

Metropolis's Hero

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Summary: Lois and Clark have the perfect professional and personal relationship. However, when Detective Mayson Drake appears in their lives with a dangerous mission for Clark, Lois questions if that is the only thing on her agenda, or if driving them apart is her endgame.

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I wish he would get here. Lois's mind raced as she watched the elevator doors open and close in the newsroom early Monday morning. Each time the doors opened, she hoped to catch a glimpse of Clark coming in. *Where is he? It's 8:30 a.m.!* She checked her watch and looked back at the doors. Finally realizing that looking at the elevator was not going to make him appear any sooner she turned back to the pile of papers on her desk and sighed.

"I guess these aren't going to get done just by staring at them." She rummaged through the stack and started to make little piles all around her desk. She glanced back at her watch and noticed 15 minutes had gone by.

Fifteen whole minutes had gone by. This was going to be a long day.

Where is he? "Jimmy, have you seen Clark?" she asked as Jimmy rounded the corner coming towards her desk.

"No! I haven't seen CK since you guys left for your date on Friday night!" he responded.

Ah, Friday night... when life was still perfect. When she managed to keep herself from screwing up and doing something that could possibly end the most perfect relationship she ever had. Go figure. Lois Lane, prize-winning reporter — fact-finding, hard-hitting, no-nonsense reporter — willing to take stories other reporters had not ever dreamed of... but yet, committing to a relationship... she found her own kryptonite.

"Earth to Lois... I said, is everything okay?" he said, waving his hands in front of her face.

"Oh, huh? Yeah... I'm fine... thanks!" she replied, waving him off. Jimmy turned on his heel and made his way to Perry's office.

"Good morning, Lois!" Clark called as he passed by her desk making his way to his desk.

"Clark!" she replied, startled, not knowing he had come through the newsroom.

He raised his eyebrow and turned his head to the side as he grabbed his coffee mug from his desk. "Are you okay this morning? You seem jumpy," he asked, staring at her.

Lois pushed the chair from her desk and moved closer to Clark's desk. "How are you this morning?" she asked, staring at him questioningly and approaching hesitantly.

He turned from filling his coffee mug and faced her with a smile. "Fine!" he responded nonchalantly.

She narrowed her eyes. *Fine, my butt,* she thought to herself. "Well, now that you are here, I need to talk to you. Can we talk... in private?" she finished as her eyes showed the path to the

conference room.

He got the hint, and placed his coffee on the desk. "Of course!" he responded. She grabbed his hand and they made their way to the conference room door. Once inside she closed the door behind them and drew the shades shut.

The smell of hot paper hit Mayson's nose as soon as she stepped off the elevator and into the center of the Daily Planet newsroom. Workers were quickly in and out of office spaces and nooks as fast as their feet could take them. She loved the quick-paced atmosphere just as much as she loved it at the agency. She caught a couple of men staring in her direction. Why not? She was beautiful. Her long blonde hair past her shoulders with her baby blue eyes drew men in like bees to honey.

"Can I help you miss?" a newsroom reporter asked.

She looked around the newsroom and spotted the office of the Editor-In-Chief, and smiled back politely to the reporter. "Thank you, but no. I know where I am headed."

He blushed with a hint of red on his cheeks and slowly backed away bumping into a desk as he tried to break away from her mesmerizing trance.

"Lois, are you sure you are okay?" Clark asked anxiously as she continued to close all the shades in the newsroom.

"Okay, how bad is it?" She turned back to him ignoring his question and biting her lower lip.

"How bad is what?" He asked moving a step closer to her, worry etched across his perfectly sculpted face.

"Clark, you can stop pretending that you aren't mad. In fact, stop being so nice," she responded, pacing with her hands constantly moving in different directions. "I know I hurt you last night when you mentioned taking our relationship to the next level, and I all but freaked out right in front of you."

"Lois—"

"Look, I admit that I could have reacted better. It wasn't like you were asking me to marry you last night. The truth is... I do think about *us* all the time, and taking the next step towards getting married and having kids... I just don't know... when you said it last night it was so real all of a sudden." She began to pace again.

"Lois—"

"But that doesn't mean I don't love you," she cut him off again. "I do love you, very much, and you know that. It's just my past relationships have always been... well... you know, a federal disaster... and this commitment... this real commitment scared me." She paused. He opened his mouth to respond but she silenced him with her hand. She took a step closer. "Clark, what I am trying to say is that I love you, and I do want to move in that direction with you, because you are the only one I want to be with." He smiled and moved a step closer making the space between them even more limited.

"I just want you to know I'm sorry for how I reacted and left things with you last night. I really am sorry, and I have been worried all night that I have screwed this up so badly... and I just... I guess... I wanted you to know how much you mean to me... and if you can find it in your heart to give this crazy reporter another chance?" she finished, biting her lip and crossing her arms.

Clark stayed silent as he smiled at her and closed the gap between them. She looked up into his eyes as the silence filled the room. "Well?" she finally demanded after a minute of pure torture.

He lowered his head to hers and engulfed her lips with his. First gently, and then more passionately, deepening the kiss. She wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling him closer. "Oh Clark," she whispered between kisses and coming up for air. Finally he pulled away, resting his head on her forehead but still

keeping her close.

“Lois, I am not sure what on earth gave you the impression that I wouldn’t want to be with you. I know that when I mentioned taking our relationship to the next level last night it could go either way... and while I was hoping for one...” he trailed off.

“Clark—” she tried to interrupt, but his finger silenced her from continuing.

“It doesn’t mean I love you any less. Lois, I know the troubles that you have had in the past and I am willing to wait as long as it takes until you are ready to be where I am in our relationship. I know you love me, and I love you... and I am willing to be patient and wait for you because you are worth waiting for.” He tucked a strand of hair from her face.

