hard that they had tears in their eyes.

Clark reveled in every uninterrupted moment with Lois. He was even mildly glad that Jimmy was in the same suite. The idea of being with Lois alone in the mountains for the weekend was fairly romantic. If he'd been alone with her, he didn't think he'd be able to stick to their agreement to wait until after the wedding to be together. Clark went to bed that night with a huge, relaxed smile on his face. It had been far too long since he'd really taken time to kick back and enjoy himself. He was immensely glad that he'd left the Superman suit at home. He fell into an exhausted sleep.

The next morning broke cold and clear. Long shafts of sunlight brightened everything in Clark's room, as he'd purposefully left the blinds open. He felt recharged by the deep, unbroken sleep and from the sunlight that he'd absorbed while he slept. He was starting to feel like himself again. He glanced at the clock on the night stand. It was nine in the morning. He hadn't slept that late in months. He pulled off his shirt to get changed for the day, happy to do things at a normal, human speed for a change. A knock on the door interrupted him.

"Morning," Lois said as he opened the door. She eyed his bare chest appreciatively.

"Morning," Clark said as he grabbed her for a kiss.

"Jimmy's bringing up breakfast from the snack shop," she said when they parted. "Then we're going to hit the slopes."

"Sounds like a plan," Clark said.

Lois left him so that he could get dressed. He tossed on his jeans and a thick maroon zip-neck fleece. He was just coming out of the bedroom when Jimmy arrived armed with coffee and a half a dozen breakfast burritos. Clark easily wolfed down two of them and could have gone for another if Jimmy hadn't gotten to it first.

The trio then headed out to the slopes for the day. Jimmy's friends had arranged for ski and snowboard rentals for them. They decided to ski first.

Clark rode with Lois up the ski lift, enjoying the beautiful day. He was so perfectly content to have her by his side. A cockeyed grin was permanently fixed to his face.

"You know, I'm thinking maybe we ought to write an article about this place," he said to her.

"Maybe," Lois said dubiously.

"Come on, wouldn't it be nice to write something different for a change?"

"That's if Perry lets us. I mean, Jimmy *is* friends with the owners. Makes it a little ... close."

"Yeah, but you and I have no ties to the Wolf brothers."

"We got a free room out of the deal," she reminded him.

"Yeah, but how is that any different than accepting press tickets to, say, an art gallery opening or a new play? It's not like the Wolfs have *asked* us to write them a glowing review."

Lois shrugged. "You can ask Perry when we get back. If he says yes, then consider the article already written." She smiled at him.

They spent the rest of the morning racing each other down the slopes. Lois was by far the better skier, and easily won most of the races. Jimmy, in his white and red ski outfit, was the only one of them who managed to beat Lois at any given race. Clark was having the time of his life. Finally, stomachs rumbling, they made one last race down the slope before lunch. Lois handily beat both of the men.

As they tromped back towards the resort, Clark trailed Lois and Jimmy. A sudden thought came to him and he suppressed a smile. He reached down, grabbed a handful of snow, balled it up and launched it. *Thwack!* It hit Lois right on her backside. She squealed a little at the unexpected impact, then quickly retaliated. Before long, it was all out war. Lois even managed a perfect shot to the back of Clark's head. Clark's hat, gloves, ski pants and jacket soon became more white with snow than black. He aimed a shot at Jimmy. The snowball sailed a foot too wide and hit a teenage boy. Clark was about to apologize when the boy grinned and sent a snowball square into Clark's chest.

Before Clark knew what had happened, the three way snowball fight grew to include the boy and his six friends. Shrieks of laughter filled the air. Clark was laughing so hard that his eyes were tearing, the droplets freezing to his face in the chill mountain air. He sent another snowball at Jimmy. It went a little low and struck him in the thigh. Lois hit Clark on his backside as he stopped to grab more snow. He sent the packed ball into her back as she turned to hit another target.

