

First Love — Matchmaker Chronicles Volume 1D – 1L

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Rated PG-13

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Summary: This story takes place in the Matchmaker Chronicles universe. Lois and Clark have been married a little over forty years. The family is having a Labor Day party at the Kent homestead in Metropolis. This story is a sequel to “Summer Camp – Matchmaker Chronicles Volume 1C.”

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Words in italics denote emphasis

< > denotes thoughts

/ denotes telepathic communications./

Chapter One 1D

Monday, August 26, 2024

High in the air over a major metropolitan area hovered a woman wearing a spandex suit with a mask and cape. She was surveying the city below her looking for anything that would require the intervention of the local superhero.

While she hovered there she had time to reflect on her past. Just how she had come to this stage of her life; how it was that she was here wearing this very revealing, form fitting costume. She thought, <If not for him I might not be wearing this uniform and doing these things. I could have had a quiet life. Oh well, I'm here now. Except for that incident a little while ago, it's been a relatively quiet night.> She started looking around and thought, <I wonder where he is?> A few seconds later her superhearing picked up the strong steady beat she knew so well and a few seconds after that he was hovering by her side. She said, “Hi handsome. Where have you been? I've been waiting a couple of minutes.”

Her partner replied, “I stopped a mugging down by the docks. What have you been doing?”

“I stopped an attempted rape over by the park. I wish I had gotten there sooner. The poor girl was a basket case. The perp had pulled her into an alley at knife point. When I got there he was pawing her and she was crying hysterically. Fortunately that was as far as he got. I gave him a little tap to put him to sleep for a while and then used his shoe laces to secure his hands and his own belt to bind his legs. I called the police and then comforted the girl. She was on the way to meet her fiancée when she was grabbed. Her fiancée hadn't wanted her to be out after dark but she was planning to surprise him by showing up at his door. It was the anniversary of the day they first met.” She had a pensive expression, most of which was obscured by her mask as she asked, “Do you realize what day this is?”

His response took her by surprise, “Of course I do. It just happens to be the anniversary of the day we first met all those years ago. It took us a while to get here but it was worth the

wait.” He looked around and said, “Things look pretty quiet. What say we head over to Waikiki and have dinner to celebrate this anniversary?”

Her reply was immediate, “I need go home and change clothes if we are going to do that. You probably are wearing a suit but I came right from work and I want to put on something more appropriate.”

With an arched eyebrow he said, “I can't wait. Let's go home.” He started flying in that direction and knew that she was by his side the entire way. They landed in the back yard and entered the house. They both spun out of their uniforms. He said, “I'll check the voice-mail while you change.”

The petite brunette said, “It won't take me long,” as she headed for the stairs.

A few seconds later she came back downstairs and as she did all he could do was stare at this vision of loveliness. She was wearing a rather short, backless, black cocktail dress with stiletto heels which gave her legs added length and definition. She did a little pirouette for him and asked, “What do you think? Will this do?”

He gave a wolf whistle and then said with a lot of feeling, “Yeah, that'll do just fine. You know, I still have to pinch myself occasionally to make sure I'm not living in a dream.”

Smiling she said, “It isn't a dream, it's a dream come true. Let's go, maybe if we hurry we can catch a movie before dinner.”

They both spun back into their uniforms and left through the back door. Hand in hand they flew all the way to Hawaii. They landed in a secluded area and spun back into the dinner clothes.

They found a movie theater that was playing a new release of a movie remake. This was a 3-D version of “The Incredibles” only this was not a cartoon. They had real actors playing the parts and a lot of CGI effects.

As they were leaving the theater he had a hard time restraining her. She was almost floating. She said, “I have always loved that movie! It's even better now. That actor that played Mr. Incredible, wasn't he something?”

In a hushed, somewhat hurt tone, her partner said, “He can't compare to me and what I can do.”

She said, “I know Sweetie! You're special *and* you're mine. Let's go find a nice restaurant.”

They didn't have too far to walk before they found what they were looking for. He asked for a table in a quiet corner.

After they were seated and had ordered she asked, “Do you remember when we first met?”

“How could I forget? It was August 26, 2013, the first day of 4H Camp. You and your family arrived in that huge van and all you kids came piling out. Both you and Jon were assigned to my group. Jon and I hit it off right away and we started palling around together and you hung around with us. At first I thought you were a pest. After a while I started to like having you around. Thursday night when the fire broke out I was the first one you woke up because you were sleeping between me and Jon. You and Jon did a really good thing that night.”

With a smirk she replied, “I have to admit I liked being with you and Jon and I was hoping you liked me, because, I liked you from the first minute I saw you. Right from that minute I knew that you were the one for me. Dad told me it's a Kryptonian thing. When a Kryptonian meets *the* one person for them, they just know, and I knew.”

“After Superman and Ultra Woman had doused the fire and they landed, when you were called over and they said they knew you, I couldn't believe it. I wanted to meet Ultra Woman so bad ...”

With a slightly disgusted tone she said, “I know! That Saturday at the lake when you came over and joined us she's all you could talk about. I have to admit, it made me jealous. After all, that was my mom you were talking about. That was when I

made the decision to copy her uniform and use the name Ultra Woman II when my time came.”

He said, “Uncle Wayne made sure I knew how to contact you so that I could send letters and call. He thought I was writing to and calling Jon when it was really you I wanted to talk to.”

“It was a shame that you lived in LA and I was in Metropolis. The only times we could see each other was when you visited your great uncle, Wayne Irig, and we visited my grandparents in Smallville.”

“I have to admit, you’re the first girl I was ever interested in, and the only one. You were my first love.”

She reached over the table and took his hand in hers as she said, “You already know that you were my first love, but now there’s going to be another love in my life.”

He got a quizzical expression on his face.

She took pity on him as she said, “Ultra Woman II is going to have to take a vacation; that is of course unless she can trade that skin tight uniform for a maternity dress.”

He got up from his chair and came around the table, picked her up in his strong arms and said in a hushed tone, “Lara! A baby?”

She nodded and said, “Yes, Michael Wayne Lee, a baby, your baby.”

Friday, September 2, 2039

That had been a while ago. Louise was now fourteen and she and Greg and Andy were all starting to get their powers.

With the help of the children they had prepared for the party. Louise had asked if she could bake some cookies, which had started a large production. She wanted to make enough that all of her cousins, aunts and uncles would be able to partake.

Mike had gone shopping for her to get the ingredients for her and wasn’t too surprised when cocoa powder and semi-sweet bits were on the list. She had worked in the kitchen all afternoon, baking batch after batch of chocolate-chocolate chip cookies. By the time she was finished and had them packed he quipped, “It looks like you were baking for the Army!”

Smiling she said, “Just you wait and see. I bet there won’t be any left over. These are everybody’s favorite.”

Chuckling he replied, “You’re probably right. I’ve seen this family go through something like this in no time at all.”

That night, after Sophie, Robert and Mary had fallen asleep, in the middle of the night, Lara and Mike moved them while they were asleep to Metropolis via super express.

Lara remembered that the way they had been moved when she was younger had been by doing the same thing. Louise, Greg and Andy helped load the van and then they climbed in and strapped in. Lara took one side and Mike took the other and lifting the van, flew at tree top level from LA to Metropolis to the delight of the kids who were awake. Once they were in Metropolis they all unloaded the van and went to bed.

Saturday, September 3, 2039

It was Saturday and the Labor Day weekend was upon them. Everyone in the Kent clan packed up their families and came to Grandma and Grandpa’s. All of the women were bringing dishes to share with the rest of the family. Clark had the Bar-B-Que pit fired up and was getting a head start on the grilling since this would be a rather large gathering.

Lara Mike and the kids had helped to set up the tables and chairs. After that they had put up the decorations and set up the pools and lawn games.

Before anyone else arrived, Lara had a few minutes to talk with Clark. “How’s it goin’ Pop?”

“Well, you know how it is; I really need to get a head start on the cooking. We have a lot of people coming today.”

There was a Mona Lisa grin on her face as she said, “Yeah, lots of people will be here today. Think you’re ready?”

“As long as there aren’t too many surprises. Barring the arrival of Herb or, heaven forbid, Tempus, I think we can handle it.”

“We’ll see Pop. We’ll see.” She turned away and headed over to where Mike was putting up some decorations to give him a hand.

A short time later the families started to arrive and the party started.

Chapter Two 1E

Sean and Heather

It was Saturday and the Labor Day weekend was upon them. Everyone in the Kent clan packed up their families. All of the women were bringing dishes to share with the rest of the family. Clark had the Bar-B-Que pit fired up and was getting a head start on the grilling since this would be a rather large gathering. The back yard of the Wisteria Lane house had been decorated. In one section some pools of various depths had been put up for the children along with some lawn games. A number of tables had been set up for serving and eating.

All except for Lara and Mike all of the families started arriving at around noon. Since Lara and Mike lived in LA they used the same trick that Lois and Clark had used when their children had been small. After they were asleep they moved them by super express to Metropolis. They woke up in their rooms in the Wisteria Lane home and thought nothing of it.

Cold dishes were placed into the refrigerator until it was time to start eating. The grandchildren all mobbed Grandpa Clark and Grandma Lois as soon as they arrived to say hi, before going over to the play area.

As families arrived groups would gather and start talking.

It always amazed Clark that even though he could recognize everyone’s heartbeat, he could still pick Lois’ heartbeat out of the crowd and know exactly where she was and her emotional state. Today he could tell that she was immensely happy. She really enjoyed having the kids and the grandkids around. Pretty soon they might even have the next generation showing up. Lara and Mike’s eldest daughter, Louise, was going to be fourteen soon. It just seemed like the years were flying by.

Sean came over and Clark asked, “How are things going Sean? Any interesting cases coming through the ER?”

Sean laughed and replied, “Not too many that you, Mom, Jon, or one of the other kids haven’t brought in. It’s been kinda quiet, which is good. I’ve been able to devote extra time to the antidote project with Jon. I hope it stays this quiet. That means that people aren’t being hurt enough to need my services in the ER.”

Clark chuckled and in a teasing tone said, “Your position in the ER at MetGen paid off a few years ago.”

Sean smiled and said, “Yeah, it did, didn’t it?” As he said this his hearing picked up a particular voice in one of the groups of women across the way. This voice had a, to him, wonderful Scottish burr with broad vowels and rolled Rs. Glancing in that direction he spotted his red haired Scottish lass talking with a couple of his sisters. He was thinking to himself how fortunate he was to have this woman as his wife and he thought back to just how it had all happened.

Saturday, May 24, 2031

ER, MetGen

Sean was just finishing up on his shift in the ER. It had been a rather frustrating day and he had been more than a little angry earlier in the day. Now, he was excited.

Around 11 AM an older gentleman had come in to the ER with his wife. He was suffering from a blood disorder and had a

prescription for a unit of blood. Apparently this was a routine procedure for him so Sean had requested a type and cross match to confirm type just to be sure. When the type was confirmed a unit of blood was pulled and he was set up in one of the unused cubicles. A Phlebotomy tech came in and inserted the line and started the delivery. Sean had made sure that a hot pad was under him so that he wouldn't be chilled from the infusion of non-body temperature liquid.

Everything had been fine until about twenty minutes into the infusion when the man's wife came out of the cubicle and called Sean. When Sean stepped into the cubicle the patient was short of breath and had distinct swelling of the extremities and was experiencing cardiac symptoms. Sean remembered back to his Cardiac rotation and recognized the symptoms as those of Congestive Heart Failure, but, this was unusual in that it wasn't chronic, this was acute. Sean immediately checked the chart and noted the patient's doctor's name and gave him a call.

"Doctor Ferguson, this is Dr. Kent in the ER at MetGen. We have a patient of yours here in the ER. He came in with an order for a unit of blood."

"Yes, that would be Mr. Halverson." Sean could hear concern enter his tone as he continued, "How is the infusion going?"

Sean replied, "I'm afraid it isn't going well. He is displaying the symptomology of Congestive Heart Failure. This is unusual in that it is sudden onset. The patient is in respiratory as well as cardiac distress. The order reads that you are to be contacted in any emergency."

"Dr. Kent, the last time he had an infusion, which was last week, he started displaying similar symptoms, only not as extreme."

"Dr. Ferguson, what do you want us to do? We could use Lasix to relieve some if not all of these symptoms. It should reduce the swelling and possibly ease the respiratory problems at the same time."

Sean could hear the resignation in his voice as the doctor responded, "Dr. Kent, as I said, this isn't the first time this has happened. In each episode the response is getting worse. I really hate to give this order, but, I order you to allow this problem to run its course."

"Dr. Ferguson, I must protest. There are procedures that we can follow that can mitigate this problem!"

"Look, Dr. Kent, I am aware of what can be done. Unfortunately, I find I must give the order for you to do nothing."

Sean was almost pleading as he said, "Dr. Ferguson, his wife is here with him. I beg you to reconsider."

Dr. Ferguson was firm as he replied, "I'm sorry. The order must stand."

Sean's anger had been building as he had been discussing this and it was evident as he replied, "Doctor, I take my oath to do no harm very seriously. You are telling me that I am to simply stand by and allow this patient to die. I don't know if I can do that."

In a somewhat conciliatory tone, Dr. Ferguson replied, "Dr. Kent, I can sympathize with you, but, this decision is out of your hands. My order must stand. Look, I understand. You need to look at it from my perspective. If it isn't this time it will be the next. It is better to handle it now. Please do what you can for his wife."

In an angry tone he replied, "Dr. Ferguson, I will be entering your directive and my objections on his chart."

"Dr. Kent, that is as it should be. It is my decision to make. It is your duty to carry out my directive. I'm sorry that you are being put in this position. If it hadn't been you it would have been whoever was in your place. You just got lucky."

Heatedly, Sean replied, "I don't consider this being lucky! Goodbye, Doctor." He slammed the phone down so hard he almost broke it.

It was Sean's unpleasant duty to tell the man's wife the

decision that the doctor had made. After she was told she simply returned to the cubicle with her husband and held his hand, crying softly to herself until he had passed.

Sean started taking his frustration out on the nursing staff. Fortunately, the chief nurse felt comfortable enough in her working relationship with him to pull him aside and talk to him about it, one on one. After their talk he apologized to the rest of the staff. They all said that they could understand and that it was okay.

About 3 p.m. an ambulance pulled in with a young lady on the stretcher. She was wearing a riding outfit with tan jodhpur style riding pants, a blouse and tan jacket. The woman was unconscious and the medics had put on a Cuban Hitch. The nursing staff was very efficient and before she was moved they had removed her riding outfit and placed a hospital gown on her. As soon as this was done, Sean sent her up for a shoulder x-ray and a skull series even though he could already see that the collar bone was fractured and that there was no skull fracture. He had to have it documented. When she came back from x-ray Sean exchanged the Cuban Hitch for a regular clavicle brace and sling.

A short time later she woke up and asked, "Wherrre 'm I?" She spoke with a strange accent and it took Sean a few seconds to place it. She was speaking in an utterly delightful Scottish burr.

Sean answered, "You are in Metropolis General, in the Emergency Room."

"Whot 'm I doin' 'errre? Oh, yes, thot trrreacherous beastie thrrew me! I think 'e was stoong by a bee."

Sean asked, "Miss, you didn't have any identification on your person when they brought you in. Can I please have your name?"

"Aye, me name is Heatherrr, Heatherrr MacLeod. I just moved 'ere to attend Metrropolis Univrerrrrsity."