She smiled. She pinched her arm, and winced and he laughed. “Just checking,” she responded. “I love you too.” She grabbed his shirt and pulled him closer for another deep kiss.

“So... on... business here at the Planet for Lois and Clark?” Jimmy asked, coughing, as he showed Mayson out of Perry’s office and down the hallway towards the conference room.

“Mm hmm,” she hummed, smiling. She loved the effect she had on men. Especially men like Jimmy. So nervous and afraid to say the wrong thing but trying to impress her all at the same time. He blushed again as he rounded the corner.

“CK and Lois are the best. I am sure they will be able to help with whatever you need,” he said a moment later, stopping in front of the conference room.

Mayson’s smile grew wider and she winked at him. “I’m counting on it.”

He knocked on the door, and showed her into the room.

“CK, Lois, you have a visitor,” he called, entering the room. Lois and Clark separated quickly before anyone could tell what exactly they had been doing just a few moments ago.

Mayson entered the room directing her smile directly at Clark and showing just enough of her white teeth with her genuine smile. Lois glared in her direction. She wasn’t surprised that Mayson would directly turn her charm to Clark. In the beginning, before she started dating Clark she had been oblivious when women paid attention to him and his handsome features. Things changed now that Clark was hers; however, she could still feel the protectiveness that came over her, just like when she had a hot lead, and moved closer to him. As some called it, marking her territory.

Mayson extended her hand to Clark and her smile grew wider. “I’m Detective Mayson Drake,” she spoke sweetly.

Clark returned her handshake and smile. “It’s a pleasure to meet you.” He released her hand and motioned to Lois. “This is my partner, Lois Lane,” he said with a smile, aware that adoration was in his voice as he spoke her name.

Lois smiled. “He forgot to say, award-winning reporter,” she joked, elbowing him in the ribs. He smiled.

Mayson noticed the loving look between them and just smiled. “Yes, Lois... I have read your work. You do a great job —”

“Well, thank you,” she responded, cutting her off and praising herself with her hands.

Mayson kept her smile. “However, I happen to prefer Clark’s writing more,” she managed to say so sweetly it was hard to consider it an insult.

Jimmy sneered in the corner. At that moment, everyone had forgotten he was still in the room. Lois snatched her eyes from Mayson and glared over at him. “Jimmy, don’t you have to run and get Perry that thing he was looking for?” she asked with irritation in her voice.

He laughed. “Nope, no... I don’t—” he stopped as soon as he

saw the death glare she was giving him. “On second thought, Perry does have a 10:30 meeting... so I’d better get going.” He moved to the door and quickly left before she whacked him on the head.

She shut the door behind him, and turned back to Mayson and Clark. “Now, where were we?” she asked, clapping her hands.

“Actually, Miss Lane... I am here to see Mr. Kent,” she responded, focusing her gaze on Clark.

“Excuse me?” she asked in disbelief.

Mayson smiled. “That’s correct. I am here on confidential business on behalf of Metropolis law enforcement.”

Lois laughed as she moved closer to Clark. “Well, let me give you a quick tutorial here at the Planet. Clark and I are partners. We do everything together.” Emphasizing the word together more than she needed too, she got the smile out of Mayson that she was looking for. “Therefore, whatever ‘business’ you have with Clark you have with me!” she finished sweetly.

Mayson moved her hands to her hips causing her jacket to spread open giving both Clark and Lois a good look at her well-toned physique. Her tight shirt would make any male with testosterone drool. That elicited another glare from Lois.

“With all due respect, Miss Lane, I am sure you are more than capable of being an asset on this case, but your services are not needed here. Your boss, Perry, is already looped in on the situation and is more than happy to speak with you if my terms are unsatisfactory,” she responded, stern and direct.

Lois’s smile faded. Clark could feel the tension in the room and decided now was the moment to step in before their conference room turned into a wrestling ring.

“Detective Drake, I can assure you that Lois is highly capable for the job. Everything I have learned, I have learned from her,” he said sincerely.

“Thank you, Clark,” Lois said, smiling first at him, and then back at Mayson.

Mayson folded her arms. *Take that, Combat Barbie*, Lois screamed in her head. Mayson sighed and grabbed a small disk from her jacket pocket.

“Mr. Kent, I have no doubt that Miss Lane is more than capable for many assignments; however, what I am about to share with you is very dangerous, should you chose to accept it. The agency will not be able to protect either you or Miss Lane, so you can understand my reason for wanting to keep as many from knowing the details of what I am about to share with you... should you decide to hear it,” she responded looking between the two.

The demeanor in the room changed. Both Clark and Lois turned serious. “Dangerous?” he repeated.

“Very!” Mayson responded. “You’re friends with Superman, correct?”

“That’s correct.”

“And you two still have a close relationship, that you could reach him quickly should trouble arise?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“Then I am prepared to share with you something very highly confidential that no one in Metropolis besides the Mayor, Chief of Police, and myself are aware of.” she said with her cop business tone.

Lois, quickly realizing this was becoming a two-person conversation, jumped in. “What could the *Planet* possibly help you with that so few know about, and is obviously so confidential?” she asked moving closer to the conference table where Clark and Mayson were already headed.

Mayson inserted a chip into the computer on the conference table and returned Lois’s gaze. “Miss Lane, as I stated before, I am not at liberty to discuss any further information with you. You have not been given authorization for the classified detail.”

That's it! Lois screamed in her head. "With all due respect Miss Drake—" she began.

"Detective Drake," Mayson cut in.