Finally, everyone was laughing too hard to continue the snow war any further. Lois tackled Clark into a snow bank and he pulled her down with him. They lay there for a few moments, their breathing ragged with remaining tatters of laughter. She seized the opportunity to kiss him deeply, once she'd gotten her breathing under control. After a minute, they became aware of the teenagers' eyes on them. Clark dusted himself off and helped Lois stand. Her cheeks were rosy from the cold. Together, they went back into the resort for lunch. Jimmy ran off to meet with his friends. He invited Lois and Clark to dine with them, but they declined, telling their friend that he needed some time alone with the Wolfs to catch up.

As soon as lunch was finished, they headed back outside. Clark was tired of skiing, so he rented a snowboard. Lois tried it, but found it too hard to keep her balance. She liked skis. At least there were two of them to keep her on. Clark was just helping her find her balance when Jimmy reappeared. The two men raced down the slopes together a few times before going back to their skis.

For the rest of the afternoon, they skied. They even took a

few runs down a different slope with snow tubes. Lois treated them to dinner. That night, they split up again. Jimmy had met a fiery, petite blonde on line for the ski lift and he went to meet her for coffee. Lois and Clark were left alone in the suite. They quickly showered and changed into warm, dry clothes. Clark ran down to the lobby while Lois was blowing drying her hair and brought back two steaming cups of hot chocolate and a plate of s'mores. He lit a fire in the fireplace by sending a few quick darts of heat onto the logs. They snuggled together on the plush sofa, Lois with her head on Clark's shoulder.

"Mmm, this is so nice," Lois murmured as Clark closed his arm around her, hugging her to him.

"I'm sorry I've been a lousy fiancé the last two weeks," he said as he leaned his cheek against the top of her head.

"You're not a lousy fiancé. You couldn't be lousy if you tried," Lois assured him. "You've just been busy. I know, I've seen the news. I've covered some of the stories. How many rescues was it? More than twenty?"

"Forty eight," Clark said. "If you count the cat I rescued from a tree."

Lois' eyes widened. "I didn't realize it was that many. No wonder why you were too exhausted at night to talk on the phone." She twined her fingers with his.

"Yeah," he agreed. "I've just been stretched kind of thin lately. I was running on empty there those last two or three days. It's one of the reasons why I really needed this weekend off."

"Off? Oh! You mean ... *completely* off duty." She had been having such a great time in the last day and a half that she hadn't even realized that Clark hadn't dashed off to any emergencies.

"Didn't even bring the suit with me," he said with a small smile.

"I am officially impressed," she teased.

Clark grew quiet. "The last couple of rescues ... I almost made mistakes. I *didn't* but I came *so* close to it."

"Oh, Clark, you try so hard to be perfect all the time."

"I can't afford to make mistakes as Superman. Mistakes cost lives," he said sadly. He sighed. "The other reason why I needed the weekend off was to spend time with the beautiful, intelligent, sexy woman I am going to marry. You have no idea how much I have missed you these past weeks."

"I've missed you too," she said, twisting in his arms to kiss him.

They stayed together, watching the flames, wrapped in each other's arms for a long while. When Jimmy finally reentered the suite around midnight that night, he found them on the couch sound asleep in front of a dying fire. Lois was resting atop Clark's chest. He smiled at his friends, shook his head, and headed to his room.

Lois and Clark awoke the next morning in the same position that they'd fallen asleep. Lois smiled as she gazed at Clark. He woke about a half an hour earlier and had been content just to watch her sleep.

"Mmm, I can't wait to wake up to this every day," she said before placing a kiss on his lips.

"You and me both," Clark promised her.

Clark dressed quickly and made a breakfast run. By the time he returned with coffee and bagelwiches, Lois and Jimmy were dressed and ready.