"Well, Heather MacLeod, my name is Doctor Kent, Sean Kent."

"Ahh, a nice Scots name that is. What clan would you be having?"

"Well, my grandmother's maiden name was Clark and the Clarks are a sept of Clan Cameron, a highland clan."

"Well, don't cha know that the MacLeods and the Camerons were allies in the rebellion." She looked around and asked, "Wherrre arre me clothes? I need to be gettin' back to the beastie. I need to show 'im who's boss!" As she started to sit up a look of pain crossed her face and also some disorientation.

Sean put a hand on her good shoulder and gently pushed her back onto the pillows as he said, "Hold on there! You're not going anywhere. You have a broken collar bone and a mild concussion. I want to keep you in the hospital overnight. Who should I notify? Do you have any relatives here in the states?"

"No, I doon't 'ave any family ooover 'ere."

"A boyfriend, perhaps?"

"No, no boyfrrried eitherrr."

When she said this Sean felt a wave of relief wash over him. He had been worried that she would be married or engaged or at least have a boyfriend.

Sean said, "I'm going to make arrangements for a room for you for the night. I'll be back shortly."

After Sean exited he made the arrangements for a room and then sought out his sister. When he found her he said, "Sis, I have a favor to ask."

Celeste asked, "What's up Bro? Need a couple of bucks till payday?"

Chuckling Sean replied, "Nah, nothing like that. I just admitted a patient and I need you to take over as the doctor of record."

Celeste had a questioning look as she asked, "Why do you need me to do that?"

He replied, "I just can't be her doctor. Let's leave it at that."

Celeste, sensing that something was going on pressed the issue. She said, “That’s not good enough, Bro. Come on, out with it. What’s going on?”

As he responded, Sean had an embarrassed smile, “You know what Dad told us about how he knew the second that he met Mom that she was the one?”

“Yeah, what of it?”

“Well, the moment I saw this woman and she spoke to me, I knew she was the one. I can’t be her doctor. If I’m her doctor, I can’t date her and I very much *want* to date her.”

“Okay Bro, where is she? I want to go meet this special woman. I need to make sure she’s good enough for my big brother.”

Sean chuckled at this because it was a running joke between the two of them. They were twins and he was all of twenty minutes older than his sister. He told Celeste where she could find Heather and Celeste went to the ER to find her new patient.

When she entered Heather’s cubicle she picked up Heather’s chart and flipped through the reports and while still looking at the paperwork introduced herself, “Hello Heather, I’m Doctor Kent and I’m your new physician.”

Confused, and with a look of disappointment Heather asked, “I thooot that the nice yooong maaan was Doctor Kent and ‘e would be me doctorr.”

Celeste chuckled and replied, “He is Doctor Kent. I’m also Doctor Kent.”

Heather’s disappointment was very evident as she said, “Ohh, you’re married.”

Celeste chuckled and said, “No, no we’re not! He’s my brother. He asked me to take your case.”

Celeste could see the play of emotions mirrored in her face. Finally with a confused tone, Heather asked, “Was therrre a prrroblem?”

Celeste chuckled again and said, “Yes, a small problem of medical ethics. You’ll understand, later.” Celeste hooked the chart over the foot of the bed again and said, “I’ll look in on you later.” With an enigmatic smile as she patted her good arm she said, “You’ll do.”

Heather was somewhat confused by her answer, but, accepted her explanation as a doctor thing. She didn’t see Sean again and a short time later the orderlies arrived and Heather was moved to a semi-private room on the fifth floor.

When Sean reached the end of his shift he went to the gift shop in the lobby and bought a bouquet of flowers. He asked an orderly to take them to Heather’s room before he went to the locker room to change out of his scrubs.

When visiting hours started Sean went up to the fifth floor and knocked on her door. He heard her call, “Come in!”

When he entered she went from a confused expression to a smile as she recognized him. She asked, “Is this why you ‘ad yourr sisterrr become my doctorr?”

Sean was a little bashful as he said, “Yes, it is. If I was your doctor, I couldn’t visit you, as anything but your doctor. This way, I can be a friend.” He looked around and saw the flowers and smiled.

She noted this and asked, “The floowerrrs werrre firrrom you?”

Sean nodded.

She said, “Thank you. That was verrra sweet.”

Sean asked, “May I call you Heather?”

She smiled and said, “Ooof courrrse you may.”

He asked, “Heather, you are going to be released tomorrow. I happen to know that you don’t have any transportation because you came in by ambulance. Since tomorrow is my day off, I’d like to offer my services to take you back to the equestrian center so that you can get your things and then I’d like to take you to lunch.”

“My, my, do all doctorr’s ‘ere in the states do all oof this for theirr patients?”

“If you were still my patient, I couldn’t do this. As a friend, I’d like to do this for you.”

With a sweet smile she said, “Alrrright, me firrriend, ye may take me to loonch tomorrrow.”

With a happy smile he said, “Thank you.”

Sean spent the rest of visiting hours with Heather and they spent the entire time talking.

The next day Sean picked her up and they spent the entire day together. That day started a relationship which eventually ended in their lives being united.

Sean, after reminiscing about how he met Heather, excused himself from his father and strolled over and came up behind Heather and wrapped his arms around her waist from behind and rested his chin on the top of her head for a few seconds. Then he kissed her red hair on the top of her head. She giggled and said, “I know who that ‘as to be. Sean, whot brrought that on?”

Sean replied, “Oh, I was just remembering the day we met. The day I met my first love.”

Turning around in his arms so that she was facing him she replied, “Aye, and I as well. I have to confess, when you took me back to the equestrrrian centerrr that day, I thanked yon beastie for thrrroowing me. I just knew that I had met the man I would be spending me life with.” She put her arms around his neck and pulled herself up into a kiss. Slowly they floated until they were a foot off the ground. Celeste sent him a thought, /Careful Bro. There are little ones around. You don’t want to give anything away./ When he heard this he realized what was happening and they came back to earth.

Lois who was standing next to Clark at that time put her arms around him and asked, “Care to try to top that?”

Clark laughed and said, “Not in public unless we are in uniform. Let them have their time. We can float together later.”

Chapter Three IF

Celeste and William

Shortly after Sean departed to join his wife, Celeste came over and gave her Dad a hug and a kiss.

Clark asked her, “How is it going in the clinic?”

Celeste didn’t need any time to think about that and replied, “Things are going well. Thank you for interceding with the Superman foundation to fund our little project. We see an average of two hundred people a day. It really keeps my staff hopping!”

Clark replied with an awestruck tone, “Wow! Two hundred a day? In a years time that would come close to the entire population of a town the size of Pensacola, Florida!”

“Yeah, and we do some really good work, treating the poor and uninsured.”

“What does Bill think about you working down in that depressed area?”

“Oh, Wild Bill doesn’t mind. It might have been a different story, if I wasn’t super though.”

This threw her back in her memory; back to before she was married to William ‘Wild Bill’ Davidson.

Saturday, July 18, 2031

Suicide Slum

The super heroine, Noel, hovered above Suicide Slum. In all the years that she had been alive there hadn’t been any successful efforts to clean up this part of town. It was still crime ridden.

Celeste was doing extra patrols, filling in for her brother who was out with Heather. She was happy to be able to do this for him, after all, it was like he was her other half. Sharing the same womb with someone for a little over eight months brings about

that kind of closeness. They really didn't even have to work at understanding each other. Even without the telepathy, it was like each knew just what the other was thinking. She was really happy for Sean. Heather was a really nice girl and Celeste looked forward to the day when she would be her sister-in-law.

Heather would be starting the new semester in September. She was a doctoral candidate in Environmental Engineering at MetU. Because of this, Heather and Sean were making the most of her time off. Heather was spending a lot of time with him at the apartment that he shared with Celeste, a lot of nights sharing Celeste's room. She and Heather had become fast friends and Heather had done something no one else had ever done. She had given Celeste a nickname, Celie. It sounded like something she, as a Scottish lass, would come up with. To her surprise the nickname had really taken, even Sean was using it.

As she was scanning the streets and alleys of Suicide Slum she used her enhanced vision to compensate for the gloom.

Suddenly she saw two men in an alley. The one had a gun out and the other man had his arms up in surrender. The man with the gun was dressed in somewhat scruffy clothes and broken down sneakers. His hair was on the longish side. He was reaching inside the jacket of the other man with his other hand.

Noel swooped down and put herself between the man with the gun and the other man and said, "You really should find a different line of work." She grabbed his gun and took it from him. He started to protest but she said, over her shoulder to the other man, "You're safe now. He won't harm you."

As soon as she said this the man took to his heels and scampered down the alley.

The man that she had taken the gun from protested, "You don't know what you're doing!"

She replied, "Yes, I do! I'm stopping a mugging!"

With an angry tone to his voice he replied, "No, you're not! You're interfering in an arrest!"

With a surprised tone she squeaked out, "Arrest?"

He reached into his pocket and pulled out an ID case. Flipping it open he showed her a police ID and a gold badge, gold being the sign of a detective.

She stammered, "I.. I'm, I'm really sorry! I, I didn't know! The way you were dressed!" She handed him back his gun.

"I was in the process of busting a drug dealer when you interfered!"

She quickly tuned in her superhearing and listened for his footsteps. She said, "Wait right here." She took off, apprehending the perp less than a block away. She picked him up and flew him back to the alley and placed him on the ground, up against the wall in front of the detective.

He spun the perp around so that he was facing the wall and said, "Spread 'em." The perp obeyed immediately. The detective moved in and placed a foot just inside the perps left foot. If he tried anything he could sweep his foot out and throw him to the ground. He pulled out his handcuffs and reaching up snapped the cuff on his left wrist. He pulled that arm down and behind the perp and then while holding the chain of the handcuffs with his left hand reached up with his right and grabbed the perp's right hand and brought it down and behind and applied the other cuff. He then turned the perp around and finished frisking him, which was what he had been starting when Noel interrupted. As he was doing this he was reciting, "You have the right to remain silent. If you choose not to anything you say ..."

When he had finished the Miranda warning he turned to Noel and said, "Thanks, I think."

Noel, abashed said, "I'm really sorry. I'll try not to do that happen again."

He replied, "You do that."

She asked, "By the way, what's your name?"

"Bill Davidson, Detective Bill Davidson. They call me 'Wild

Bill', I don't know why, something about not necessarily going by the book all of the time."

"Okay, well, 'Wild Bill' I hope to see you again."

"Not if I can help it." Turning to his prisoner he said, "Okay you, let's go. You've got a date with a cell."

Celeste watched as 'Wild Bill' and his prisoner walked away and thought to herself, <Oh, I'll be seeing you again, you can count on it.>

Tuesday, July 22, 2031

Less than a week later, as Noel was again hovering over Suicide Slum, she saw two cars that appeared to be drag racing down a busy urban street. As she watched one car managed to get a lead on the other and made a left just ahead of a light change. The car in pursuit did a four wheel drift through the light sideswiping a car that had just moved legally through the light. She swooped down and landed on the roof, reaching to either side and grabbing the window frame and roof and lifted the car airborne. She flew it to a parking lot and wouldn't set it down until the driver had taken his foot off the gas. The she released the car and landed next to the driver's door. When she looked in she had a shocked expression and stumbled back with a look of sheer horror on her face.

The driver opened the door and stepped out. He addressed her, "Well, you've done it again! The car I was chasing was the getaway car from a liquor store heist."

She recovered quickly and said, "Wait right here." She flew off and about a minute later landed with the car he had been pursuing.

He pulled his gun and ID out and held one in each hand as he said, "Police! You're both under arrest. Get out of the car, put your hands on the roof and lean in to them."

He pulled out his handcuffs and applied a handcuff to the wrist of one of the perps. He had him move around to the other side of the car and used the other cuff to attach the two perps with their arms around the door pillar of the getaway car. As soon as this was done he frisked them, removed their weapons and read them their rights.

Once this was done he went back to his car and got on the radio. He gave his location and requested backup.

He slowly walked over to Noel who had been standing by all this time and asked, "What do you have against me? Did I do something to you to make you mad, or something? Is it my cologne? The way I comb my hair?"

She stammered her reply, "No, no, I, I just, I just saw two cars racing and I needed to keep people from getting hurt."

"So, you stopped me and let the felons run away."

With her eyes downcast she said, "I didn't know. I'll do better next time, I promise."

With bitterness in his voice he replied, "Don't do me any more favors, okay?"

She replied, "I'll try not to interfere again. I'm just here to help."

He replied, "That kind of help I can do without. Go on, get outta here and go help somebody that really needs it."

As she took to the sky she was mentally berating herself for making that mistake, especially with him of all people. <Why did it have to be *him*? Anybody else and it wouldn't have been a problem, but, this is twice in a week that I've made a problem for him. I need to start using my x-ray vision to see who it is before I interfere.>

Saturday, July 26, 2031

ER, MetGen

Doctor Celeste Kent was nearing the end of her shift and also nearing the end of her current rotation in the ER. It had been a relatively quiet evening until they heard the tones go out over the

med-channels which dispatched the Medics. She knew that they could expect serious injuries and marshaled her staff to prepare for the onslaught. Once everything was prepared she manned the radio to relay orders to the Medics as they transported the victims in.

Fortunately she found out that it would be a single victim, not a mass casualty event so most of the staff was ordered to stand down. The rest waited. They could hear the siren as the ambulance approached and knew when it was near the drive because the siren suddenly went silent. When the ambulance pulled in the Medics pulled the stretcher out of the back and rushed the victim in through the glass swinging doors.

The individual on the stretcher was a bloody mess but through all of that blood, she felt that she recognized him.

With the typical efficiency of the ER he was cleaned up, his bloody clothes were removed and a hospital gown put on. Once this had been done she started her work. She had a couple of cuts to suture and a couple that Steri Strips would handle. She infused the area with a little Lidocaine before starting the sutures. She used the finest thread she could find and used only enough sutures to close the wound. Then she applied Super Glue to finally close the wound. That would hold until the sides knit.

Half an hour later he woke up. The nurse called her over and as she arrived he was trying to get up out of the bed. She quickly moved to the side of the bed and placing her hands on his shoulders pushed him back onto the pillows. She said, "Where do you think you're going?"

Groggily he said, "I need to get back there and take them down."

She said, "My patients don't go walking out on me!"

As she was saying this he finally was able to focus his eyes and see who was talking to him. When he got a good look at her he ceased his struggles and relaxed. He asked, "You're my doctor?"

She replied, "That's right! I'm Doctor Kent. You're in my ER and you're not going anywhere."

He started to smile and said, "Well, if you put it that way and as long as I can lay here looking at you, I will be good and stay right here."

With a small smile on her face she replied, "I can't guarantee that you'll be able to look at me all the time Detective Davidson. I do have other patients. We are bust at times."

When she used his name he got a shocked expression on his face and asked, "How do you know my name?"

She was caught off guard. She had made a mistake and she knew it. She had to think of some excuse and do it fast. She stammered out, "Uh, well, uh, your, uh, your ID, we had to check your ID in your wallet, yeah, your ID."

He started to smile but didn't say anything.

Celeste was bothered by that smile. She said, "I have other patients to check on.. I'll be back later."