"Detective," Lois repeated rather sarcastically. "Clark and I don't keep secrets from each other. Not at work, and not in our personal relationship outside of this office. Therefore, whatever you have to share with Clark or want to ask him to do, comes as a package deal. Capisce?" Staring right into her eyes she folded her arms and stood her ground.

Mayson glanced at Clark. "I agree with Lois," Clark chimed in. "Let's hear what you have to say. Should I chose to accept I can assure you that if it is as dangerous as you say, Lois will have no part in the matter," he said.

The smug smile on Lois's face disappeared as soon as Clark dismissed her from working on the case as if she was a child. Mayson smiled and began to speak, cutting off any hope of a rebuttal from Lois.

"You asked about my relationship with Superman. What help do you need from me that Superman can't directly help you with?" he asked

Mayson smiled. "I like your thought process. I know you both are very familiar with all the gang crimes that are currently happening within our South district of Metropolis." She checked for understanding and when both nodded, she continued. "We have made numerous attempts to try and control the situation with witness protection, informants, plea deals... but everyone we send in comes home in a body bag."

"A mole," Clark said.

"Precisely. Every time one of my agents even gets close, they end up dead. We have taken every precaution we can think of, but they all end up dead." She flipped through the pictures on the screen allowing Clark and Lois to take in all the detailed information. "There has to be a mole within the agency. Anytime I bring in a higher-up, more die and more and more holes in our cases arise and we lose everything," she replied passionately.

"Wonderful, a corrupt agency that's gotten out of hand," Lois chimed in. Mayson glared at her with obvious irritation on her face. "So how do Clark and Superman fit into this picture?" she asked.

"We need a new tactic. Trust me, one we NEVER like to use because it does involve civilians, and we never EVER want to put our own citizens in harm's way." She released the breath she was holding. "The Mayor is very fond of Superman and all the good he has done for the people of Metropolis. With him being the Man of Steel, it gives us the advantage we need to hopefully crack this case. However, if the mole gets wind that Superman is involved, then everything will blow up in our face."

"So you need me to report back to Superman and only involve him when needed." Clark asked.

"Yes... and no." Mayson responded. "The agency is very familiar with the work that you and Miss Lane do. Some of the cases that you have solved would take some of our detectives months to work... and I am not pleased to admit that." She turned away from them to run her hands through her hair, giving them another glimpse of her well-toned backside assets.

Lois grunted. "Okay, so..." she encouraged.

Mayson turned around and looked at Lois and then Clark. "So Miss Lane, that means we need someone on our team that can connect the dots, remain ethical, and help find us the mole who is killing our own, at the same time ruining the good city of Metropolis. We do this and our people will be safe again," she finished, now staring intently at Clark.

"I can assure you that Superman will be more than willing to help you in whatever is needed for the people of Metropolis," he offered.

Mayson smiled. "I have no doubt that he would. I am not as concerned with his need to help as I am with yours, Mr. Kent. If

you choose to help, it requires undercover work that will go deep and, I must warn you, could get sticky. I will do everything in my power to make sure you are safe, but we need Superman there in case... in case—"

"In case you fail to protect him," Lois finished rather annoyed.

Mayson turned her glaring eyes at Lois. "Let's get one thing straight here Miss Lane, I am damn good at my job, and I take it very seriously. So if you are about to question my ability or qualifications to do the job, save your breath," she said, disgusted.

Lois rose from the chair. "You have a lot of nerve. You come in here asking for our help with a problem that YOUR department has obviously not been qualified to handle, and then you want to go and berate me on my choice of words," she replied, equally disgusted.

Mayson took a step closer. "As I recall, I wasn't asking for your help."

Clark quickly stepped in between both ladies. "Detective Drake, Lois, I think this is getting out of hand. No one is questioning anyone's ability to do their job. Right, Lois?" he asked, questioning her with his eyes. Lois finally broke her eye contact with Mayson to look at Clark and stepped back to offer space. Mayson did the same, relaxing her posture from defense mode to a more casual but alert stance.

"Detective Drake—" he began.

"Mayson," she corrected, smiling.

He returned the smile. "Mayson. I have heard enough. Whatever I can do to help the people of Metropolis you have my word I will do."

"Clark!" Lois interjected, stunned that he had all but accepted the position.

"Thank you, Mr. Kent." Mayson beamed.

"Clark," he corrected her.

"Clark," she returned, smiling. "Before you fully accept, there is just one more piece of information you need to be aware of," she said with hesitation.

Lois folded her arms across her chest, fully irritated that her partner was accepting the position to work with Detective Drake without even discussing it with her. Where did that leave her? On the sideline to write stories about how the summer heat is hotter than the previous year? No thank you! She was, after all, the senior reporter on this team. Why did Clark get all the fun?

"I am sure whatever it is we can work it out," he responded. *We?* Lois echoed in her head as she looked from Mayson to Clark.

"The only plausible explanation for why you would make visits to the agency is if you are visiting the office for personal reasons. Clark, we would have to lead people to believe we are an item. This will give you the full access you need to snoop around... and the only harm done would be a few public lunches together."

"Oh, this is a joke!" Lois laughed as she unfolded her arms and walked past Mayson before turning around to face them.

"I don't recall saying something funny," she responded.

"You want my Clark to pretend to be your boyfriend to gather information?" Lois laughed again.

Mayson glanced at Clark, who was eyeing Lois with a concerned look. "Look, Miss Lane, I understand this is not the ideal situation and it will be weird for all of us, but I need this to look as natural as possible and I am the only one that has enough clearance to let him in. A top agent with an award-winning reporter... it makes sense. It will get those in charge scared enough to start making the moves we need while allowing Clark to dig, and both Superman and I will be there to assure his safety," she replied.

"You can spin it anyway you want, M..a..s..o..n," Lois

drawled, “but these criminals will see right through your plan.”