It was a clear day, just as the previous one. It was, however, about twenty degrees colder out. They spent part of the morning snowboarding. With Clark's guidance, Lois was beginning to get the hang of it. Still, the wind as they raced down the slopes was too much for Lois. They abandoned the snowboards for ice skates. For a long time, they circled the small rink. Clark's eyes were glued to Lois as she fluidly zipped around the rink. She was so elegant, so graceful. It was a shock to him when he collided with the railing. He'd completely forgotten to watch where he

was going. Finally, stomachs growling, they abandoned the rink and ate an early lunch together.

"Hey, how about we rent a couple of snowmobiles?" Jimmy said as he dug into his slice of hot apple pie.

Clark brightened at the thought. "Sure!"

Lois shook her head. "I think I'd rather stay in. It's way too cold out there today. You boys are crazy for staying out there."

Clark shrugged. "Suit yourself." He drained the last of his Mountain Dew.

Jimmy swallowed the last of his pie. "All right! Let's do this!"

"Be careful," Lois said to Clark as he zipped his jacket.

"I will," he promised. "You'll be okay staying in by yourself?"

She nodded. "I finally got into the book you lent me. You're right, it's pretty good."

"I knew you'd like it," he said with a self-satisfied smile.

"Just remember, we have to be out of here by four."

He kissed her lightly. Then they parted ways. *It was just about noon when Jimmy and Clark set out on their rented snowmobiles. They headed along the trails that were designated for the vehicles. A few times, the trail narrowed and a steep slope lay to either side. That, nor the frigid wind that cut into their faces, stopped them from racing along.* Clark was loving every second as the machine sped him along the snowy trail. He couldn't stop laughing at the thrill of it all. He was feeling so free, so recharged, so relaxed. He tossed a glance over his shoulder. Jimmy was to his right and slightly behind him.

"Last one back buys the donuts tomorrow!" Clark challenged.

He was too late in bringing his attention back to the trail. The trail curved sharply to the right. Clark tried to swerve but couldn't make the turn tightly enough. The snowmobile slipped down the embankment to the left and struck a tree. Clark was thrown from the vehicle and continued to tumble down the hill (which was thankfully not so steep in this area), smashing into rocks and trees as his arms and legs flailed for purchase. He finally stopped when he crashed into a maple tree.

He groaned. Not from pain but from embarrassment. It had all happened so fast and he hadn't been able to concentrate on covertly using his powers to stop his descent. He groaned again as he realized that his glasses were a loss. His right lens was cracked right down the middle. His left lens was completely gone. He was instantly glad that he'd packed a spare pair. But he knew he was in trouble. In moments, Jimmy was at his side.

"Oh, Jesus! CK! CK, are you all right?"

"I'm fine, Jimmy." He tried to get up but Jimmy wouldn't allow him.

"I gotta call for help," he said as he dug for his cell phone. In his panic, he couldn't seem to remember which pocket he'd left it in.

"Jimmy, really. There's no need."

"CK, you could have ... I dunno. A concussion. Broken bones. Internal bleeding. OrI dunno." He found his phone and was beginning to punch in numbers.

Clark grabbed the phone and snapped the flip piece shut. "No." His voice was resolute.

"You've gotta get checked by a doctor," Jimmy insisted.

Clark shook his head. "I can't. Not worth the hassle."

"Come on, dude. You have medical insurance, if it's the money you're worried about."

Clark laughed and stood. "It's not the money, Jimmy." He thought for a moment. Jimmy was getting to be a lot like Lois. Once he started investigating something, there was no stopping him until he got what he wanted. "Look, let's just go back to the hotel."

"No way," he said. "I'm worried about you."

Clark took a deep breath and closed his eyes for a moment. "I

promise you, I'm fine."

"CK, no one goes through something like that without getting hurt."

"I can. Look, let's go back and once we're safely in the suite, I'll explain. Deal?"

Jimmy eyed him dubiously. "Deal. But, uh, your glasses. How are you going to see where you're going?"

"Trust me, I'm not as blind as you might think," Clark said with a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

They trudged back up the slope. Clark righted his snowmobile and they made their way back to the resort at a much slower speed. He left his glasses on. There was no need to reveal his secret out in the open.