Celeste sent a thought, /Sean, HELP!!!/

Sean immediately replied, /What's the matter Sis? I thought you were on duty today. Why the SOS?/

/Sean, remember how I took over a patient for you the other day?/

/You mean Heather?/

/Yeah, Heather. I need your help. I need you to take over a patient for me./

/Sis, really? What's his name? Where is he?/

/He's Detective Bill Davidson and he's here in the ER./

/I'm with a patient right now. I'll be down in a couple of minutes./

/Thanks, Bro. This makes us even for that favor./

/It might make us even for that one but there are a lot of others on your tab, but, who's counting./

/You're supposed to help me, after all you are my *big*

brother./

With a mental chuckle he sent, /Alright *little* sister. I'll see you in a few./

Half an hour later Sean Kent walked into the ER. He approached his sister and she pointed to the cube that the patient was in.

Sean walked into the indicated cubicle and picked up the chart and started reading Celeste's notes. As he was doing this he said, "Hello, I'm Doctor Kent and I'm going to be your doctor."

Bill asked, "Did you say, Kent?"

Still looking over the chart he replied in a somewhat distracted manner, "Yes, Doctor Kent, Sean Kent. I see that my sister treated several deep lacerations. Let me take a look at them."

When Sean had finished speaking he put the chart down and pulled out his pen light and moved up so that he could examine his sister's work. He muttered to himself, "Those sewing lessons Grandma Kent gave Sis really paid off." He spoke up and directed his comments to Bill, "She did a very good job. You should have only minor scarring as a result."

Bill asked, "You did say that she's your sister, didn't you?"

Sean looked at him and said, "Yeah, my twin sister."

"That's good news."

Sean said, "I think we need to keep you here overnight for observation. If you behave yourself you'll be out by noon tomorrow. We need the beds for more serious cases."

"Anything you say, Doc. I'll try to be good."

"I'll check in on you once you're up on the floor."

A half hour later Bill was transferred to the floor.

At the end of her shift Celeste changed and went up to visit. The door was open so she walked in. Bill sat up straighter in the bed and asked, "Did you come to check on your handiwork Doc?"

She replied, "No, not really. Your doctor told me that everything was going to be fine."

He asked, "Tell me Doc, why did you do that? Turn me over to your brother, that is."

She replied, "Ethical reasons."

He said, "You know, I have the strangest feeling that we've met before. We couldn't have, could we?"

Taken aback by this question she stammered, "I don't know. I don't think so. How could we? I mean, you're a policeman and I'm a doctor. This is the first time you've been in my ER."

He gave her a very appraising look as he asked, "What are you doing for lunch tomorrow?"

"Me,? Lunch? Tomorrow?"

"Yeah, you, lunch, tomorrow."

"I'll be on duty until 5:30."

"How about dinner then?"

"Dinner? With you?"

"I think I'm hearing an echo in here. Yeah, dinner, tomorrow, with me. Will you? And don't just repeat what I've said."

"Well, I don't know. I'll have to think about it."

"Don't think too long. I may change my mind."

"Alright, I'll go out to dinner with you."

"Should I pick you up here?"

"Yeah, that would be fine."

"Okay, but only if you promise not to leave me in the lurch to handle any emergencies."

"Unless we have a mass casualty event, I'll be free at the end of my shift."

"I meant, outside the hospital."

With a startled expression she asked, "What do you mean?"

"I think you know what I mean. The thugs that beat me up took my ID. It wasn't in my clothes. I know how you knew my name. Let's talk over dinner."

That dinner had started a relationship which had resulted in a

marriage.

Celeste came out of her reverie and looking around saw that Bill was talking with Rich and Rob, Jessica's and Lucy's husbands respectively. She excused herself from her dad and drifted over that way.

Bill sensed her approach and turned to meet her. He asked, "Having a good time?"

"Yes, yes I am. I was just thinking about how we met. You know, I don't know if I ever told you this, but, you were my first love."

"I have a confession to make, I had dated and had some girlfriends before I met you, but, none of them could hold a candle to you. With you it was different. I guess you could say that you were my first love too."

She looped her arm through his and said, "Come on, let's go get something to eat."

Chapter Four 1G

Jessica and Richard

Shortly after Celeste went over to join her husband, 'Wild Bill', Jessica, with baby Linda in a baby carrier on Jessie's chest, came over and gave her Dad a hug and a kiss.

Clark reached out and stroked baby Linda's hair and then leaned in and gave her a kiss on the head before he asked her, "How is it going? How fast is the population of Metropolis growing, aside from this one of course?"

Absentmindedly Jessie was stroking her daughter's head as she was speaking. She didn't need any time to think about that and replied, "Things are going well. On any particular day I may have a baby or two to deliver."

Clark said, "Between that and this little bundle you are really busy."

Contemplatively, Jessie looked down at her daughter as if considering her answer. Still looking at her she said, "I wouldn't trade my life for anyone else's. Rich is such a good husband and father. Now I can see how you and Mom did it, have a big family, I mean. The way you always worked together, we're the same way. Now that he has powers it's just that much easier."

With a smile Clark said, "You know, Mom didn't have her powers back until Jon was ten. Those first years were the hardest."

"Why was that?"

"You were probably too young to remember. It wasn't until her birthday when Jon was a little over ten years old, just after Lucy was born; Herb visited and gave Mom her pendant for her birthday present."

"I would have been about three. Did she have to wait the three years?"

"No, because we had been together, as soon as she had the pendant, she had her powers back. Back before you were born, in fact, before we were even married, Mom had my powers for about a week."

"That's right; I remember seeing the pictures now. You know you've told us over and over how you knew, from the first minute of meeting Mom that she was the one but I always had my doubts about it, until it happened to me." This sent Jessica on a mental journey, back in time.

Monday, March 20, 2034

It was a routine day in the office. Doctor Jessica Kent, OB/GYN had recently moved her offices into the Medical Towers associated with MetGen. They were on the third floor and just down the hall was a bridge that communicated directly with floor three of MetGen.

After her seventh patient of the morning, it was time to break for lunch.

Rachel Beck, her office manager approached her and asked, "Jess, want to join me for lunch?"

"Sure Rachel, it'll be fun. You're still new in town. I could show you one of my favorite places, Travaglini's. It's a little Italian place around the corner. They serve the best lasagna in the city."

With an appreciative look, Rachel said, "Ooooo, I love lasagna, it's my favorite. Let's go, oh, by the way, is there a jeweler on the way? I need to have the battery and strap replaced on my watch."

"Sure, Limerick Jewelers is on the way. We can stop in there before lunch. Let's grab our coats and head out."

A few minutes later they were out of the building and walking away from MetGen. After a ten minute walk they arrived at Limerick Jewelers. There were a couple of other customers in the store so they had to wait a couple of minutes to be waited upon.

The owner of the store, Mr. MacDonald waited on Rachel personally. While they were talking the other customer finished making their purchase and left. Jess decided to do some shopping while she waited.

The clerk approached and asked, "Is there something I can show you?"

"I was thinking about an anniversary present for my parents. They are coming up on their fortieth anniversary. Do you have any suggestions?"

"Traditionally for the fortieth anniversary something involving a ruby would be in order."

"Alright then, let me see some rubies."

"Right over here in this display case." He led the way a few cases over.

He unlocked the sliding glass door at the back and reaching in pulled out a tray containing ruby pins, necklaces and rings placing it on the top of the case.

As Jessie started looking at the offerings a couple of customers came in. The clerk that was waiting on her said, "I'll be with you in just a moment."

Just then they both pulled out guns and one of them shouted, "Come out from behind those counters. We don't want any silent alarm switches pushed."

Once the clerk and Mr. MacDonald were out from behind the counters the second crook said, "On the floor! NOW!"

Jess, without thinking said, "If you know what's good for you you'll put those guns away. If you don't I'll ..." She suddenly realized just what she was saying. She wasn't in her super persona of Hazel! She was there as Dr. Kent.

The perp said, "You'll do what? Get on the floor!"

The other thug was using the butt of his gun to smash the glass of the display cases to grab the jewels.

Jess started to take a step toward the second crook. He said, "I warned you," and swung his gun in her direction.

Just as he pulled the trigger the clerk jumped in between Jess and the gun. The impact of the slug hitting his chest drove him back into Jessie. She caught him and gently lowered him to the floor. She was kneeling beside him and examining his wound. Her enhanced vision told her everything she needed to know. Without immediate help he would die.

She looked up at the crooks and said, "See what you've done? If he doesn't have immediate help, he'll probably die! Armed robbery is one thing. Murder is an entirely different rap. I'm a doctor. At least let me call for an ambulance."

The first crook looked at his companion and said, "I don't want a murder rap, even if it is as an accessory. Go ahead, lady, make your call, but, no tricks. Call for an ambulance, not the police. We should be out of here before the medics arrive."

Jess reached up and touched her earphone. She heard, "Say a command."

She said, “Dial emergency.” She heard three beeps and then she heard, “911, what is the nature of your emergency?”

“This is Doctor Kent. I need an ambulance at Limerick Jewelers. The clerk has been hurt.”

“Dispatching.”

“Thank you.” She reached up and touched her earpiece again to sever the connection. She asked, “Satisfied?”

“Okay.” He turned to his crony and said, “Come on, let’s finish up and get outta here.”

Jess was applying direct pressure to the wound to limit the blood loss and sent, /Mom, Dad, Jon, Sean, Jimmy, Sam, robbery at Limerick Jewelers! The clerk has been shot! I need you./

She heard back, /We’re on the way. Bill, you might want to show up in your official capacity./

Bill replied, /On my way./

Two seconds later, Superman flew in through the back door while Ultra Woman, Kam-El, Dan-El, Zar-El and Ben-El all came in through the front door. The perps were both disarmed and restrained. A few seconds later Detective William ‘Wild Bill’ Davidson walked in and identified himself and read them their rights.

As soon as the perps had been restrained Jess sent, /Sean, he’s going to need immediate help. I need you in the ER. Mom, could you take me to MetGen? Pop, can you carry the clerk?/

Lois sent, /Sure thing Honey. Here we go./

Superman picked up the clerk and Ultra Woman picked up Jess and they exited the store. Sean had left a few seconds before.

When they arrived at MetGen they went straight to the ER. Superman placed the clerk on a stretcher and he was immediately surrounded by nursing staff.

Doctor Sean Kent hurried up. He was carrying a bag of D5W and another of normal saline. He asked, “What do we have here? Gunshot, good thing I was restocking. Get him gowned and these lines started. Jess, I could use your help.” He sent a mental summons, /Celie, I need you in the ER! STAT!/

/Be right there Bro./

The ER staff under Dr. Sean Kent went to work and they were very efficient about it. In less time almost than it takes to tell about it the patient was undressed and gowned and the two lines were started. Sean did a cursory exam. The staff didn’t know it but he was actually using his enhanced vision and could see that delay could be fatal. He turned to one of his nurses and said, “Debra, you just came down here from the OR. We can’t wait on this one. Help me scrub and gown then prep for surgery.”

As soon as Sean was gowned Jess said, “Debra, help me get ready.”

As she was finishing up Celeste walked in and started to scrub. Debra helped her gown as well.

All three doctor Kents were gathered around the stretcher. Since time was of the essence they had not moved him to a formal OR. Debra pulled over a tray and opened the surgical set.

Sean said, “Okay, we have to go in. Scalpel.”

Debra snapped a scalpel into his outstretched hand.

Sean made a lateral incision, across the wound, opening it up for access. When finished he dropped the scalpel on the dirty tray and holding out his hand said, “Probe.”

Debra handed him a probe.

Very gently, being guided by his enhanced vision he probed the wound. He pulled the probe out and said, “Jess and Celie, I need both of you to retract.”

Both Jess and Celie were handed claw end retractors. Each inserted the claw end into the side of the incision nearest them and pulled it open.

Sean said, “Good. Hold it there. Number three hemostat.”

Debra snapped it into his outstretched hand. He looked at it and changed his mind. “On second thought, make it a number four.” Debra exchanged the instruments.

Using his enhanced vision he watched as he inserted the closed hemostat into the wound. Just as it was about to touch the back of the slug he stopped and opened the jaws just enough to clear the slug. Advancing the hemostat a few more millimeters he closed the jaws on the back of the slug. Slowly he pulled the hemostat with the slug out of the wound.

Once it was out, everyone standing around breathed a sigh of relief.

Sean dropped the slug on the tray with the hemostat. He said, “Irrigator. Sterile water.”

Debra said, “We have normal saline.”

“That’ll do.”

Debra filled the irrigator and handed it to him. He gently inserted the irrigator tip into the wound and started depressing the plunger, gently washing what residue from the powder might have been on the slug as well as cloth fibers from the wound.

When he was satisfied that he had done enough he said, “Celie, why don’t you close up for me. Your stitching is superior to mine.”

“Happy to Sean,” as she stepped in to take his place.

He took over with her retractor as she prepped self dissolving suture material and put in a couple deep sutures and then closed the skin.

When they were all cleaned up, Sean grabbed both of his sisters in a group hug and said, “Well done guys. We make a great team.”

Debra called over, “Doctor Kent!”

All three answered in unison, “Yes?” and then they all started to laugh.

Debra clarified, “Doctor Sean Kent, do you want to write up any orders?”

“I’ll be right there. Standard antibiotic and pain regimen. Write it up and I’ll sign it.”

A short time later the clerk was sent to the floor.

That evening, during visiting hours, Jessica sought out her clerk who had tried to save her. She found him sitting up in bed, with his left arm in a sling, watching TV. As soon as he saw her he smiled and turned the TV off. He said, “I hear that you saved my life. If it hadn’t been for you, I might have died there on the shop floor.”

“Actually, you have to thank Superman; he’s the one that brought you to the ER. Besides, you saved me, not the other way around. Why did you do it? Why did you throw yourself in front of his gun?”

“I didn’t want to see you get hurt. I couldn’t have lived with myself if I hadn’t done something.”

“I wouldn’t expect that out of a store clerk.”

“Oh, I’m not really a store clerk. I’m just working there to help out my Uncle Mac and to pick up some spending money for next semester.”

“Oh, what are you studying?”

“History, Archeology ... I’m doing my dissertation on Native Cultures, specifically, the interaction between the Wampanoags and the Pilgrims. Native American activists have tried to rewrite history and paint the Pilgrims in a bad light. The opposite is actually the case. The Pilgrims lived in peaceful harmony with their neighbors in a mutually beneficial relationship.”

“Wow, I never knew much about the Pilgrims. How did you get interested in all that?”

In a conspiratorial tone he asked, “Promise to keep it a secret?”

She nodded,

He said, “Indiana Jones.” He started chuckling.

She asked, “Are you being serious?”

“Serious as a heart attack, or a bullet in the chest.”

She giggled.

He said, “I understand you’re a doctor. You helped remove the bullet.”

“Yeah, guilty as charged.” She extended her hand and took his and shook it. “Doctor Jessica Kent. This was actually a little out of my line. I’m an Obstetrician. I usually deliver babies, not bullets.”

He laughed and said, “I’m glad you helped on this one. By the way, my name is Richard Stuart. You can call me Rich, even though I’m not. I’m just a poor doctoral student at MetU.”

Jess said, “I’m pleased to meet you Rich. Call me Jess.”

He had a musing expression as he said, “Doctor Kent. It was a Doctor Kent that signed off on my prescription and all. Your husband?”

“Actually, my brother. I’m not married.”

He brightened up and said, “Well then, in that case, can a poor doctoral student ask the pretty doctor out to dinner, so that I can thank you properly? It won’t be anything fancy, unless I ask Uncle Mac for an advance on my pay, but it would be worth it.”

“Let’s talk about it I a couple of days, when you’re feeling somewhat better.”

“Only if you promise to visit me every day.”