“Look, obviously this is a lot to take in and I am not expecting any decisions right at this moment,” she said looking between the both of them. She reached into her left pocket, grabbed a card out along with a pen, and wrote her number on the card. “I know that the two of you have a lot to talk about.” She tucked the pen back in her jacket pocket and handed the card to Clark. “I put my cell number on the card. I do need an answer by tomorrow.” Lois moved closer towards Clark and glared at Mayson. “Let me know as soon as you both decide. Whatever your decision might be, I thank you for taking the time to listen to my proposal.”

She grabbed her disk out of the computer, gave them both one last smile, and walked out the door, leaving Lois and Clark to digest the information they were just given.

Lois paced the room as Clark adjusted his glasses and watched her deep in thought.

“Can you believe her?” she practically shouted as she threw her hands in the air.

“Lois—” he began.

“I mean, the nerve of her to think that she can come marching in here and demand help, and then pick and choose the help she wants.” She paced back and forth. “She’s just going to have to deal when we tell her no,” she shrugged.

He took a step forward. “Lois, I am not telling her no. I am accepting the assignment,” he stated.

She stopped and turned directly to him. “I’m sorry, what?” she asked in disbelief.

“Lois, you heard Mayson, the crime in Metropolis is out of control, and they need our help to find this mole within the agency.”

“No, Clark, you mean they need you.”

“Lois...”

“No! Since when did we go from being partners professionally and personally to now taking assignments all on our own?” she answered back, pacing again.

“Lois, this is dangerous... and I agree with Mayson that the more people involved the more will get hurt. Besides, I have Superman on my side in case I need any help.”

“Well, your relationship with Mayson won’t take too much faking since you two seem to be on the same page on everything,” she replied sarcastically while motioning with her arms. “Besides, I have just as good a relationship with Superman as you do,” she added a beat later.

“Lois, I know this isn’t going to be easy, but Metropolis needs us right now. I need you right now,” he said, closing the gap.

She sighed and looked away. “Clark, you are asking me to be okay with this, and I can’t do that,” she said, shaking her head.

“Do you understand that you are asking me to watch you risk your life with an assignment that seems impossible, while at the same time pretending to be in a relationship with G.I. Barbie?”

“Lois, you know that I love you. Nothing, and I mean nothing, will happen between Mayson and myself. We will be the most unromantic couple,” he replied.

She waved her hand to stop him in mid-sentence. “Just stop, Clark.” She pinched the bridge of her nose while she blew out a breath. “I don’t want you to take this assignment. I know how that sounds... and I know it sounds like I am only thinking about myself, but I don’t care. I don’t have a good feeling about this, and I don’t want you to do it. Just let the agency figure this out and let us go back to what we do best: being Team Lane/Kent.”

He took a step closer within reach of her. “You know I can’t turn this down. You will see that everything will be okay, and that this will be over as soon as it started.”

Her anger boiled at the surface. A knock at the conference

door interrupts her from responding to his last comment. She turned away from him as he ran his hand through his hair. Jimmy opened the door and could see the tension thick in the room.

“CK, the Mayor is on line one for you.”

“The Mayor?” she questioned. “Well, Mayson doesn’t take any time in securing what she wants,” her icy tone evident.

“Thank you, Jimmy. I will take it in here,” he acknowledged. “Lois, maybe we should continue this later.”

She shook her head and huffed at the same time. “No, Clark, we finish this now. You know how I feel about this. If you pick up that phone and accept this assignment...” her threat left hanging.

“Lois, I have to,” he replied picking up the phone.

They stared at each other for what seemed like the longest moment, and then she swiftly turned on her heel and stormed out of the conference room, leaving Clark to answer the Mayor’s call.

“I’m telling you Perry, there is trouble in paradise,” Jimmy observed as he watched Lois slam the conference door and storm to her desk, rummaging through her papers.

“Judas Priest, I knew that woman was going to be trouble,” he muttered as he carefully approached Lois’s desk. “Lois, is everything okay?”

“Fine, Perry,” she responded coldly as she continued to search her desk shoving papers aside on her desk in a careless manner.

“Well, can I help you find something?” he asked, noticing she was becoming more frustrated by the moment.

She finally found what she was looking for. She grabbed the keys and her purse off the back of her chair along with a single file and moved towards her keyboard.

“You know what, Perry? You can. You can tell my so-called partner in there good luck with his new assignment, while I go and finish our other commitments.” With that, she turned and stormed out of the Planet.

“Is it done?” a brooding voice questioned Mayson.

“It is,” she responded.

“And how did our newest recruit take the news?” he asked.

“He accepted without hesitation as we predicted. Lois Lane, on the other hand, will be a thorn in our side,” she replied, disgusted.

“Well, I can handle Miss Lane. You remain focused on the task at hand. We need to capture the mole within this agency and clean up this city. If we don’t, the Mayor will have our heads and we will all be unemployed.”

“Yes, I don’t need reminding how critical this assignment is. Just keep Lane off my back, and I assure you that Clark and I will get this done.”

“Uh, Clark, do you have a second?” Perry asked after he emerged from the office.

“Sure, Chief,” Clark replied, glancing around the newsroom. “Where’s Lois?” he asked a moment later.

“Well, that’s what I want to talk to you about, son,” he responded.

“She’s still pretty upset, isn’t she?”

“I wouldn’t even dare have Superman take on that woman at this moment.”

Clark sighed. “Perry, I can’t understand why she is being so unreasonable about this. I mean, I know it isn’t the most ideal situation we have ever been in, but for our law enforcement to be asking for help from a reporter and Superman tells us this is serious.”

“Ah, Clark... Lois is a woman. A very strong-headed, opinionated one,” Perry joked.

