

In a Very Alternate Universe

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Rated: G

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Summary: The onset of young Clark's powers proves to be his undoing.

WHAM warning: This is not a happy story. As its title indicates, it takes place in an alternate universe. This universe's Clark fares much worse even than Alt-Clark ever did. If you are looking for a cheery story, look elsewhere. You've been warned.

Disclaimers: No BRs were harmed in the creation of this story. The Kent family belong to Warner Brothers and DC Comics. I just borrowed them for a little not-for-profit entertainment.

As always, all feedback welcomed.

I'm a monster: a freak, an alien, and a monster.

I deserve the death sentence, but I can't kill myself. It's not that I don't want to; I do want to more than anything. It's that I physically can't do so. Believe me, I've tried.

And so as part of my self-imposed penance, I am sitting in my Fortress of Solitary Confinement writing my confession — a confession that no human is ever likely to see.

Things started going wrong when I broke Ma's vase. Now, kids break their parent's things all the time; nothing unusual there, right? A stray baseball, a bit of careless roughhousing, even a moment of clumsiness in which the vase is dropped, and the fragile item gets broken. But none of that was how it happened with me. I had just picked up the vase and it crumbled in my hands. I had crushed it, but I wasn't even holding it very tightly.

Ma wasn't angry; she was disappointed. That was worse. She had thought I was being careless. But when, over the next week, I grew strong enough to lift Bluebell over my head, Ma realized I was having some trouble adapting to my changing body, and she apologized to me. I broke her vase, and she apologized to me. If only that had been the worst of things.

As I grew stronger, I grew faster, too. By the end of that week, I could outrun all the horses on the farm. By the end of the following week, Pa could not keep up with me even when he drove the car as fast as it could go. Soon, I was running so fast that no one else could see me clearly when I ran all-out.

At first, I had been a little scared about the damage I could do, but I also thought it kinda' neat that I could do things no one else could. I felt special. Ma and Pa always accepted me, no matter what I did.

But when I started seeing through things, I began to get scared. I really freaked out when I couldn't see Pa's skin, and could only see his insides. I ran into my room. Pa followed me there and asked me what had made me run off. I kept my eyes closed the whole time I told him. I didn't want to see his innards. Doing so seemed both creepy and disrespectful.

I didn't see his face, but the tone of his voice sounded both more concerned and more serious than I had ever heard it before. He said that he had something he needed to tell me, but that we should go into the barn first. I let him take my hand and lead me there.

He told me a story that sounded more unbelievable than the

bedtime stories that I had outgrown years earlier. I had already known I was adopted; that was never a secret. But he told me that day in the barn that they didn't get me through an adoption agency, but that I literally fell from the sky. He raised the trap door in the barn — the one I had hitherto been forbidden from ever opening — and lugged something up from the area below. When, at his insistence and after he moved behind me, I opened my eyes, I saw a small spaceship.

As I stared at the vehicle, I was sucked into a whirlpool of emotion. Pa's story and the ship explained a lot. I now knew why I could do all these bizarre things. But it meant that not only did I not belong biologically to the Kent family, I didn't even belong to the human race.

Where did I come from? Was there no one on my entire home planet who thought me worth keeping? What was so horrible about me that they thought it best to send me far away from their planet? Did they know what I would become? Was I a freak to them as I am to humans? Or were my parents heinous criminals and their spawn deemed unworthy of life on their planet?

I think Pa sensed what was going through my head. He told me again that he and Ma loved me as much as if I were their natural child, that they knew who and what I was when they adopted me, and that we were a family in every way that mattered.

After I calmed down a bit, he brought us back to the problem that started the conversation: namely, my being able to see through things. He told me that we should practice having me try to see through objects and then having me try not to do so. He thought that if I went through enough exercises, I would learn to control my vision just as I was learning to control my strength and speed. How I wish that I had just refused and lived the rest of my life blindfolded.

But instead, I went along with him. He had a whimsical idea. He ran inside to Ma's sewing room, grabbed a couple of needles, and brought them back to the barn. He buried them in a pile of hay and told me to try to retrieve them.

I don't want to write about what came next. I don't want to live through it again, even just in my mind. And yet I haven't thought about anything else since it happened.

I was only trying to do what Pa asked of me. But a part of me knew even then that opening my eyes was a terrible idea. Why oh why oh why didn't I listen to that instinct?

All right. A few minutes have passed, I've calmed myself down, and I'm ready to go on with my story.

I faced the haystack and opened my eyes. I concentrated all my will to seeing through the hay to where the needles were. Nothing happened at first; I simply saw a haystack. But then I grew frustrated with the whole situation and with my uncooperative eyesight. And as my frustration turned to anger, I felt a heat in the back of my eyes. I was startled when wisps of smoke came from the hay, which soon caught fire and became a roaring blaze. I grabbed a nearby horse blanket and beat out the fire.

A part of me wondered why Pa wasn't helping me smother the flames. When the fire was put out, I turned to ask him and saw the reason why — Pa had collapsed onto the floor. The sight of me starting a fire with my eyes must have been too much for his weak heart; he must have fallen as I was reaching for the blanket. I had been so focused on the fire that I didn't even hear him hitting the floor. By the time I tried using the CPR I had learned in 4-H, it was too late. He was already gone.

Before I even went into the house to give Ma the awful news, I tore off a strip of the horse blanket and made it into a blindfold; there was no way under the sun that I was going to let my vision cause any more damage. I have not seen another person since that day. Later that evening, at my insistence, Ma put bandages over my eyes, and I told anyone outside the family who asked that my

eyes were injured in the barn fire.

I stayed for the funeral. I knew Ma needed my emotional support that day, and so for her sake I tried to hide all my inner turmoil. But she knew me better than that. Even in her grief, she tried to help me. She told me that what happened wasn't my fault, that I hadn't killed Pa, but that it was just his time, and that she knew I would never have purposely done anything to harm Pa. And she forgave me. God bless her, despite all her own pain and loneliness, even in the midst of her deep mourning, she forgave me.

I wish I could forgive myself. But no matter what Ma says, I killed Pa. And I could easily kill other people, if not by causing them heart attacks, then by setting them afire or by crushing them. Not to mention by whatever lethal ability chooses to manifest itself next.

As soon as the funeral was over, I packed a few mementos and clothes, as well as some pens and notebooks, in a waterproof container and then left home for good. I ran to the ocean and then swam as far north as I could. When I hit ice, I resumed my running. I've built a new home for myself here as far away from humans as possible. For the good and safety of humanity, I can never see another human.

I guess the people on the planet I came from knew what they were doing. They were smart to rid themselves of this super-monster while they could.

I hope Ma will forgive me just once more, this time for abandoning her. But since I won't ever return to civilization, I suppose I'll never know.

THE END