“How could I refuse the guy that took a bullet meant for me? I’ll be her for visiting hours each day.”

Rich was released on Friday and he took Jess out to dinner. She asked to go to Travaglini’s out of consideration to his finances. Travaglini’s was noted for the excellence of their food and their reasonable prices. Tony no longer waited table, but it was still a family business owned and operated. The atmosphere was on the romantic side and over the course of the dinner, Jess came to the realization that the feeling that had been nudging her, poking at the fringes of her realization were everything that Mom and Dad had described to all of the kids. That spark of recognition that here was the one individual for her. She was in love for the first time in her life. She was wondering if he felt it too.

That dinner turned out to be only the first of many. The start of a relationship which began to occupy a majority of their free time .

A few months after they had started dating, he was taking a trip to Massachusetts to research some points for his thesis. He asked Jess to accompany him. “I’ve stayed in Plymouth before. I know this little B&B. I’ve already called and they have two rooms available.”

Jess said, “Sounds like fun. Sure I’ll go with you.”

That weekend he introduced her to the Plymouth Plantation and she really enjoyed interacting with the re-enactors.

At the end of the day he took her to the shore. There was a pavilion erected around a rock that had ‘1620’ carved into it. He said, “This is the famous Plymouth Rock.” He surprised her by kneeling and saying, “Here is another rock. It isn’t historic or even very large, but, it would mean a lot to me if you would wear it. Jessica Kent, will you marry me?”

Jess reached out and caressed his cheek before placing her hand before him so that he could slip the ring on her finger and said, “Yes, Rich, Yes I will.”

Coming out of her reverie she looked around. Celie was just walking away from Rich and Rob with her arm wound around Bill’s. She said, “Excuse me Pop. I want to join my husband.”

“You go ahead Jess. Enjoy the day.”

“I’m sure we will. Later, Pop.”

She walked over to where Rich and Rob were standing. She said to Rob, “Mind if I steal my husband away?”

Rob said, “No, go right ahead. I need to find Lucy anyhow.”

Rich asked, “How are my two most favorite women in the

world?”

Jess smiled and said, “Very happy. Happy to be with you. Happy to have a daughter. Just happy. I was just thinking about how things all worked out, with us, I mean. You know, I never really dated before you. Dad says it’s a Kryptonian thing. We really aren’t too interested in dating until we find our soul mate. When we do it’s love at first sight. You my dear husband were and always will be my first love. I really can’t say my only love, because,” she looked down and caressed Linda’s hair, “You have to share it with her.”

He smiled and said, “I can accept that. I can’t claim it was a Kryptonian thing, but, I never had any serious relationships before you. None of the girls I dated really interested me, before you. I guess you could say, you were my first love as well.”

With a smile and a laugh she said, “I’ll accept that. Let’s go lover. Let’s get something to eat. I need to feed myself so that I can feed her. Do me a favor. Make sure I don’t have any chocolate. Remember what happened last time? Whew, what a mess.”

Rich said, “Tell you what. I’ll pass on the chocolate as well so that you don’t have to feel bad watching me eat it.”

With an arched eyebrow she said, “I knew there was a reason I loved you. You’re so considerate. Let’s go eat.”

Arm in arm they walked off in the direction of the buffet.

Chapter Five 1H

Jimmy and Margaret

Shortly after Jessica, with baby Linda went off to join her husband, Rich, Jimmy arrived with his wife. He walked over and greeted Clark while Peg went to say hello to Lois.

As Jimmy was walking up to Clark he said, “Hey, Pop, What’cha got that’s good?”

Clark chuckled and said, “Oh, the usual. For a crowd this size you have to make a wide variety in order to please everyone.” He lifted the lid of the grill and enumerated the contents, “We have some steaks, chops, burgers, dogs, Grandma Kent’s famous recipe fried chicken and Grandpa Kent’s special recipe Bar-B-Que ribs.”

“Wow, Pop, you sure do put out a spread at these picnics.”

“I try to make sure everyone has what they prefer. How’s the business going?”

Smiling Jimmy said, “It’s going great guns. I’m going to be able to pay back your seed money in no time. I’m having to increase my staffing! Computer Forensics is the business to be in I can tell you.”

With a silly grin Clark said, “Don’t forget that that was at twenty percent interest compounded monthly.”

Jimmy replied, “Ha, ha, ha, very funny. All things considered I might be able to give you some interest on the loan.”

“No, I will not accept that. If you can pay us back the front money, that’s fine. If you weren’t able to that would be fine too. You know starting a business is a lot like starting a family. You have to make sure that you have the right partner and a clear path to follow.”

This statement caused Jimmy to think back, years back, to when he first started college.

Monday, September 8, 2031

It was a big day for Jimmy Kent. Today he was enrolling in MetU. Okay, so he was only going to be a freshman, but, so what, he was going to be starting college. Finally, he was going to be able to pursue his dream. He couldn’t wait to get past all of the grunt courses like, English Lit and World History and get to the good stuff, advanced Calculus and *programming*, YES, that was where it was at — Computer Science.

After being processed through registration he went to schedule his classes. The inevitable (Yuk) English Lit as well as

all of the other basic requirements all freshmen went through, but, he was able to sneak an elective, Basic Computer Science. That should be an easy A with his background. He had been playing with and then building his own computers for years now. Okay, admittedly, now a days it was a no brainer. You got a Mother Board from this store a CPU from the same or another store, memory and all of the other accessories. Slapped it together and started surfing the PubNet, but he was still looking forward to it.

Just so that he could get the full experience he moved into the dorm and met his new roommate, Stan. They hit it off right away. Stan was a Sophomore History major, but Jimmy didn't hold that against him. They found that they had similar tastes in music as well as some extracurricular activities.

One thing worried Jimmy; he had recently turned eighteen and was starting to float occasionally in his sleep. To combat this he had devised a plan. He had rigged up a strap that would be concealed under his sheets that he would attach to his wrist when he went to bed. This tether would not hold him down but he had built an ultrasonic tone generator that if he started to float the tether would pull on a switch and turn on the tone which his roommate wouldn't hear, but which would be loud and annoying and wake him up. He had tried it out at home and both of his parents and all of his siblings that were still at home complained when it woke them up as well.

After moving all of his 'stuff' into his room he went to the bookstore to get his textbooks, most of which were in digital format, but, copy protected so that they couldn't be 'acquired' on the 'black market'. As soon as he was back in his room, the first book he started looking at was his Basic Computer Science text. The others he would read to complete his assignments, but, this he would relish.

That evening he and Stan went to the cafeteria for dinner. After they got their trays they moved into the table area and Stan spotted his 'little sister'. Stan's 'little sister' was named Margaret Dennis and she wasn't really his little sister. This was a program where a sophomore was teamed up with a freshman so that they could show them the ropes. Jimmy looked around for his 'big brother', Mike, but he didn't see him so he sat with Stan and Margaret. They had a pleasant time chatting even though Jimmy's mind was really on that classes he would have the next day. Because of that he missed some significant points in the conversation. After dinner Jimmy and Stan went back to the dorm. They shared some music by transferring some between their players.

After a while they got ready for bed and Jimmy made sure to hook up his device. It was a good thing that he did because it woke him up three times in the night.

The next day was the first day of classes. He had three scheduled, English 101, World History 101 and Basic Computer Science 101. He struggled to stay awake in English but when he got to History he woke up. After he sat down and brought out his pad and started setting it up for class. He brought up the text and shared the screen with his word processor for notes. While he was doing this someone sat down right next to him, even though there were plenty of open seats. When he looked up to see just who it was, he recognized Margaret, Stan's 'little sister'.

He said, "Hi, you here for History?"

She replied, "Yeah, I was happy to see a familiar face in the crowd. Mind if I sit here?"

He replied, "Nah, no problem. It's nice to have someone I know in the class. Maybe we could study together. It would make the study time go quicker."

She flashed him a smile and said, "I'd like that. Your name's Jimmy, right?"

"Yeah, Jimmy Kent."

She started thinking and said, "Kent, Kent, uh, that name's

familiar." She snapped her fingers and asked, "Are you related to Clark Kent at the Daily Planet?"

With a surprised expression he asked, "Yeah, how'd you guess? How do you know about my dad?"

"Who doesn't read the Planet? If there's anyone out there that reads the Planet that don't recognize the Lane and Kent byline they would be really dumb."

Jimmy started laughing and said, "There ARE some people that don't know that Lois Lane is actually married to Clark Kent."

Shocked she asked, "Lois Lane is your mother?? Wow, what did you say your major is?"

Jimmy replied, "I'm a Computer Science major."

"With Lane and Kent as your parents why aren't you Journalism major?"

"That's their thing. Mine is computers. I love computers and even if I do say so myself, I can practically make them sit up and beg."

As he was speaking she was starting to smile. As he finished it was strongly reminiscent of Mona Lisa. She said, "Sounds interesting. If I have any problems can I come to you for help?"

He replied, "Sure, no prob."

Just then their conversation was cut off by the professor entering the room.

Jimmy noted how she handled her pad and the way she took notes and was impressed with how she handled her equipment.

When class finished as they were packing up he said, "Well, will I be seeing you at dinner? We could plan when we get together to study."

"Sure, I'll look for you and Stan."

"Okay, see you later." He walked out of the room after her. He had an hour to kill before Comp Sci so he went to the snack bar and got a soda.

He was anxious to start the next class and arrived ten minutes early and started setting up.

At three minutes till class was supposed to start an individual sat down next to him. He thought, <This is getting monotonous. There are plenty of open seats. Why does the seat next to me always have to be occupied?> He looked up and his jaw dropped open. It was Margaret again. He stuttered, "Wha, what are you doing here? Are you sure you're in the right room?"

With a deadpan expression she said, "If this is Basic Computer Science, then I'm in the right room."

"But, I thought you said you might need help with your computer."

"I was playing with you. You must not have been listening last night at dinner. I said I was a Computer Science major."

Jimmy blurted out, "But, but, you're a girl!"

She put on an offended tone, "Are you trying to say that girls can't be any good with computers?"

Realizing he had made a big mistake, Jimmy tried to back track. "Uh, no, of course not. Girls can be every bit as good with computers as guys." Then he mumbled under his breath, "I just haven't met any."

She must have excellent hearing because she heard him and retorted, "Oh you haven't huh? Well, I'll have you know I'm probably every bit as good with computers as you are, so there."

"Yeah, well, we'll just see about that. I bet you that my grade will be higher than yours for this class and any other class we have together."

She retorted, "You're on, buster. May the better person win."

That started a friendly rivalry that lasted through all four years. Sometimes Jimmy would top Margaret, or Peg, and sometimes it would be the other way around.

There was the time in their sophomore year that they had a

team project.

They were together in a programming class and had to write a fairly complicated script to perform a number of functions in an Artificial Intelligence environment to enable certain tasks to be performed by attached servo mechanisms.

They had each written section of the code and then brought it together.

Jimmy looked over the finished product and said, "It won't work, Peg."

She shot back, "What do you mean, it won't work. You think, maybe, you could do better? It'll work just fine. Let's run it and find out."

He grabbed her hand and stopped her just as she was about to hit commit. He said, "Let me put a line of code in, before you start it."

"What do you want to add?"

He scrolled through the code until he found the spot he was after and then inserted his code.

She was watching over his shoulder and asked, "Why did you put that in there? That's a *kill* command!"

"Yeah, run it and you'll see why I put that in there."

"I'm not sure I like someone editing my code."

"Trust me, you'll be thanking me. Go ahead and run it."

She had a distrustful look on her face as she hit 'run'.

The routine started and began as expected until it hit the routine she had written. When it got there it started going through the motions over and over again.

She looked on in exasperation and started hitting the keyboard shouting, "Stop it. Stop it! *Stop it!*"

Jimmy grabbed her hands to keep her from demolishing the keyboard and said, "Just wait."

When it had gone through one hundred iterations it suddenly shut down.

When it did he said, "I saw that you had set up an endless loop. That line I put in made it stop after looping one hundred times."

Crestfallen she said, "I guess you win. If you hadn't seen that I would have failed the project."

He chuckled her under the chin and said, "Hey, what are friends for? Besides, we're in this together. It's *our* project, not just yours or mine. Come on partner, let's go over this code and see where it needs to be changed."

An hour later they were finished and Jimmy said, "I don't know about you, but I'm hungry. Let's go get something to eat. My treat."

She looked at her watch and said, "It's kinda late. Where could we go at this hour?"

He had a sly smile on his face as he said, "I know a little place that might just be able to feed us."

He sent a thought, /Mom?/

/Hi Jimmy. What's up?/

/Mom, I'd like to bring someone over. We just finished working on a project and we need something to eat./

With a mental chuckle, Lois replied, /Oh, what's her name?/

/Oh, Mom! Oh, all right, her name is Peggy, uh, Margaret.

Can we come over, I'd like you to meet her./

/Come on ahead Sweetie. Dad and I were just finishing up on a snack. I'm sure we can find enough to feed both of you./

/Thanks Mom. We'll be there shortly./

As this communication had been happening they had been cleaning up. When they got outside, Jimmy led the way to his car.

When they drove up in front of the Wisteria Lane house Peggy let out a whistle and asked, "Who lives here?"

Jimmy replied matter of factly, "I do. Come on, I want you to meet 'The Hottest Team in Town'."

Shocked she blurted out, "Lane and Kent! I don't know. Look at me! I'm not really dressed to be meeting them." She was

wearing jeans and a sweater.

He reassured her, "Don't worry. They've seen me and my brothers and sisters in worse. Don't sweat it."

With some trepidation she followed him to the door.

Even before he would have reached for the knob the door swung open. Standing there in the doorway stood a smiling Lois. She said, "Welcome to our humble abode. Jimmy, why don't you introduce us?"

"Uh, Mom, this is Margaret Dennis. Margaret, Lois Lane, my Mom."

Just then Clark came up behind Lois and said, "Don't stand out there on the stoop, come on in."

As Peg entered, Lois reached out and took her hand and shook it.

Peg stammered, "Wow, this, uh, this is quite an honor. Lois Lane and Clark Kent *the* star reporting team at the Daily Planet. I don't know what to say."

"You don't need to say anything. We're happy to meet you, finally. Jimmy has told us a lot about you. We're just sorry he didn't bring you around sooner. Whenever he is home all he talks about is his classes and you. Not necessarily in that order."

She looked over at Jimmy and asked, "Really?"

He looked down and flushed with embarrassment as he said, "I guess I do talk about you and us a lot."

Lois said, "You kids must be hungry. Come on in to the kitchen and Clark will get you something to eat." Lois put an arm around Peg pulling her aside and said, "I've never been much of a cook. Clark takes care of most of those chores. I'm sure you'll like whatever he prepares."

Lois and Clark's easygoing manner soon put Peg at ease and they began trading anecdotes about Jimmy, some of which caused Jimmy to blush in embarrassment.

A good time was had by all.

Before Jimmy and Peg left, Lois had elicited a promise that Peg would be a regular visitor.

The rest of the four years they were inseparable.

Over the course of the four years there were many, many study sessions either in the snack bar, or the common room or one or the other's dorms. Eventually they wound up in the same dorm, just down the hall from one another. Many nights one or the other could be found in the other's room studying. Sometimes, they weren't studying. They were sharing music and sometimes playing either against each other as opponents in First Person Shooter games but more often as teammates taking on all comers. As a team they were almost unbeatable.

Possibly because of the rivalry they were both on the Dean's list throughout their four years.

They were nearing graduation and Jimmy had been acting somewhat strangely.