“And that is one of the reasons I love her as much as I do.”

"Clark, women are creatures from a different planet. I am sure that you two will work this out just as you always do, but try to see her point in this as well. This is one of the largest, if not most dangerous, assignments this newsroom has ever received... and you are asking your partner in every capacity to... well, butt out!" he said casually.

He pondered on Perry's words. "Do you have any idea where she might have been headed?" he asked a moment later.

"I wish I knew, son," Perry responded and patted him on the back before walking back to his office.

Lois fumbled with her keys as she opened her apartment door and dropped her files on the coffee table before they fell out of her arms.

Yeah, pretty sure that was just my award-winning interview, she thought to herself as she shut the door and locked it behind her. She began to take her heels off as she made her way to the kitchen, and grabbed a spoon along with a pint of her favorite chocolate brownie cookie dough chocolate ice cream. Just as she was about to take a much-needed bite, a knock came at her window.

"May I come in?" Superman asked as he hovered outside.

"Yes," she answered, moving from the kitchen to her living room.

"I just finished speaking with Clark. He told me about the assignment."

"Mmm," she responded, giving nothing away on her face.

"Clark's worried about you," he said, a beat later adding, "we both are."

"Well, I appreciate your concern, Superman, but I'm fine. You can tell Clark that I am no longer upset." She turned away and headed back to the kitchen.

"While I would be inclined to believe you, Lois, the evidence says otherwise." He stood with his arms across his chest.

"And what evidence would that be?" she asked.

"The fact that it is only mid-afternoon and you are here eating what looks to be an entire pint of chocolate brownie cookie dough ice cream gave you away." He pointed as she scooped another spoonful in her mouth.

She looked at the spoon she slid in her mouth and then immediately placed it on the counter.

"Okay, I'm mad. No, I'm furious," she replied a moment later. "Clark and I are supposed to be partners in every way and he made this decision without me. He just accepted without even thinking about how this could affect us." She started to pace again for what seemed like the millionth time that day.

"Lois, knowing Clark as well as I do... you were the first thing he thought about when it came to this decision. This will be a highly dangerous situation and Clark couldn't bear the thought of you being in harm's way."

"So, it's okay that I have to worry about him being in harm's way?" she asked.

He didn't have an immediate response. After a few minutes, he drew closer to Lois. "Lois, Clark is a very resourceful individual and more than capable of handling this situation."

"That doesn't make this any easier. We are just as close in working together and I would have you and Clark there to protect me," she responded.

"Lois, I'm sorry, but I have to side with Clark on this one. I do think you need to sit this one out," he said sternly.

"You too!" She huffed and walked past him. "Well, let me tell you and Clark something. I have done crazier stuff way before you two ever strolled into Metropolis, and if he thinks I am going to sit on the sidelines and let him do this all by himself then he is crazy. I will just find my own avenue to work this story like I always have in the past," she said nonchalantly.

"Lois—"

"Superman, I appreciate your concern... but I just had an idea and I really must get going. I am sure you have someone or something more important to be saving so..." She motioned to the window.

"Are you throwing me out?" he asked.

She shrugged. "It does sound and look that way doesn't it?" she replied.

After a few moments of silence he retreated. "Okay, Lois. I see there is no more arguing at this moment, but this subject isn't over. Neither Clark nor I will allow you to put yourself in harm's way," he said sternly.

She just smiled. "Thank you for stopping by Superman. Be safe," she replied and then turned to grab her purse and keys. She rushed at the door with a new plan in place.

"Detective Drake, you have a visitor," an agent said as he knocked on her office door.

Mayson looked up from her desk to see Lois standing in her doorway. She sighed and motioned for Lois to come in.

"Please, Miss Lane... have a seat." She gestured to the chair in front of her desk.

"No need, I don't plan on being here too long."

"Well then, what can I do for you, Lois?" she asked.

"This... uh... assignment that you asked Clark to, uh, 'partner' with you on — how much danger is he really in?"

Mayson swallowed. "Lois, I can understand your concern for Clark. I wish I could tell you that he would not be in any danger... but then your reporter skills would see that my story is full of holes and lies." She chuckled. "I promise you that I will do everything in my power to ensure his safety and make sure that he comes safely home to you."

Lois remained cool, not giving anything away. "I'm sure that you will. Let's get one thing straight here Detective Drake: Clark is very important to me. I am not one who loves to share things, so understand this. Cross the line with Clark... and you will answer to me."

Mayson smiled. "Lois, if I didn't know any better, I would believe you just issued a threat to a law enforcement officer."

"File a complaint. One more thing. Mayson, I may be forbidden from working directly with you and Clark on this assignment, but nothing will keep me from doing what I do best. If there is something in your... department, then I will find it." She straightened, adjusted her suit jacket, and walked out of Mayson's office.

It was after 6 p.m. when Lois returned back to her apartment to find Clark waiting at the door. She paused, seeing him standing there, and then slowly moved to open the door.

"Lois, where have you been? I have been worried sick about you," he said, relief evident in his voice.

"Working on a lead, Clark. Look, now is not a good time." She finished unlocking the door but refused to walk in.

He sighed. "Lois, you have to talk to me about this."

She chuckled. "You know, that's what I thought this morning too — until you showed me that we can make decisions without talking with each other. Good night!" she snapped and opened the door and shut it behind her leaving him in the hallway.

As soon as the door shut, she backed against the door and slowly sank to the floor to allow today's events to sink in.

Clark paced around his apartment, angry at the way Lois had foiled any attempt to talk. "Mom, Dad, I just think she is overreacting a little too much on this... don't you think?"

"No," Martha responded.

"I have to agree with your mother on this one, Clark," Jonathan added.