Clark hung back as Jimmy returned the snowmobiles. He'd gotten lucky that the machine wasn't damaged. Together, they made their way back up to the suite. Lois was stretched out on the couch in a white cable-knit sweater with a band of teal snowflakes around her chest. She had a battered copy of *Jurassic Park* in her hands.

She looked up as she heard the door open. Her eyes flew to Clark.

"Oh my God! What happened?"

"I misjudged a turn," Clark said simply.

"He fell down an embankment and hit several trees and rocks before he came to a stop," Jimmy said at the same time. "And he won't allow me to call for a doctor."

"Let me talk to Clark alone for a few minutes. Okay?"

"Sure."

Jimmy sauntered off to his room to change out of his ski clothes. Lois ushered Clark into his room.

"What the hell happened?" she demanded as the door shut.

Clark shook his head. "It was all my fault. I wasn't paying attention." He shrugged out of his jacket and ski pants. Snow had gotten inside of his jacket, so he changed his shirt to a navy blue cable-knit sweater. He rifled through his belongings for the spare pair of glasses. He recounted the events to her, starting with renting the snowmobiles and ending with them coming back to the suite.

"What are you going to do?" Lois said, her voice still demanding.

"I guess ... I tell him the truth."

"Clark!"

"What? If you have a better idea of some lie that will explain why I don't even have a scrape from that, I'd like to hear it." He softened his tone. "Sorry. I'm just really mad at myself." He slumped onto the bed, shoulders hunched. "I don't know what else to do."

Lois sat down beside him. "I guess you're right. I can't think of anything else that he'd believe."

"I don't really want to," Clark clarified. "I just can't think of a way to get out of this one. I always feared that I would do something stupid that would give myself away. I just always figured it would be during a rescue. I never thought that a careless mistake like *this* would be the one to give me away." He sighed. "I guess I've always known that someday Jimmy and Perry would catch on. I'm just surprised that it wasn't Perry first." He stood. "Better get this over with."

"Do you want me to stay with you?" she asked. "Or else I could, I dunno, get some coffee or something so you can talk to him alone."

Clark flashed her a weak smile as he took her hand. "Please stay."

They slipped back to the living room. Jimmy was sitting in one of the armchairs. Lois and Clark sat down on the couch. Their friend eyed them uncertainly. Clark ran a hand through his hair, looking for the right words.

"Well?" Jimmy asked after Clark failed to start talking. There

was a little anger in his voice.

"Jimmy," Clark began. "I'm sorry. I never intended for you to find out this way."

"Find out what?" Jimmy's voice still had a hard edge to it.

"Please, let me finish." When Jimmy failed to say anything more, Clark continued. "Before I tell you this ... I need to," he paused, searching for the right words once more. "This thing I'm about to tell you ... it's a dangerous secret. Knowing it could put you in danger. It puts Lois and myself in danger, too. You have to know that I trust you, Jimmy. But all the same, I need to be sure that this secret doesn't go beyond these walls."

"I swear," Jimmy said, worried. "Are you dying or something, CK? You've got me all freaked out."

Clark chuckled. "Not quite. But all the same, I can't go to the hospital."

"Why not? What do you have to hide?"

Clark reached up and gently pulled his glasses away and pushed his hair back. "This is why. I'm Superman." He whispered the last two words.

Jimmy went pure white as Clark removed his glasses and pushed his hair back. Even before Clark confirmed it with his words, he saw the face of the Man of Steel emerge. Pieces fell suddenly into place. Clark's lame excuses and disappearances. Why Lois had suddenly stopped complaining about the very same thing. Why Lois and Clark always had Superman exclusives. Why Superman had looked vaguely familiar the first time he'd ever seen him.

"Oh, Jesus," was all Jimmy could say at first. He worked his mouth for a few seconds, searching for words. "I mean ... uh ... prove it." The words surprised him as they came out.

"Spoken like a true newspaperman," Clark chuckled.