One evening they were having dinner together and Jimmy said, "We'll be out of here pretty soon. What are your plans?"

"Like I've said, I want to get a position with an IT firm. You've been talking about starting your own business. Maybe you'd hire me?"

Jimmy started to pick up his tray and said, "Let's get outta here."

She gave him a quizzical look, and shrugging, started clearing up. She joined him as they deposited their trays in the receptacle and then he took her hand as he led her out and onto the quad.

In the center of the quad there was a fountain with a statue of the school's mascot over it. Jimmy led Peg over to the fountain and indicated that she should sit. He sat down next to her. After a few minutes of sitting there looking at his folded hands he finally spoke up. "Peg, we've been together now for four years. I don't know about you, but, I feel that we've gotten pretty close, if fact,

I can't image getting this close to anyone else. Now, we're going to be graduating and going our separate ways."

"Jimmy, I said I'd be happy to work for you."

Jimmy blurted out, "You don't understand, Peg, that's not what I want. I don't want you to work *for* me. I want you to be my partner."

"Wow, Jimmy, I'm honored. Your partner. What do you want to name the company, Jim & Peg Computing?"

He let out a choked laugh. He said, "Peg, you don't understand. I want you for my *partner*. But, not in my business."

She replied, "This should be a fairly simple algorithm to solve, but, I'm having a problem. If partner equals yes then work together also equals yes. If partner equals no then we don't work together and we go our separate ways. I say partners yes, so we work together. Simple enough."

Jimmy said, "Okay, let's add another line of code. If partners equals yes then work together yes, else work together equals no."

She was puzzled, "Wait a minute, that doesn't compute. Where did that else statement come from? How could we not work together if we're partners?"

Jim slipped off of the side of the fountain and knelt before he continued, "It all depends on how you define partners. Peg, I want you to be my partner, but, not necessarily in a business. Peg I want you to marry me. Will you?"

With a serious expression, Peg said, "Now, that is a simple enough algorithm. Given: that you, Peg, want to stay with him, Jimmy, then if he asks you to marry him answer equals yes. Yes, Jimmy, I'll marry you. I've wanted you to ask that question for a while."

"Let's take a walk. I want to take you to a jeweler to get a ring. Then we need to have a long talk. There are some things you need to know. I just hope that you won't change your mind about me afterwards."

"There's nothing you could tell me that would change my mind, Jimmy Kent. Once I have that ring on, nothing and nobody is going to make me remove it."

"I just hope you mean that."

James Perry Kent and Margaret Ann Dennis were married on Saturday September 8, 2035, almost four years to the day from when they first met.

Just as Jimmy was coming out of his reverie Peg walked up and put an arm around his waist. He put one around her and pulled her in close.

Just then, Lois came out of the house carrying a cake and everyone shouted, "Surprise!"

The cake read, "Happy Anniversary Jim and Peg, 4 Whole Years"

There were some shouts of, "Speech, speech!"

Laughing, Jimmy said, "Thanks, everyone. This is a surprise! Our anniversary isn't until Thursday!" Looking at Peg, he said, "We couldn't be happier. You all know how it is when you find your first love."

Peg added, "First and *only* love."

Jimmy agreed, "Yeah, first and only. It's special. I guess I'm preaching to the choir on that one though."

Jessie said, "Just wait," she started caressing Linda's head as she continued, "There will come a day when it won't be *only* anymore. You're going to have to learn to share."

Jimmy and Peg both blushed and Jimmy said, "Funny you should mention that Jess, Peg needs and appointment."

As if there hadn't been enough excitement already, pandemonium broke out and all the girls mobbed Peg and took her away.

Chapter Six II

Lucy and Robert

Shortly after Jimmy obliquely made the announcement of Peggy's expectant status Lucy broke away from the crowd and brought a slice of the anniversary cake over to Clark. She said, "Here ya go Pop. I didn't want you to miss out on the cake. I figured if you didn't get it before the munchkins raided you wouldn't get any."

"Thanks, Luce, I appreciate it." He dug a fork in and looking at it he started laughing as he asked, "Who ordered this cake? If I were to guess, I'd say it was your mom. A chocolate cake with chocolate fudge frosting and if I'm not mistaken, white chocolate for the writing."

Lucy started to laugh, "No, Pop. Don't blame Mom; we all had a hand in it. Jess objected, but she was overruled. We got a small white cake with white, non-chocolate frosting for her, just so she wouldn't feel left out."

He started to laugh and said, "Okay, I won't get on her case then. How are things going with you? How's the practice going?"

"Oh, well, you know how it is, ups and downs." As she continued to speak she started to smile and become quite animated, "It's really a high when a child is brought in at the request of a school's Guidance Counselor for testing because the child is overachieving. When we do the testing and get the results we have to go over them with the parents. If the child is just showing average intelligence it usually indicates that the child is just extremely diligent in their studies. If they show up as above average intelligence we can work with the parents to map out a course of study which will capitalize on the child's strengths. It keeps the child interested and not frustrated."

The cast of Lucy's visage changed as she continued, "On the other hand, when a child is brought to us because there is a perceived problem, those are the sad cases. The hardest thing to do is to tell a parent that their child has a special need. Frequently the parents strongly suspect that there is a problem, developmental or emotional and will bring the child in for evaluation. We will interview the parents to get a history and then we will go through the standard battery of tests. Sometimes the answer will come out through the interview. Sometimes there was head trauma, perceived as more or less harmless at the time, but, which has a lasting impact. Occasionally, fortunately very rarely in this day and age, a sibling will have a communicable disease while the mother is pregnant and this causes retardation. Occasionally it is a psychological problem such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and other times it could have a physical component."

"Most parents strongly suspect that there is a problem. Some are in denial but, others are expecting to hear that there is a real problem. Hearing it confirmed by an expert is still a shock either way. As many different families as there are the responses fall into just a couple of general categories. Some handle it well and make the hard choice of handling it within the family. Occasionally, all too often I'm afraid, they don't handle it well and opt for placement."

"I especially hate having to tell them that their child meets the educational classification of autism. I try to provide them what hope and encouragement I can, but they always look like I just told them their child had died. To them, it must feel like I had. I hate having to shatter their worlds like that, but if there is to be any real hope for helping the child, the false hopes of having typical childhood development has to be removed first. I really hate being the bearer of such bad news. On the bright side, there have been some breakthroughs in treatment though. We refer some clients for nutritional counseling. Occasionally specialized diets can help."

"It really makes you stop and think. If it wasn't for our Kryptonian physiology which keeps us from needing to

immunize our children we might have that problem to worry about. I think we need to count our blessings; most of them are over in the play area, that no one in the family has had any problems. All of the kids appear to be normal, whatever you might define normal to be for our super-normal family.”

Clark, with a serious expression said, “You know, there were times when we were worried about you.”

“Aw, come on Pop. You weren’t really worried about me, were you?”

With a sly expression he replied, “Let me count the times.”

This sent Lucy on a mental journey, back in time.

June 2018

The petite, brunette, eight year old Lucy was dressed in her summer uniform of shorts, a white top (for some unaccountable reason, she had a penchant for wearing white and usually managed to keep her top, at least mostly, clean) and sneakers as she hopped on her bike on a bright early summer day. Grandpa and Grandpa Kent had come to Metropolis to visit with them for a few weeks so Jon wasn’t the one in charge. He was going to be starting college in the fall and he was taking a couple of summer classes to get a head start. He wanted to take an extra load so that he could finish in three years instead of four.

This morning Lucy was peddling down the street looking for her favorite crony, Rob. Robert Jackson was a boy her age that lived three houses down. When she peddled up in front of his house he was just coming out the door. She shouted, “Hey Rob, what to go for a ride?”

He ran down the steps, jumped on his bike and rode down the walk to join her. “Where to?”

“Oh, I don’t know. Around.”

“Okay.”

They both started to peddle away. They went down the street which was in a quiet residential area when Lucy had an idea. She shouted, “Catch me if you can!” She took off, peddling for all she was worth and got a head start on him.

He chased her for almost ten minutes and they were both tiring when they came to a slight hill right where the road turned off. Lucy went straight ahead and hit a trail that went straight downhill. She shouted, “Wheeeeeeeee!” as she started down the slope. She was bumping and sliding side to side slightly as she picked up speed. She suddenly realized that she was going faster than she wanted and pushed down on the peddle to apply her brake. Her bike continued to pick up speed, the rear wheel simply sliding on the dirt of the trail. She shouted, “HELP!!”

Rob had stopped at the top. He jumped off his bike and started running down the hill as fast as he could. As he was running he was watching and saw that she managed to stay upright as she reached the bottom of the slope. He started to breathe a sigh of relief when he saw that she wasn’t out of danger quite yet. At the bottom of the hill the road that they had been on came back around. Lucy hit the walk at the side of the road and her brake caught, but just enough to slow her down a little before she was into the road shooting across, just missing the back bumper of a car that crossed in front of her. Lucy finally managed to stop and a minute later Rob came running up.

“Lucy! Are you okay?”

“Wow! What a ride!”

With fear in his voice Rob said, “Lucy, you almost hit that car!”

Smugly she replied, “Yeah, well, almost don’t count.”

Just then Ultra Woman landed next to Lucy. She said, “Well, young lady, just what do you think you are doing?”

Lucy was startled speechless. That tone and phrasing reminded her so much of her mom she simply couldn’t believe it.

Ultra Woman startled her out of her stupor when she said, “Well? I asked you a question.”

Lucy found her tongue and said, “Well, you see, uh, we were out riding and I saw this trail down the hill and well, I got going too fast and ...”

Ultra Woman cut her off, “I think you need to be a little more, no, make that a lot more careful. That car could have hit you, then where would you be?”

“In the hospital?”

“If you didn’t wind up dead. Which you might just be if your father finds out about this.”

“You won’t tell him, will you Ultra Woman? Please?”

Ultra Woman said, “No promises. Be more careful.” Ultra Woman lifted off and disappeared into the sky.

After she flew off Rob said, “Well, I sure don’t want to ride down that hill.”

Lucy taunted him, “What? Are you afraid?”

Rob replied, “Weren’t you listening to what Ultra Woman said? Sure I’m afraid to go down that hill and you ought to be too. Come on, I think I want to go home now.”

Lucy was conciliatory, “Aw, I’m sorry Rob. Let’s not go home yet. Tell you what, let’s ride to the park and swing for a while.”

“Well, okay. Let’s go swing. Maybe we could climb on the monkey bars too.”

August 2022

Twelve year old Lucy had on her bathing suit and over it she had on a white cover up and a pair of white shorts. She was in the car with her twin siblings, Sean and Celeste. They had just left the house headed out for a day of water fun at a water park. They stopped and picked up Rob. He came out wearing cut offs and a T-shirt. Once he was aboard they headed out.

When they arrived at the water park Sean told Lucy and Rob that they would meet back at the car at noon to eat their picnic lunch before going back into the park. Lucy left her cover up in the car but she left the shorts on as she and Rob headed off, together.

Rob spotted the water slides and said, “Let’s hit the slides!”

Lucy looked around and said, “I want to hit the pool. I want to go off the high dive. When you’re up there in the air it feels like you’re flying.”

“Awwww, come on, Lucy. They don’t want kids our age on the high dive. They’re afraid we’ll get hurt!”

“Come on, Rob! What’re you afraid of?”

“Lu – cy, they *don’t* want us *up* there!”

“Well, *I’m* not afraid.” Suiting her actions to her words she headed for the ladder to the high platform and started climbing. When she reached the top she looked down. It was really higher than she had realized and she knew that she had made a mistake, but, she couldn’t back down now.

She moved to the edge of the platform and tried to make it look like she knew what she was doing and that she wasn’t the least bit afraid.

Rob watched in fear as she approached the edge of the platform. When she took off, at first it looked like a perfect swan dive, but, when she didn’t heel over and go into a standard dive he started to feel fear.

As she was falling she realized that she wasn’t going to be able to change her orientation the way she was supposed to and started to feel some fear. She could see the surface of the water rushing up at her. She started to curl into a ball but was unable to complete the movement before impact.

She was a little less than flat when she hit the water. It felt like she had been kicked by a mule. All of the wind was knocked out of her and she lost consciousness.

The next thing she knew she was at the side of the pool and Rob was dragging her out of the water. He had been ready and had jumped in as soon as she had hit and had pulled her to the

surface.

A second later Dan-El landed next to them. He had a concerned look as he asked Rob, “What happened?”

Rob was too intimidated by the superhero to do anything but tell the truth, “She climbed up to the high platform. I told her we weren’t supposed to but she wanted to feel like she was flying. She hit the water in almost a belly flop. I saw what was happening and I dove in and pulled her out. Is she going to be okay?”

Dan-El said, “I think she’ll be okay. You got to her in time. She’s lucky to have a friend like you around. Think you can keep her out of any more trouble?”

Rob replied, “I’ll try. I don’t usually have much luck along that line though. She has a mind of her own.”

Dan-El then made a comment that surprised Rob, “Don’t I know it.”

Rob couldn’t count the number of times he and Lucy had been doing something and she had gone off and gotten herself into trouble and one of the super heroes had come to her rescue. It was almost like she had her own crew of guardian angels. He didn’t know anyone else who had been rescued more times than Lucy. He just shook his head and knelt by her side and said, “You heard him. You have to stay out of trouble.” He helped her to stand and said, “Let’s go over to the water slide.”

Since her body was still stinging from that dive she was more than a little bit subdued as she said, “Okay. I’ll be good.”

Rob laughed and said, “Don’t make any promises that you can’t keep.”

She smiled and said, “Oh, I mean it. I’ll be good, at least for the rest of the day. Let’s go have some fun.”

Hand in hand they headed for the water slide. They met Sean and Celeste at the car at noon for lunch. Sean asked, “How has your day been going?”

Lucy replied, “Okay, how about you?”

Celeste asked, “Are you sure there haven’t been any problems?”

Lucy had her hand behind her back with her fingers crossed as she replied, “No, no problems, at least none to mention. Right Rob?”

Now Rob was caught in a quandary. Does he support Lucy in this lie to her sister or rat on her? Before he came to a decision he was saved from it by Sean who said, “We didn’t ask Rob, so don’t put him in the position of having to lie for you.”

With her head down and scuffing her toe in the dirt she said in a subdued tone, “Okay, well, you see, I wanted to dive off the high platform.”

Sean prompted, “And?”

“Well, I couldn’t dive as well as I thought I could.” She brightened and got animated, “You should have seen it. I started off just fine. A perfect Swan Dive,” her countenance fell as she finished, “but then I couldn’t figure out how to change position into a dive. It was almost a perfect belly flop. My stomach still stings.”

Rob finally added, “I had to pull her out and then Dan-El showed up. It always seems like one of the supermen or women show up whenever she needs rescuing. It’s like she has this group of guardian angels watching over her.”

Celeste said, “One of these days she’s going to get herself into something and they won’t be around to rescue her. Then she’ll be sorry.”

August 2028

Eighteen year old Lucy would be starting college next month. She was planning to live in the dorm and had Jimmy fix her up with an ultrasonic device like what he was using so successfully to keep her from floating in her sleep and giving herself away.

She was disappointed, Rob, her long time buddy and best

friend wasn’t going to MetU. His grades had been so good he had gotten an Ivy League scholarship and was going to Yale. He was going to be a Bio-Chemist. She had realized some time ago that he was the one and when he decided to go to Yale it almost tore her heart out because there was no way she could go with him. She would have to content herself with seeing him on semester breaks and summers.