"I don't believe this," he responded in disbelief. "If I don't do

this, more innocent lives will be in danger as well as the men and women who are trying to protect us,” he argued.

“Son, no one is saying that you shouldn’t do this,” he responded.

“Okay, now I am confused.”

“Clark, Lois is upset because you made this decision for the both of you without even consulting her. You didn’t even give her the opportunity to acknowledge her concerns and feelings around the subject,” Martha said.

“Mom, I—”

“Clark, listen. Being the other part of you for so long has given you the ability to just act and help without even thinking twice. The moment you decided to make Lois a part of your life, you also included her into that other part of you as well,” she replied cutting him off.

“You’re right. You both are always right. I keep forgetting how hard things can be for Lois. Things would be so much easier if I just told her about the other... part of me already.” He sighed.

“Have you thought anymore about that?” Jonathan asked.

“Yes, Dad... I have.” He smiled through the phone. “I know Lois is the one and I know now that our relationship is headed in the direction of marriage. I plan on telling her the whole truth. It’s just... I will after this whole mole thing is taken care of.”

“That’s our boy,” both parents responded.

A knock sounded on Clark’s apartment door. “Mom, Dad, I have to go — someone is at the door. I love you too... goodbye.” He hung up the phone as he walked towards the door.

“Detective Drake,” he said, surprised.

She smiled and gave him a once-over. In that moment he realized he was wearing only his sweat pants, leaving his chest bare for Mayson to get a thorough perusal.

“Uh, please come on in. Let me just go grab a shirt.” He motioned her in, and shut the door behind her.

“Please don’t feel the need to on my part.” She smiled slyly, and walked into the living room before turning around.

He huffed, and placed an undershirt over his head.

“I apologize for intruding at this late hour,” she offered a moment later.

He waved her off. “Really, it’s no intrusion at all. What can I do for you?” he asked.

“I know I said I could give you twenty-four hours to decide whether you will accept this assignment, and I hate to pressure you. My bosses are anxious down at the agency, and I just wanted to come by and see if there was anything I could do to help you make this decision... or at least make you more comfortable in making the decision,” she said sweetly.

Lois raced to Clark’s apartment, feeling terrible about how she left things with him earlier. She was mad — still was, and had every right to be — but couldn’t take the silence any longer. She missed him. She missed being with him and being close to him. She climbed the stairs to his front porch and was about to knock on the front door when she heard a female voice inside.

“Mayson!” she said in a loathing voice as she peered into the window.

“Mayson, as I mentioned to you this morning, whatever Superman and I can do to help we will. We both love the city of Metropolis and its people and want to see the crime in this city to disappear,” he responded sincerely.

Mayson took a step closer and squeezed his arm. “Thank you, Clark,” she said sweetly.

“Ugh... I am going to break her well-manicured fingers,” Lois said, disgusted.

He smiled at Mayson... but a loud crash came from outside of his apartment door.

“What was that?” he asked, concerned.

“I don’t know. Stand back,” she motioned as she pulled the gun from behind her back and cautiously moved towards the

door. He was not used to taking the back seat but decided to let her do her job.

Mayson opened the door with her gun extended, and stepped out to see Lois standing in the doorway.

“Lois, are you alright?” he asked, concerned, moving past Mayson, who lowered her gun and placed it behind her back.

“I’m fine, Clark. It was just a ceramic pot that fell from the roof. Luckily, I heard it in time to move. Mayson, what are you doing here?” she asked, ignoring him.

“I just stopped by to make sure Clark didn’t have any questions from our meeting this morning,” she responded.

Lois walked over to his phone. “Hmm... are the phones broken now?” she asked sarcastically.

“Lois...” he interjected.

Mayson just smiled, but retreated knowing that an argument wasn’t going to get them anywhere. “Well, I really must be getting going. Lois, Clark.” She nodded as she moved her way to the door.

He followed behind her and opened the door to let her out. “Good night,” Mayson said to Clark and then turned to Lois.

“Good night!” Lois shouted from the living room... with a ridiculous wave. He turned and gave Mayson a brief nod and shut the door behind her.

“Lois—”

“So what was she really doing here?” She cut him off, her defenses back up again.

“Exactly what she said she was doing here. Do you not trust me?” he asked, a bit defensive.

She moved around his living room, touching things with her finger as she thought about her next words.

“Of course I trust you Clark,” she said, giving up and stopping in place. “It’s her I don’t trust.” She pointed to the door.

“Lois, you know that I would never do anything to hurt you. There was nothing going on here,” he responded.

“Really?” She responded with a nervous laugh. “Because just before I almost lost my head, it looked like she was grabbing onto your arm and you two were smiling at each other,” she replied.

“Lois, you’re jealous!” he laughed.

Her nervous laugh was back. “Ha, me jealous?” She pointed to herself. “Of her?” she said a moment later.

He smiled. “Yes, her.”

“Now who is being ridiculous?” she said, pacing around the room again. “You know, it’s getting late. I’d better get back to my apartment.” She hurried to make it to the front door.

“No so fast.” He grabbed her and held her against his chest.

“Lois Lane, amazing reporter, dodging a question,” he joked.

“Ha ha,” she responded, breaking out of his hold.

“Lois...” He paused as he could see the tension was back between them.

“Clark, it is getting really late,” she replied nervously.

He sighed. “Lois, since when did our relationship go back to that awkward stage before we started dating?”

She let out a breath. “I don’t know... but I hate it,” she replied almost like a whine.

He moved closer. “Lois, I don’t want to fight with you. Today has been one of the toughest days I have had in a long time,” he finished, closing the distance between them and rubbing his hands up and down her arm.

“I don’t want to fight with you either,” she agreed.