Clark levitated off the couch and hovered a good foot above the cushions. He raised his eyebrows as he peered at his friend. After a few moments, he lowered himself back to the cushions.

"Oh, God," Jimmy said. His eyes were wide and staring.

Clark hadn't seen him blink in a good minute.

Clark replaced his glasses, knowing that it would be easier for Jimmy to talk to a familiar, non-super hero face. "I'm sorry," he said softly.

That seemed to break the spell on Jimmy. He shook his head. "Sorry? For what?"

"For not being honest with you these past couple of years. For the fact that you had to find out this way."

"I think I know why," the younger man said as understanding flashed in his eyes. "If word got out ..."

"I'd never have a normal life," Clark finished for him. "And all the people I care about would be a target for anyone in the criminal circuit. And I do care about you, Jimmy. You're the closest I've ever had to a brother." Clark sighed. "That's if I wasn't locked up in a lab somewhere getting dissected."

"I guess I really can't blame you for hiding this," Jimmy said sympathetically. "Geez. So you're not ... I mean ..."

"No, I'm not a human," Clark agreed. "At least, not biologically. But I was raised among humans and I do view myself as one. I'm an ordinary guy with a few ... extra abilities." He smiled uncertainly.

"So, uh, do you wear the suit under your clothes?"

Clark laughed. "Sometimes. Not today though."

Jimmy suddenly grinned. "Oh man, I can't believe this. My best friend is the coolest guy on Earth!" He thought for a moment. "Man, I had a snowball fight with Superman. Wow."

Clark's smile brightened and Lois laughed.

"You're taking this much better than I did," she said.

"When did he tell you?"

"Well, actually, he didn't. I figured it out on my own."

"Ouch," Jimmy said. He shot an 'are-you-crazy?' look at Clark.

Lois nodded. “Long story short, I figured it out a few hours before he proposed.”

Jimmy’s jaw dropped. “Seriously?”

Clark’s face flushed. “It’s not that simple,” he protested.

“He wanted to be sure that I was accepting him as Clark, not as Superman,” Lois said, coming to Clark’s aid. “To make sure that I loved the man, not the powers.”

Jimmy nodded thoughtfully. “I guess I can see that.”

Clark turned serious. “Jimmy, you have to understand how hard it’s been for me to keep this secret. Only my parents and Lois know ... and now you.”

“Must have been tough keeping that secret.”

“It wasn’t so bad once Lois knew. But I still hate that I’ve lied to you.”

“No, really, it’s cool. I probably would have done the same thing in your place. Don’t worry, CK. My lips are sealed.”

“Thanks, Jimmy.”

The younger man suddenly laughed. “Oh man! I was right!”

“About?” Lois asked, one eyebrow arched.

“I always said that no normal human male had a chance with you.”

Clark and Lois joined in the laughter.

Later that afternoon, Lois and Clark drove back to Metropolis. Clark was unusually quiet, staring out the passenger window. Lois tossed a glance at him as she drove.

“It bothers you, doesn’t it? That Jimmy knows.”

“A little,” he admitted. “I know he’ll keep the secret safe. It’s just ... I dunno.”

Lois caught the tone of his voice. There was more to it than he was saying. “What?”

Clark shook his head and ran his hand through his hair. “It sounds stupid.”

“What?” she repeated softly.

“Well, up until now, only family has known, you know?”

“Clark,” she said, her voice catching a little as the meaning of his words sunk in.

“Just because we haven’t actually said our vows yet doesn’t mean that you aren’t my family,” he said softly. “In my heart, you’ve always been family.”

“You’re mine, too,” she said. “I can’t wait to make it completely official though.”

“Me, too.”

“Just a couple more weeks now,” she said dreamily.

“That’s still way too many,” Clark sighed. “Man, the power of time manipulation would be handy right about now.”

Lois laughed. “It sure would.” She thought for a moment. “So, aside from the whole Jimmy thing, did you have a good weekend?”

Clark grinned. “It was exactly what I needed.”

THE END