June 2036

Lucy was having a hard time containing herself. She had just moved out of the dorm and back home. She had just defended her thesis, successfully and won her PhD and could now call herself a Child Psychologist. It would take time to build a practice but, that wasn’t why she was excited.

Rob was coming home too. He had called her a couple of days ago, the day he had presented his research and won his PhD in Bio-Chemistry. His research had been on the effects of unusual radiation frequencies on tissues. Lucy didn’t know why he had chosen that as his topic, but, he had worked diligently in his research, sometimes to the exclusion of their weekly call.

It was five PM and a call came in. Clark answered the phone and after a short conversation he hung up. A few seconds later Lucy heard a general call, /Hi kids. I need to call a family council this evening. 7:30 for all that can make it./

A chorus of affirmative replies came in.

At 7:30 the family gathered in the living room. Clark said, “Thanks for coming. In a minute we will be joined by someone that needs to tell us something.”

As if on cue there was a knock on the door and Clark answered it.

When Rob stepped into the room everyone but Lucy was surprised. Lucy had heard his heartbeat and knew who was here before the door was opened.

Clark said, “Introductions shouldn’t be necessary, you all know Rob. What do you have for us Rob?”

He pulled out a memory chip and said, “Jon, here are all of the notes on my research project. The samples I worked with are in a sealed container and secured. The Kryptonite I was working with is in a lead enclosure. I’m sorry that my results weren’t more encouraging.”

Lucy was looking at him aghast. <What is he saying? What’s this all about? Does he know our secret?>

Just then he turned to Lucy and asked, “Lucy, can I see you, outside?”

She was stunned by all of this and simply nodded. He reached for her hand and led her outside.

Once outside she rounded on him and asked, “What’s this all about? Why were you working with Kryptonite? What tissue samples?”

Very calmly he said, “One thing at a time. The reason I accepted the scholarship to Yale, even though it was going to take me away from you was the opportunity it presented for using a premier research facility. Six years ago I had a talk with your dad and we came up with this plan. I knew it would be rough, that I would miss you terribly, but, if my research could in some way provide a cure or a way to immunize you against Kryptonite radiation, I was willing to make the sacrifice.”

She blurted out, “You knew??? How?”

“Even as a kid I knew that there was something special about you. Why would the supermen and superwomen have such an interest in one little kid that they were always on hand? Later, it all came together. When I graduated from MHS I went to your dad and had a talk with him. I told him what I had figured out and what I wanted to do. That’s when we came up with the plan. The final part of that plan happens now.”

She was still reeling. He knew! She was startled when suddenly he took her hand and asked, “Lucy Ellen Kent, will you marry me?”

Her mind had been reeling and this didn’t help any. She asked, “Wha, what did you say?”

“Six years ago, when I went to your dad, I asked him if I could marry you. We decided it would be best to wait until the research was done. It’s done now, so there are no more barriers. I asked if you would marry me.”

“This is kinda sudden. Why should I marry you?”

“Oh, I don’t know. Maybe because I’m crazy about you and have been like forever and because for the last six years I have done what I could to see to it that some green rock wouldn’t kill the woman I love.”

“Why did you have to keep it a secret?”

“Because I was working with Kryptonite. I couldn’t take the chance of you having an accidental exposure. I’d never forgive myself if something had happened to you.”

“When did you know you wanted to marry me?”

“I don’t know exactly, sometime between when we met and five minutes later. Even as kids I knew you were the one for me. You were my first love.”

“I’ve got a news flash for you. I was never interested in anybody else. Dad says it’s a Kryptonian thing. When we find our soul mate we are bonded permanently. What was that you asked me again?”

“I’ll repeat it as many times as I need to in order to get the answer I want. Lucy, will you marry me.”

“Well Rob, since you and Dad are ganging up on me, what can I say, but, yes. Yes, Rob, I’ll marry you. At least you know what you’re getting into. You already know the family secret.”

Rob reached into his pocket as he said, “I’ve worked a couple of jobs, teaching assistant and adjunct professor so that I could earn enough for this.” He pulled his hand out of his pocket with a ring box in his hand.

She held out her hand so that he could slip the ring on. Then she was in his arms and they were kissing.

They were interrupted by a cheer that went up in the living room. The family had been watching and listening in.

Lucy blushed with embarrassment. She said, “I’ve never gotten used to that.”

He was chuckling as he said, “I guess we might as well have had this conversation in the middle of the living room.”

Lucy came back to the present and looked around. Rob was approaching.

Rob said, “Hi Pop. Can I take Lucy away? I want us to go eat.”

“Sure, go get something good. I strongly recommend the ribs and the chicken. They’re both from old family recopies. Go enjoy yourselves. I’ll see you later.”

They turned away and Rob led her over to the serving table.

Chapter Seven 1J

Sam and Alice

It seemed like the kids were all taking turns spending a few minutes with Clark, one on one as the party progressed.

There only remained a couple and one of them was approaching even as he was thinking about this. Sam, the youngest of the first generation walked up and said, “Hi, Pop. How’s the cooking going?”

“I’m glad that Grandma Kent taught me to cook. I’m also glad that I spent some time with Great Uncle Mike. He taught me some things about cooking for large groups. He really learned to cook in the Army and he passed on some of those techniques to me as the family grew.” Clark looked around and chuckled as he continued, “I’d say that we have the equivalent of a tank

company here today. How are things at the Foundation?”

“Well, you know, when Murray retired a few years ago it left us in a little bit of disarray. It was okay when I stepped in as business manager, but, you really needed a promoter. That was what Murray really excelled at. Now that we have Stu on board, that aspect should be covered. Actually, things are running so well, I might finally be able to take a vacation.”

This sent Sam back several months in memory.

January 2089

Sam was in his office as director of the Superman Foundation. The office was on the top floor of what had previously been LexTower, but, was now simply called The Foundation. The open balcony was very convenient for the comings and goings of the super family when they had reason to visit the offices.

Since only the top ten floors were used for the foundation the rest of the building had been rented out. Ever since The Foundation had been purchased from the ‘estate’ of Lex Luthor the clients in the rented office space in the building had seen a reduction in their rentals. Rents had been reduced so that expenses were covered with a smaller profit margin to the delight of the occupants. As a result, unoccupied office space was virtually non-existent and there was a waiting list for companies seeking space in the building.

Thanks to Sam’s business acumen, after extensive remodeling and the addition of extra entrances and exits the sub-basement — which had been Luthor’s bunker — had been turned into an underground shopping mall. Consequently it had become something of a tourist attraction. There was a food court that held a variety of ethnic cuisines which Sam made sure were all different. Upscale shops vied with one another to get space.

Running the Superman Foundation was a full time job and a half and Sam found himself putting in long, sometimes, very long hours. His family started to worry about him. Keeping your nose to the grindstone was one thing, grinding it completely off was another thing entirely. Fortunately, one of the perks of being the Director was the use of the attached private apartment.

Sam was the eighth child of Lois and Clark and he was not married so, occasionally, one of his siblings would set him up with a blind date. In order to placate them he would take an evening off and go out with the girl. He had to admit, usually he had a good time, but, there just wasn’t that zing. He had seen it happen, over and over with his siblings. He was beginning to feel that the state of marital bliss just wasn’t for him and he had just about resigned himself to bachelorhood.

One day he had a call from Lara. “Hey Bro, what’s happening?”

“Not much Sis. Just the usual. I move this piece of paper from one side of my desk to the other and then move it back again. Repeat as needed to look busy.” He couldn’t help chuckling at his own joke.

He could hear Lara laughing as she replied, “Well, far be it for me to interrupt such important work, but, I need to ask you to do me a favor.”

Wary, Sam replied, “Oh, and just what would that be? Not another blind date I hope.”

Defensively Lara said, “No, I’ve given up on that. No more matchmaking for me, so, not this time. Here’s the situation, I have an out of town visitor and I’d like you, since you’re the only unattached member of the family, to act as a tour guide for a couple of days. She’ll be arriving in Metropolis 3:30 this afternoon on the flight from LA to Metropolis. Her name is Alice. She has shoulder length auburn hair and is wearing a beige business suit. What I need you to do is simply show her the sights. If you feel like taking her to dinner, so much the better, but it isn’t required. She just wants to see the sights.”

“Okay, Sis. As long as it is with the understanding that there are no expectations. You said 3:30?”

“Right, 3:30 on the flight from LA.”

“Okay, I’ll pick her up and show her around.”

“Thanks, Bro! You’re a life saver. Oh, one more thing, I’ve Okayed any monetary expenditure to be covered by The Foundation.”

“Sis, how does this tie in to The Foundation?”

“I’ll explain later. I have a meeting to get to. We’ll talk later. Bye.”

“Okay, bye Sis.” He hung up the phone and had a pensive expression as he mulled over this conversation. The obvious conclusion was that his sister was setting him up again.

At 3:30 Sam was at gate 5 which the monitors had indicated would be where the flight from LA would deplane. Sam didn’t know just what to expect. This probably had something to do with the firm that Lara worked for in LA, perhaps a client. As the passengers started to deplane, among the first off, indicating a business class seat, a stunningly beautiful woman with shoulder length auburn hair came through the door. She was beautiful, in an exotic sort of way. Her skin was not pinky pink but had a slightly darker cast and her eyes had a very slight slant. Sam couldn’t believe his eyes. There was an immediate attraction. He was going to have to call Lara and thank her for this one.

She walked right up to him and in a voice that was somewhat throaty and sultry and held a slight, but, interesting accent, asked, “Are you Samuel Kent?” It almost sounded like Zamuel when she pronounced it.

He was entranced. She was an absolute vision of loveliness. As he stared he stammered, “Yeah, Zamuel,” he realized that unconsciously he had imitated her pronunciation of his name and quickly corrected himself, “Uh, that is Samuel, Samuel Kent. You must be Alice. Alice what?”

She giggled at his apparent bemusement and said, “Alice, just Alice.” When she pronounced her name it sounded almost like Al’-i-Sea

Surprised by this cloak of mystery, not wanting to reveal her last name he thought, <I really need to call Lara,> before he said, “Okay, Alice, are there any particular sights you are interested in seeing?”

“Your sister has told me a lot about The Foundation Mall. Can we go shopping?”

“We can do more than shop there. Would you like something to eat as well?”

“That will not be necessary; we had a meal on the air-o-plane. It was an interesting flight. Not like what I had expected. The accommodations were somewhat ... cramped.”

Sam was surprised by this statement. From the order in which she had exited the plane he knew that she had flown business class. Those were the most roomy accommodations on any aircraft. He thought, <She must do most of her travel by ocean liner. She would have a large cabin to sleep in and plenty of deck to walk around on.> He asked, “Did you bring any luggage?”

Her reply surprised him, “Luggage, what is this ... luggage?”

Sam was becoming increasingly convinced that English was not her first language. He thought that he needed to try to get his questions across in a form that she might understand. “Do you have any extra clothing that you placed into boxes to bring with you?”

“Ah, extra clothing. No, I did not bring extra clothing with me.”

Sam thought, <Ah, that’s why she wants to go shopping. She must have lost her luggage and Lara made the arrangements for The Foundation to pick up the tab as a good will gesture. Well, The Foundation can afford to buy some clothes, no problem.>

Sam took her out to his car. He was proud of his car. It was a

classic. It was a 2010 Jeep Grand Cherokee which he had restored to almost factory mint condition.

As they walked up to it she stopped and looked at it. She asked, “This is your conveyance?”

Sam was a little taken aback. He replied, “Well, yeah. I know it isn’t exactly new, but, it is in perfect condition. I did convert it over to a fuel cell, but, other than that it is factory mint.”

He heard her mutter, “Primitive.”

He couldn’t let on the fact that he had super hearing so he pretended not to hear the comment, even though it stung. He was very proud of his car.

He opened the door and she got in. As she got in the car, her skirt hiked up and Sam got a good view of a pair of very shapely legs. He showed her how to fasten her seat belt.

She asked, “Why is this physical restraint necessary?”

He looked her in astonishment and asked, “You mean, the seat belt? It’s to help keep you safe in the event of an accident.”

With a deadpan expression she asked, “Would it not be better to avoid accidents?”

He barked out a startled laugh and said, “That’s why they call them accidents! Sometimes they are unavoidable.”

She said, “Curious.”

Sam moved around and got into the driver’s seat and started the car. He pulled out of the lot and headed downtown. He parked in the parking building adjacent to The Foundation and led the way to The Foundation Mall.

They started off in a shop specializing in casual clothes. She selected a couple of sporty outfits. A pair of regular jeans and some shorts that were so short they made ‘Daisy Dukes’ look long. These she paired with several tops some of which would allow a bare midriff. She found some foundation garments and sleepwear. Some of the sport outfits she tried on for size and asked if Sam would give his opinion on them. When she modeled the shorts with the short top Sam started sweating. He had seen just how shapely her legs were when she got into his car, now, seeing the entire package, whew! He could feel his pulse racing and he could hear that hers was slightly elevated as well.

Next they went to a more formal shop and she selected a couple of business outfits. One suit had a skirt and the other had slacks, both had jackets. She picked out some silk blouses and shoes to go along with them.

Next they went to a formal shop. She found a gown and modeled it for him. It was an off the shoulder gown that was fitted on the top and then loose and flowing below, almost like a flowing robe.

Sam had all of these purchases packaged and sent to the Foundation office.

Sam invited Alice to join him for a bite to eat in the food court.

While they had Chinese he asked, “How long will you be in town?”

“That is as yet to be determined. It will depend upon availability of transport.”

“Where will you be staying?”

“Your sister has arranged for me to stay with your parents.”

This surprised Sam. His parents were going to have to be careful with a stranger in the house. He said, “When we finish up here, we’ll go pick up your purchases and I’ll take you to the house.”

“That would be acceptable.”

“I would like to take you out to dinner tonight.”

“Perhaps another night. I would like to spend the time with your parents this evening.”

March 2089

Sam had started seeing Alice on a regular basis. This pleased Lois and Clark because this was the most they had seen him since

he took over as Director of The Superman Foundation. They had been dating for months now and she was still pretty much a mystery to Sam, which made her all the more enticing.

One Saturday Sam and Alice were downtown doing some window shopping. As they were strolling along suddenly they heard shots being fired and racing engines.

Sam looked around and spotted an alleyway. He said, "Wait here, I'm going to go for help." He started to run off. Suddenly, just as the car was passing them, the rear side tires, one after the other, exploded. Sam stopped and turned back to see what was happening. He started looking around for another family member, but, he couldn't find anyone. The car skidded to a halt and the perps jumped out brandishing weapons. The police cruiser pulled up and the cop jumped out and took up a position behind his door with his gun held in both hands. He shouted, "Police, you're under arrest! Drop your weapons!"

The perps both brought their guns around and started to bear on the cop. Before either one had a chance to squeeze off a round the metal of the weapon in the hand of one of them became too hot for him to hold. The high density polymers of the Glock in the hands of the other started to melt and flow seizing up the mechanism. The perp dropped it and both of them put up their hands.

Sam sent a mental call, /Who did that?/

He received back a thought, /Tee, hee, hee, I did./

Sam didn't recognize the source and sent, /Who is that?/

/Me./

/Who is me?/

/Me./

Sam was mystified. This sounded like a kid, but kids didn't have powers.

Alice reached out and took Sam's hand and said, "There, you see, you don't have to leave me now."

They continued their day and Sam was in a quandary as to what had happened, but, he was starting to have some suspicions.