They stared at each other for a long moment. He slowly lowered his head down to her and placed a soft kiss on her lips. She returned the kiss and it began to deepen. As soon as it began to deepen, she broke apart.

“No.” She stepped back and turned away from him.

“No?” he repeated in disbelief.

“I’m still mad at you, Clark. Really, really mad at you.” She

sighed, turning away from him.

"I know you are. And you have every right to be."

"Wait, what?" she said in disbelief that he agreed with her so easily.

He chuckled. "Lois, you were right when you said that this should have been a decision we made together. I am so used to making decisions on my own, this relationship is still teaching me that whatever decisions we do make will impact us together."

She looked surprised. "That's so funny."

"Funny?" he repeated.

She smiled. "I was just telling Superman that earlier today," she answered.

He smiled back. "Lois, I'm sorry. I should have been more considerate of your feelings this morning and what this would do to our relationship. I love you... and I do care about what you think," he added.

"I love you too. As much as I hate to admit it, I feel terrible telling you not to take this assignment because I didn't like it, but Clark I am very much afraid. This assignment is dangerous... as much as you try to gloss over that or try to hide it, we can't ignore the facts that Mayson gave us today. If anything ever happened to you, I... I..." She swallowed and couldn't finish her sentence.

"Lois, nothing is going to happen to me," he replied, moving closer to embrace her.

"You can assure me all you want; that doesn't make this feeling disappear. The fact that we aren't even allowed to work closely on this, and your working with Mayson, makes this more difficult," she responded. He was about to respond, but she cut him off. "Clark, the only way I might even be remotely okay with this situation is if I can do research on my own like we always do. I could work behind the scenes." She spoke with the excitement back in her voice.

"Lois, I don't think that is a good idea."

"Why not?" she whined.

"Because, this is very dangerous."

"You're right. However, no more dangerous for you than it is for me. We both will have Superman protecting us... and no one will ever know I am helping. You collect the data and information and then we will work on it together back here." She paused. "Clark, I promise to be extra careful so that no one knows I am on the case and it still allows me to keep an eye on you... and Mayson," she finished.

"Lois, for the sixth time there is nothing between Mayson and myself," he emphasized again.

"I know Clark." She smiled. "I believe you. This is my offer... so take it or leave it."

"And if I chose to leave it?" he asked, raising his eyebrow.

"Then you work with Mayson... and I will work my own leads and not share," she said, raising her own eyebrow in response.

"All right, I see that we need to compromise. As long as you stay far away from anything potentially dangerous then you and I can work our own theories." He smiled. "Now, can we please stop talking about this and get back to just being Lois and Clark." He enclosed his arms around her waist.

She wrapped her arms around his neck and smiled. "Hmm... I like the sound of that," she said as he started to trace kisses down her neck.

The kissing continued as they moved to the couch and playfully fell on each other. "Ah... Clark!" she squealed as he landed on top of her.

Daily Planet Newsroom-Tuesday, 8:30 a.m.

Lois laughed as they entered the Planet newsroom arm in arm.

"That's five dollars you owe me. Cough it up," she joked,

arriving at her desk.

"I have a better idea," he said grabbing her into his embrace. "How about I take you to dinner?" he asked.

"Well, looks like you two are back to normal," Perry said, rounding the corner.

Clark released his grip on Lois. "Yeah, I would say we are doing just fine." He smiled and winked at her.

"Chief, you all right?" he asked after noticing Perry's attention was elsewhere.

"Uh... yeah... fine," he responded. "Clark, uh... Detective Drake is here to start your, uh, 'special assignment'. She's in the conference room." He motioned in the opposite direction.

Lois and Clark looked at each other, and he gave her a reassuring glance.

"Uh, Lois, how are we doing with the NIA story that you both were working on?"

"It's coming along, Chief. I have a meeting today with a representative down at their headquarters. You don't have to worry about me. Clark and I had a long talk and I am not going to interrupt his business with the agency. You can relax." She smiled.

"Oh, Lois..." Perry nervously laughed. "I didn't think for one second you would. Uh, Chip what are you doing with that machine? Any more ink and we will close up shop," he yelled, turning his attention from her to the copy boy.

"Saved by the copy boy," she laughed.

He chuckled. "Well, I'd better get in there." He gestured towards the conference room doors.

"Yeah, you'd better," she sighed. She walked over and placed a slow kiss on his lips. "Be careful."

He kissed her once again. "Always!"

It was after 2:30 p.m. when Lois returned back to the office. She looked toward the conference room, where the door was still closed and the shades drawn.

"Hey, Lois, welcome back," Jimmy called. "How was the interview?" he asked.

"Eh, a dead end. The NIA is doing everything and anything to stonewall me from finding out the truth. I need to get tricky," she responded. "Is Clark still here with Mayson?" she asked looking back at the conference room.

His gaze following hers, he laughed. "Yeah, they've hardly come out all day. Just a few bathroom breaks, otherwise they have been cooped up working."

She continued to stare at the conference room. "Well, I am sure there is a lot of information to go over." She sat down tapping her pen on her desk.

"Well, if you need to do some digging, that Detective Drake has some pretty impressive contacts who could help you," he offered.

She rolled her eyes and placed the pen down on the desk. "I would die before I asked her for help," she replied.

"Well, I think we made great progress today," Mayson commented after taking a much-needed stretch.

"I think we did too. We got through a lot of files today and cross-referenced three or four leads that we can look into, to start with," he responded.

"I agree. My God, it's after 2:30 p.m.," she exclaimed. "I think we should take a much-needed lunch break."

He looked at his watch. "You're right." He stared at the door and back at Mayson. "I am sure Lois is back from her interview. I will see if she wants to join us for lunch."