June 2089

Sam had invited Alice to go to the beach with him. He had picked her up and they had driven to the shore. When they got there they made quite a stir. When Alice removed her cover-up she revealed a body that was every bit the equal of his sisters and sisters-in-law. She was gorgeous. His Kryptonian physiology gave him a physique which was like that of an extreme athlete. They made quite a pair. Sam had chosen red as the primary color of his uniform with blue trunks and trim. He couldn't help thinking that his uniform looked a lot like the later uniform that Mr. Incredible wore. Alice was wearing a bikini with a red top which was the exact shade of his uniform and blue bottoms that matched the color of his trunks.

They spent some time just lying on their towels soaking up the sun and talking.

Suddenly, Sam heard a call for help. A swimmer had gotten caught in an undertow and was being swept out to sea. He jumped up and said, "Let's go for a swim."

Hand in hand they headed for the surf. When they were in waist deep he released her hand and dove. His plan was to remain underwater as he rescued the swimmer.

Once underwater he started flying. When he neared the area he detected two swimmers. It appeared as though the swimmer he had heard was a father who had been trying to rescue his daughter. Sam thought he could rescue both, but, he didn't know just how he could make it look realistic. He came to the surface near the man and started swimming to him. The man shouted, "Don't worry about me, get my daughter!" Sam looked in that direction and suddenly an auburn haired head popped to the surface next to the child. Alice grabbed the girl and looked back at Sam.

Sam was dumbfounded, how had she done that? It would have taken powers like his!

Suddenly he received a thought, /Let us take them to shore. I believe that you have some questions you wish to ask./

They stopped at a fast food franchise and picked up something to eat and went out to the car. Once in the car Sam asked, "How is it that you have powers?"

"I was born this way, although I didn't have the powers until I arrived."

"Until you arrived! Arrived from where?"

"New Krypton. You had asked about my name. On New Krypton, genealogy is important to us. Our name expresses our lineage as does yours. I am Ali of family Ce." She pronounced it sea.

Astounded, Sam asked, "Why are you here?"

"On New Krypton I am the unmarried granddaughter of a member of the council of Elders. It was felt that a trip to Earth to learn the customs and to spend some time with Lord Kal-El and Lady Lois would be beneficial."

"Why did you keep your powers a secret?"

"I was cautioned by your sister Myel and also Lord Kal-El and Lady Lois that it should be so."

"How much longer will you be here?"

"That still has not been determined."

"Can you stay? Permanently?"

"Why would I do that?"

"Because I want you to. I want you to stay ... with me. Ali of the family Ce would you marry Ben of the family El?"

"Do you mean form a life bond?"

"Yes, I mean, form a life bond."

"Ben of the family El, it would be my pleasure to form a life bond with you. I knew, from the first moment I saw you that you would be my life mate."

"I felt the same thing. It was love at first sight. You are my first Love."

"As you are mine."

Saturday, September 3, 2039

Clark was just about to say something to Sam when there was an interruption.

A few minutes earlier Lara had disappeared into the house. Now she reappeared in the company of several men who looked like old fashioned monks dressed up in robes. As soon as Lara led them out the back door of the house they, upon seeing Clark, bowed before proceeding into the yard. Clark called Mike over. "Mike, can you take over here for me for a bit? I've got something else I need to do."

"Sure thing, Pop. Go ahead. Lara's been planning this for weeks."

"Why that sneaky ... She takes after her mother. Don't let the steaks burn."

"I've got it. Go greet your visitors."

Clark walked over and the leader of the delegation bowed again as Clark approached. Clark said, "Trey, my old friend. I didn't know that you were coming."

Trey said, "Lord Kal-El, it is a pleasure to see you again." He called a specific individual forward. "I'd like to introduce Gan-Ce, grandfather of Alice. We came to officiate in the ceremony."

Alice had come over behind Clark, hand in hand with Sam, AKA Ben-El. She broke away from Sam and threw her arms around the neck of Gan-Ce and said, "Grandfather, you came! For the joining ceremony?"

"Yes, Granddaughter. A happy day. The joining of the house of Ce with the house of El."

Alice held out her hand to Sam and he came forward and took it. She performed the introductions, "Ben-El this is my

grandfather Gan-Ce.”

Sam said, “It is an honor to meet you sir.” Sam didn’t know how to appropriately greet him so he proffered his hand. Gan-Ce reached forward and clasped his hand around Sam’s forearm in a forearm shake.

Gan-Ce said, “My granddaughter has chosen well.”

A few minutes later, with the family gathered around, all except the younger children and a couple of the teens who were watching them, the ceremony binding Alice and Ben-El in a life bond took place. As soon as this was accomplished Lara disappeared into the house again and reappeared a few minutes later with a justice of the peace that she had scheduled earlier. He performed a civil ceremony for the young couple.

Jimmy had worked to create an Earth persona for Alice so on the marriage license appeared the name Alice Richards which immediately changed to Kent.

As soon as the justice said, “You may kiss the bride,” a cheer went up from all gathered.

The Justice left after receiving his fee and Trey and the rest of the Council of Elders that were present joined in the festivities.

Clark returned to the cooking and Trey drifted over there to talk. It was a pleasant conversation.

Chapter Eight 1K

Jon and Jen

This had been some party! So far they had had an announcement of a baby on the way from Jimmy and Peg along with their anniversary celebration. There had also been the arrival of a delegation of the council of Elders from New Krypton who had come to officiate at a life bonding ceremony for Sam and Alice, followed by an American civil wedding ceremony.

Clark had just had a conversation with Trey who had gone off to sample the foods that were on the buffet. The conversation with Trey would require some additional thought before he actually answered the questions he had asked.

Just then Jon, Lois and Clark’s oldest, walked up. “Hi Pop, how ya holdin’ up? I saw you in conference with Trey and decided not to interrupt.”

A sudden thought came to Clark and he said, “You know, you are just the person I needed to see. I need to ask you to do me a favor. The conference I just had with Trey was about Earth customs. I’d like you to tell him about your relationship with Jen. They have been locked in to tradition and arranging marriages for their children, but, after what happened with me and your mom and between me and Zara and more recently with Sam and Alice, they are thinking of changing things.”

“Sure Pop, I’d be happy to. From what you’ve told us about what happened, I’ve always been glad we didn’t do that kind of thing.”

Jon went off in search of Trey. When he found him he was sitting with a couple of the other elders enjoying sampling some of the foods that had been prepared by the members of the family. He asked, “May I join you?”

Trey sat down his plate and said, “Yes, you may. I have been looking forward to speaking with some of Lord Kal-El’s children. Which one are you?”

“I’m Jon, uh, Kam-El, the eldest son.”

“Ahh yes, the scientist.”

“Yes, I am a scientist, however, that’s not what I came to talk about. My father, Lord Kal-El, said that you wanted to know more about Earth customs regarding Marriage and pair bonding.”

Trey expressed his interest by saying, “Yes, we are very interested. It would appear as though the Earth custom of allowing individuals to find their own life mates is a hit and miss proposition. At times it works out as evidence by your family.”

Jon asked, “Have you ever given it a try?”

“The first time we had any problems with our system was

with your father and Lady Zara. They were both rather strong willed individuals and even though they were life partners from birth they chose to abandon custom and go their own way. I have to admit, in both cases they appear to be happy in their current pair bonds.”

“My father and mother found out that there is a reason for their happiness. No matter what arrangements were made when they were born, they were fated to be together. Let me tell you a story.”

“It was July of 2024. I had just graduated from MetU with a Bachelors degree in Chemistry. I had worked hard and had completed my degree in three years instead of the normal four. I was planning to continue on for advanced degrees and was taking the summer off. It was the Fourth of July Holiday.”

“Oh, that’s right, you don’t have any frame of reference for that. Please allow me to explain. Originally our country was a colony of another nation, the same way New Krypton would have been a colony of Krypton if it had continued to exist. There came a time when the colonists felt that the absentee government was abusing its power and requiring monetary remuneration for services that they were in fact not receiving and they felt that they should have a voice in their government. When the parent country refused to lessen the burden a rebellion ensued. I might liken it to what happened with Nor. He tried to usurp the rightful ruler’s authority which caused a civil war. In that case it was solved by my father engaging Nor in single combat. That didn’t happen here. This country announced its intention of throwing off the yoke of the parent country which led to a war. We celebrate the day that this declaration was signed as the day a new nation was born. That occurs annually on the fourth day of our month of July.”

“Okay, so, it was the Fourth of July Holiday and our family had taken a vacation and gone to visit my grandparents, that is the Earth couple that had raised my dad as their own son. You remember Smallville, don’t you?”

“Ah, yes, we were there briefly when Lord Not captured it.”

“Right, I remember Dad telling us the story. Anyhow, we were in Smallville for the holiday and we chose to go to Smallville Lake for the day. We all participated in a number of sporting and athletic activities.”

“One thing that all of the Kent women have in common is their feminine form. They are all at the top when it comes to ranking feminine beauty and if they had all entered the contest for the Corn Queen, it would have been a four way tie. I guess I need to explain that. There is a local celebration held in Smallville on an annual basis, the Corn Festival. It is a celebration of the harvest of the major crop produced in that area of the country. As part of that they have a beauty contest where women vie for the title of Corn Queen. Anyhow, the point is that all of my sisters are so beautiful that they would have all been chosen over the other contestants and would have had to share the honor.” Jon started laughing as he continued, “That was one of the problems that Dad had, they all knew just how beautiful they were and they all enjoyed showing off their beauty so when they were on the beach, only the skimpiest swim suits would do. Dad was scandalized, but, there wasn’t a whole lot he could do because Mom joined in with them by wearing a bikini every bit as skimpy as her daughters. At that time, Sam was thirteen and Lucy, my youngest sister was fourteen going on twenty-one. Us guys were almost as bad. We weren’t vain but we knew that thanks to our Kryptonian physiology we had bodies like extreme athletes, so we also wore as little as possible at the beach. I was twenty-four at the time.”

“Anyhow, that was on Friday, July fifth that we were at the lake. The girls were playing two-on-two beach volleyball to a crowd of male admirers and among them was the lifeguard.”

I wasn't paying particular attention to the girls; after all, they are my sisters. I happened to glance out over the water to the float and was attracted to a girl that had just swum out. As she climbed up the ladder I used my telescopic vision to get a good look at her. My breath was taken away at the sight of her. She was wearing a black bikini top which barely covered the essentials and extremely brief red bikini bottoms with a yellow band, almost like a belt as the top strap. I marveled at the fact that her bikini was a match for my uniform. I was truly mesmerized by her and I just stood there frozen as I watched her. She was a vision of beauty! She was the only girl there that could rival my sisters in the beauty department. Her beauty was in stark contrast to my sisters though; all of my sisters have dark hair that they inherited from our parents. This girl was a platinum blond and she had a knockout figure which was amply displayed by the extremely brief bikini."

"I watched as she crossed the float and climbed up on the diving board and walking out to the end gave a couple of experimental bounces before returning to the float end of the board. She did her approach and bounced on the end of the board, went into a short arc and hit the water cleanly."

"I watched for her to surface and when approximately fifteen seconds had elapsed, I started to worry. Thinking that there could be a problem I took off at a run and had a hard time restraining myself and maintaining a normal human speed as I crossed the beach to the water. I hit the water in a shallow dive and stayed underwater and started to fly, cleaving the water like a torpedo. I arrived in the vicinity of the float within seconds and started using my enhanced vision to locate her. I spotted her tangled in some submerged debris which had been washed into the lake from a storm the previous month. She was unconscious as I freed her from the debris and brought her to the surface. "

"As soon as I had her head above water I started administering mouth to mouth resuscitation. As I did so, when my lips came into contact with hers I felt something akin to an electric shock pass between us. It startled me but didn't keep me from doing what needed to be done. I gave her a couple of breaths and then started to move her back to shore. When we got into shallow water I picked her up and carried her to the beach where I continued to administer life saving measures, talking to her as I did, 'Come on, breathe. Come on, I know you can do it, breathe. Come on and breathe.'"

"Suddenly she started coughing and spitting up water. I lifted her up and pulled her into my chest in an embrace. As she started to come to, her left arm came up and around my neck and her right arm came up under my left and across my back."

"After a couple of minutes she realized the position she was in and pulled back to look me in the face. I asked, 'Are you okay now?'"

"She asked, 'What happened? All I remember is that I dove off the board and suddenly I was caught.'"

"I replied, 'I was watching and when you didn't come back up I swam out to find you. Once I had you free I brought you back to shore. I'm Jon, by the way, Jon Kent.'"

"She said, 'Hi Jon Kent, Jen, Jennifer Jenkins, pleased to meet you. You'll never know just how pleased.' She looked at the way I was holding her and relaxed in my arms. She used her arm around my neck to pull me down and she kissed me. When she released the kiss she said, 'Thanks, Jon Kent. You saved my life.' I have to tell you, when her lips touched mine she felt the same electric like jolt that I had felt when I was doing the mouth to mouth and it surprised her as much as it had surprised me. It was unlike anything she had experienced before."

"I picked her up and carried her over to my towel and laid her on it before sitting down next to her. There was an immediate sexual attraction. That tingle that we had felt was the soul mates connection. The way Mom and Dad explain it is that when you

find the person that is fated to be your life partner your souls recognize each other and that tingle is evidence of it."

"Well, she propped herself up on her elbows and we talked. We talked and talked and talked some more. Neither of us was inclined to do anything that would break the rapport that we had established. I found out that Jen was a second cousin to Lana Lang, an old acquaintance of my Dad, and that she was eighteen. The single item that I discovered that made me happiest was the fact that she didn't have a boyfriend."

"Before the end of the day I had her contact information and asked, 'Would you like to go to the movies? They are doing a 'Back to the Future' marathon at the Talon. All three movies, back to back.'"

"Jen said, 'Only if you promise to buy me popcorn.'"

"Of course I said I would. In fact I offered to buy the biggest tub they had as long as we could share."

"She laughed and said, 'You're on. We'll share.'"

"Before the end of the vacation we had spent the majority of our time together."

"Mom and Dad had seen what was going on and had allowed things to happen naturally. Dad knew just what I was going through and he and Mom had asked if they could have a talk with me."

"They asked me if I thought she was the one. I was sure that she was and I told them so. You see, this was a chance meeting, but, that is the way it usually happens. I don't know how it is on New Krypton, but, a Kryptonian here on Earth knows immediately when they meet the one who is their soul mate, even without touching. Dad said that as soon as Mom walked into the office where he was being interviewed he knew she was the one. Well, that's just how it happened with me. As soon as I saw her on that float I knew that she was the one."

"We decided that I really needed to be certain about our relationship before bringing her in on the family secret. She was just going to be starting college in the Elementary Education program at Midwestern."

"After the family went back to Metropolis I stayed in Smallville and lived with Grandma and Grandpa Kent so that I could continue to date Jen. I also applied to Midwestern for their post graduate program and was accepted. I also applied for adjunct professor status in the Chemistry program and was accepted. It wouldn't pay a lot, but, it would pay for an apartment and dates."

"Jen knew there was an attraction there just as I did, but, that didn't keep other guys from trying to make time with her. I have to admit, I didn't like it when she went out with other guys. Doubly so when she told me that this individual or that one couldn't keep his hands to himself. If I had seen that I might have broken his hands for him. The one good thing that came of all that was that Jen could contrast them with me and it wasn't too long before she stopped allowing anyone else to get close. By the end of her freshmen year we had an understanding. We became engaged that summer."

"Later that summer tragedy struck. Jen's parents were killed when their brakes failed as they were negotiating a turn on a highway and they went off the road into a tree."

"Jen was really broken up, but I was there as much as possible to support her. There for a while she didn't want anything to do with me. She blamed my family for failing to rescue her parents. It was unrealistic but it put a wedge between us for a year. I kept in touch and would talk with her at every opportunity. Eventually, she came to the realization that her anger was unfounded. I mean, there is no way we can be everywhere and on the scene for every accident in the world. We had to restart our relationship and it took until she was ready to graduate for us to be at the point that she was ready for us to marry. That was in 2028, eleven years ago. We had our first child, Bernard, in

2031.”

As Jon was finishing up his narrative, Trey was obviously mulling over the story and its ramifications. He said, “I can see that this system has obviously worked out for the El family here on Earth. I guess you could also say that it has worked out for Lady Zara and Ching-Ka. They also are happy in their match. You have given us much information to consider.”

Jon said, “Each of us, when we have found our life mates it has been love at first sight and in each case our mate is truly our first love. If you have any further questions you can talk to any of my brothers or sisters. I’m sure they would all be willing to tell you their stories.”

“Thank you for your time Kam-El. We will give your story consideration as we try to decide if we will discontinue the birth marriage custom.”

Just then Jennifer walked up with six month old George in a carrier. Jon said, “Lord Trey, I’d like to introduce you to my life mate, my wife, my first Love, Jennifer, and this is little George.”

Trey stood and bowed to Jen saying, “It is a pleasure to meet the life mate of Lord Kal-El’s oldest son and,” he reached out and caressed George’s head, “the grandson of Lord Kal-El and Lady Lois. May he grow to be as wise as his parents and grandparents. Please accept the blessing of the Council of Elders.”

Jen smiled and said, “Thank you, Lord Trey. It is an honor to meet you.” Just then George started to fuss and Jen said, “If you’ll excuse me, the little lord is hungry.”

With a bright smile Jon said, “I’ll come with you. Lord Trey, please excuse us, duty calls.”

With a smile Trey said, “Of course. I do hope we can talk more, later.”

“I’ll make time, later.”

Trey replied, “Thank you,” as Jon and Jen turned to leave.

Chapter Nine 1L

Lois and Clark

All of the kids had each had a turn, spending some time with Clark, one on one, as the party progressed. They had each had their turn and there had been some surprises.

This had been some party! So far they had had an announcement of a baby on the way from Jimmy and Peg along with their anniversary celebration. There had also been the arrival of a delegation of the council of Elders from New Krypton who had come to officiate at a Life Bonding Ceremony for Sam and Alice, followed by an American civil wedding ceremony.

Clark had just had a conversation with Trey who had gone off to sample the foods that were on the buffet. The conversation with Trey would require some additional thought before he actually answered the questions Trey had asked.

In order to buy some time to come up with some good answers, Clark had sent Jon over to talk with the leader of the New Kryptonian Council of Elders.

A few seconds later Lois approached. He heard her heartbeat even before he saw her approaching and a smile lit up his face in response to that knowledge. When he looked up he saw her, his wife of so many years. Still beautiful at age sixty-three, almost sixty-four. He marveled at her grace and beauty. A sprinkling of gray in her hair, a few lines, here and there but still a beautiful woman. Today, in honor of the planned wedding of Sam and Alice she had chosen to wear a modest business suit in peach with a red blouse under the matching jacket. She had allowed her hair in recent years to go longer and it flowed softly around her shoulders.

As she walked up she greeted her husband, “Hi, handsome. Wow, what a day.”

Chuckling he said, “You can say that again. We knew about the Justice of the Peace but that sneaky daughter of yours . . .”

Laughing, Lois interrupted, “Daughter of *ours*! She’s just as

much your daughter as she is mine.”

“Oh, I don’t know about that! Keeping something a secret like inviting a delegation of the Council of Elders to officiate at a Binding Ceremony. I never did anything like that to you.”

With a surprised look Lois retorted, “You *never* what? You never kept it a secret that Clark Kent was Superman? You never lied to me, giving me really lame excuses for why you had to duck out, especially when we were in the middle of a really important conversation? I’d say you bear just as much responsibility for this behavior as I do.”

“Okay, if you put it that way, I guess we have to share the responsibility.” Giving her a very close appraisal up and down he said, “I must say that you are dressed very nicely today. That outfit makes you look almost good enough to eat.”

Lois did a pirouette so that he could see the entire package. “I wanted to look nice for the wedding. You like, huh?”

“Always.”

With a somewhat wanton look she said, “You look kinda good yourself! I always like you in a suit. The only thing is, I catch myself being like Alice was with Perry when he wore a tux. I can’t wait to get you out of it. At least you took of the jacket and rolled your sleeves up.”

He started to laugh and said, “The only reason to wear a suit to a party is if there’s going to be a wedding and you’re the father of the groom.” After the ceremony, Clark had returned to his cooking chores. He had taken off his jacket and after rolling up his sleeves he had donned an apron that had ‘What’s Cookin’ embroidered on the front. The apron mercifully covered up most of his trademark, garishly colored tie.

Lois moved in and put her arms around his neck and pulled him down into a kiss. “I think I’m going to go up and change. This outfit is okay for a mother of the groom at a wedding, but, this is a party and now, since the JP has left, I aim to get comfortable. I’m going to go in and check on some things and change. See you in a little while.”

“Okay, I plan to go change in a little while myself.”

Lois walked off and Clark observed that Trey had been watching, even as he had been listening to Jon as he told the story about his and Jen’s relationship.

A short time later, Jon finished his story and he and Jen had excused themselves so that Jen could feed Bernard.

Trey returned to enjoying the repast as Clark returned to mulling over the discussion he had previously had with him.

Earlier

As Clark was still in the process of cooking Trey had approached. As he neared Clark he had bowed slightly and said, “My Lord, Kal-El . . .”

Clark had interrupted him at this point. He said, “Trey, please, this is Earth, not New Krypton and this is a party, a festive occasion. I don’t want all of the bowing and scraping that you feel necessary. You are a guest in my house and I honor you as such. You are also a friend. If it hadn’t been for your courage, bucking Nor, my atoms would have been scattered across the galaxies. Really, I owe you my life.”

With a humble expression Trey replied, “It was my duty. An injustice had been done. Lt. Ching pointed out the law and I was duty bound to act on it. Furthermore, if you hadn’t defeated Nor, we would be suffering under his yoke even today. Besides, the council had been tricked into the judgment that had been handed down. Your defeat of Nor proves that you were in the right.”

Clark was somewhat embarrassed by all of this and replied, “Okay, there were good things done on both sides. This is a party. Why don’t we just relax and have some fun. This gives you an opportunity to meet some of our children.”

Trey replied, “I look forward to doing just that, but, I have

some questions. You have a number of children, but, has it been worth it? By staying here on Earth and using your powers, it appears as though you have shortened your expected life span. You appear to be aging at the same rate as Lady Lois, by the way, where is she?"

Clark was caught in a quandary by this line of questioning. He would need some time to think about how to answer. He said, "She's around being the perfect hostess. Why don't we resume this conversation when she returns? Why don't you go over to the buffet and sample some of the dishes that my children have prepared."

Trey said, "Thank you, I think I shall. We can talk more later; as you suggest."

Trey watched as Jon and Jen headed to the house so that Jen could feed Bernie in private. As they neared the door a ravishingly beautiful blond came out through the door. She was dressed in a halter top, shorts and sandals which showed off her long shapely legs. Most of her upper body was hidden however by a baby carrier with a four month old infant in it. She stopped and had a short conversation with Jon and Jen before they proceeded into the house and she moved into the yard.

Trey was wondering just who this woman was. He didn't recognize her as the wife of any of the sons of Lord Kal-El and Lady Lois. She appeared to be the correct age to be the wife of one of them, however, the only blond haired daughter-in-law was Jennifer, whom he had just officially met. He watched the woman as she moved toward the rest of the party. He was surprised when she moved in the direction of Kal-El. When she neared him he took her in his arms and careful of the infant in the carrier he gave her a hug and a kiss. With a knowing look Trey nodded his head. He thought, <She must be a concubine! I need to ask if he has adopted that custom.> He arose from his chair and approached Kal-El.

When he was near enough he said, "Ahhh, I see that you have followed at least some of the traditions of New Krypton. Is this one of your concubines?"

Before Clark had a chance to answer a five year old, brown haired whirlwind swirled into their presence. She put a brown smudged hand on the woman's leg and transferred some of the brown substance to the bare skin as she said, "Mommy, Mommy, tell him I can have another piece of cake."

The woman looked down. She saw that not only were the hands covered in this brown substance; her face was also smeared from nose to chin. She took all of this in before she asked, "Tell who Sweetie?"

"Brother!"

"Which brother, Sweetie?"

The little girl pointed at a brown haired seven year old and said, "Him, CJ."

Clark leaned down and picked up the girl and tossed her into the air to her absolute delight. She was squealing the whole time she was in the air. When he caught her he held her up in front of himself and asked, "Just how many pieces of cake have you had, Pumpkin?"

As Clark had been playing with the little girl a dog had come over, obviously following the girl. The dog spotted the brown stain on the woman's leg and started licking it off. Startled, she looked down and said, "Shelby, good dog." She reached down and petted his head as he cleaned her up.

The little girl answered his question, "Three, but they were small pieces."

Laughing Clark said, "It looks like you got as much on you as you did in you."

Hurt in her tone she replied, "That was Ben. He tried to grab my cake and he slipped and pushed it into my face. Besides, CJ said that I shouldn't be eating brown cake cause I'm an olive so I

should only eat green cake."

"Clark Jerome Kent Jr. why are you teasing your sister that way?"

CJ dug his toe into the turf as he looked down. He knew that he was in trouble. Whenever Mom got that tone in her voice and used his full name, the boom was about to be lowered. All he could say was, "Cause."

His mom reached over and took his ear in her hand and said, "Because? Because is not a reason. Just because her middle name is Olive doesn't give you leave to tease her about it, and you, young lady, where do you get off eating three pieces of cake?"

"Aw, Mom, it's chocolate!"

"I know very well that it's chocolate. Your sisters ordered it that way." She settled down some as she said, "I know you can't help it. You all inherited my penchant for chocolate. I guess I really can't blame you too much. I just wish I could eat some of it." She looked longingly in the direction of the table where the anniversary cake was placed. Then she looked down at the baby in the carrier and thought better of it. "I'd like to have some too, but it would be a real problem for Martha." She reached up and stroked the baby's dark hair.

Trey had been taking all of this in and finally his curiosity got the better of him. Turning to Clark he repeated his question, "Lord Kal-El, is this woman one of your concubines?"

Clark had a smile on his face as he said, "Hold that question for a couple of minutes. I need to go change." He raised his voice, "Mike, can you take over here for me for a few?"

Mike answered, "Sure Pop. Got it covered."

When Mike had come over to man the grill, Lara had come over with him so Clark turned to her and asked, "Lara, could you supervise CJ and little Lois for us for a few minutes?"

"Sure Pop, I'd be happy to."

Little Lois started to object because she knew that she could wrap Clark around her little finger but Lois put a stop to that by saying, "Lois Olive Kent, you obey your sister. She's in charge till we get back."

"Aw, okay." She turned to Lara and asked, "Can I please have another piece of cake?"

Lara laughed and said, "Oh, I suppose so. Let's all go have a piece."

Clark handed over the spatula and fork and headed for the house, disappearing through the door. Less than a minute later he reappeared wearing a polo shirt, shorts and sandals and appeared to have dropped a good thirty years in those few seconds. Trey's jaw dropped. This was Lord Kal-El as he remembered him from over thirty years ago, young and virile. Was this another man?

Clark walked up to Trey and said, "I'm sorry we had to deceive you, but, you see, we weren't expecting you. We knew of the arrangements for the Justice of the Peace and we had to dress appropriately for his arrival. We had to be the appropriate age. Now, since it's just family, we can remove our disguises. Trey, this is not my concubine, although she was that once upon a time. This is Lady Lois."

Trey sputtered, "But Lady Lois has dark hair!"

Laughing at his confusion Lois said, "Not now she doesn't."

Clark looked at Mike, and asked, "You got it?"

Smiling, Mike replied, "I'll try not to burn anything. Go ahead, have a talk."

Clark led the way over to a table and he Lois and Trey all took seats.

Clark reminded Trey of his question, "You asked if I thought it had been worth it to give up my long lifespan to stay here on Earth. As you can see, I really haven't given that up, but, frankly, even if I had I wouldn't have traded that for being with Lois. I think you saw thirty years ago, I was willing to give her up for the greater good, the welfare of New Krypton. However, if it was

a choice between my first love and aging prematurely, I would choose to spend what time I have with the only woman I have ever really loved.”

“When we found out that Lois’ life had been extended by exposure to the Kryptonian aura we realized that we would have to take steps to prevent the world from discovering just who Superman and Ultra Woman were. We adopted a plan of using makeup to make it appear that we were aging. At the appropriate time we will retire our original personas. As it is we have retired from the Daily Planet in those personas and have assumed new identities. In the new identities we courted and married assuming our original names again thanks to the laws of the state. As the new Clark and the blond Lois Kent we are again a reporting team at the Planet.”

When Lois goes out on a rescue as Ultra Woman she wears a brown wig which duplicates her original hair in length and style.”

Trey was blown away. He asked, “So, you will live a normal Kryptonian life span and Lady Lois will also now have the same life expectancy?”

“That is essentially it. I just had a thought. Let me talk with the kids.”

Clark thought specifically of each individual that he wished to communicate with so that it wasn’t a general band communication and sent, /I have a question .../

After the communication he turned to Trey and asked, “Trey, would you consider possibly conducting the Kryptonian Life Binding Ceremony again? At this time the only ones who have gone through it are Sam and Alice. I just had a conference with the rest of the family and we would all like to honor the traditions of Krypton by participating in the ceremony also. There will be eight couples.”

Trey began to smile as Clark had been talking and said, “We would be more than happy to perform the ceremony for you and the rest of your family.”

Louise, Lara’s fourteen year old daughter, was called over and she gathered up the younger children that had all drifted over to the food and herded them down to the play area.

Trey and the other elders that had come stood in the center of a circle formed by the El family, all but Sam and Alice, and conducted the ceremony binding them according to Kryptonian custom as life mates.

At the completion of the ceremony Trey and the other elders departed by going into the house where the Kryptonian teleport transferred them to their ship.

That evening after Lois and Clark had put CJ, Olive, Benjamin and Martha to bed they had a chance to discuss the day.

Lois snuggled up to Clark on the couch curling her legs under herself and released a relieved sigh. She wiggled a little bit to get more comfortable and then said, “What a day. Lara really surprised us with that one. She really pulled a lot of strings to pull that off.”

Laughing he said, “She takes after her mother. Accomplishing what most people would consider impossible. Well, how does it feel to finally be the Kryptonian Lady Lois-El?”

She shifted position so that she could give him a kiss after which with an arched eyebrow she said, “I seem to recall that there is a second part to that ceremony. Wasn’t there something about the marriage bed? I think that if we are truly to honor the Kryptonian ceremony we have a date upstairs, but, we need to be quiet so that we don’t wake the kiddies.”

Together they floated up off the couch and floated upstairs so that not even the quietest footfall would wake the children and they disappeared into their bedroom.

THE END