"Umm... Clark?" Mayson stopped him in his tracks. "You have to remember that part of this assignment is that we need to make people think we are an item. We have done a great job on the paperwork trail, but we need to make some progress on that

end as well. I thought we could start with lunch... just the two of us."

He sighed and looked back at the conference room door before glancing back at her. "You're right. Where shall we go?"

"No, I am not going to take no for an answer. Mr. Henderson, let me be clear, you can continue to spend your hours and dollars on trying to stonewall me, but sooner or later I will find out the truth," she said sternly, tapping her pen. "Mmm... yeah, you do that." She smiled to herself as she hung up the phone.

She started to drum on the keyboard when Clark approached. "It sounded by the conversation just now you haven't had much luck with the NIA today."

"Hey." She smiled seeing him. "Ah, yes... you know our government." She sighed. She looked over to see Mayson talking with Jimmy. "How is your day going so far?"

He followed Lois's eyes towards Mayson and then turned back to her. "Good. We have a few leads to go on."

"Oh, that's great!" She beamed. "Just taking a break?"

His smile faded and he shoved his hands in his pockets.

"We're headed to lunch. You know... to start the other part of the assignment."

"Oh!" she gasped and grabbed a file on her desk and moved past him.

"Lois, I was thinking about later tonight... and that dinner I owe you."

She smiled. "Well, I—"

"Clark, are we ready?" Mayson asked as she approached the two of them. "Oh, hi, Lois." She smiled.

"Mayson," she replied, losing all trace of her smile. "Well, I guess you two better get going. I have lots of work to get done as well." She glanced between the two and then back at her desk.

"I'll see you later," he said as he bent down and kissed her on the cheek.

Lois watched them both exit the Daily Planet together, touching her cheek where he had just placed a kiss a moment ago.

"So, how long have you and Lois worked together?" Mayson asked as she sipped her tea.

"Three years," he responded. "Three long, but wonderful years." He smiled.

"You really love her, don't you?" she questioned.

He smiled and did not even hesitate. "With all my heart," he answered.

"Mayson, Mayson Drake?" a blond-haired man asked as he passed by their table.

"Oh my God, Chief Smith. I haven't seen you in years. What are you doing in town?" she asked after they embraced in a hug.

"I'm actually here on business for your agency." He looked over at Clark. "I don't think we have been properly introduced."

"My apologies. Clark Kent, meet Chief Inspector James Smith from the Washington D.C. headquarters. Chief Smith, meet my boyfriend Clark Kent, award-winning reporter for the *Daily Planet*."

Clark and James shook hands and eyed each other. Clark looked uncomfortable at the mention of being introduced as Mayson's boyfriend, but didn't lead James to think any differently.

"Well Mayson, he's a looker. I wish you two the best of luck. In fact, I look forward to seeing the both of you tonight at the agency dinner," he stated.

"Agency dinner?" Clark questioned as he looked over at Mayson.

"I had no idea," she replied, looking equally curious.

"Oh, well I hope you two didn't have other plans," he smiled.

"We would be honored to be there," she interjected quickly.

"Great!" he exclaimed and smiled at them. "See you later tonight," he said as he waved goodbye and headed in the other direction.

Clark and Mayson re-took their seats and settled back into lunch. "Mayson, about tonight... I can't go with you. You mentioned we would have to do a few lunches and make a few appearances at your agency... but not dinners," he finished in a whisper.

"Clark, I had no idea we would have to do any dinners. I picked this restaurant because I knew Chief Inspector Smith would be coming through here. I had a hunch from our meeting together earlier today." She looked around. "Clark, what if he has something to do with what is going on in the agency?"

He pondered her question. "You could be right, but I promised Lois..."

"I know... and I am sorry. If there was something I could do to get you out of this, I would. You saw his face when I introduced you to him — he didn't like it. Your appearance tonight could help us draw out another clue," she said. "Clark, please... I promise you we will make it up to Lois. Our agency needs this." Her eyes were pleading.

He nodded, and sighed. "All right."

They quickly finished their lunch and he dropped her back off at the agency, then made his way back to the Planet.

"There you are!" Lois yelled as Clark came through the elevators. "I was looking all over for you. I need your opinion on my story," she said grabbing his arm towards her desk. "So after you left I was going through all my stacks of files and I realized that there was one piece of information I was missing. Mr. Henderson must be involved; it makes sense. He was..." She stopped talking when she realized that he wasn't even paying any attention to her. "Clark, am I boring you?" she asked, irritated that he wasn't listening.

"Ah, Lois, I'm sorry. You were saying?"

She looked at him, concerned. "Clark, are you all right? Something is wrong. Tell me!" she demanded.

"Nothing is wrong," he responded, rubbing his hands up and down her arms. "I just have to... to... ah... cancel dinner for tonight," he said.

She looked puzzled. "What do you mean? Why do you have to cancel dinner?"

"It's a long story, but the head of the agency's Washington D.C. headquarters is here and the next thing I knew he had asked Mayson and I to dinner," he replied.

She laughed. "Let me get this straight. You are cancelling dinner with your girlfriend — the one you love — to have dinner with your fake girlfriend after you spent all day with her?" she asked trying to stay calm.

"Lois, I know. I promise I will make it up to you, I swear," he said trying to defuse the situation.

She just shook her head, furious with him. "Just go, Clark. The world of Metropolis needs you." She sighed and grabbed her purse and made the way to the elevator.

"Lois, please," he said, chasing after her.

She got into the elevator, and he made it just in time before it closed. "Lois, wait!"

"Clark, I have to go... and you have a date to get ready for." She pressed the button again and he let the doors close between them.

Clark picked Mayson up promptly at seven and they entered the Italian restaurant to meet the rest of her team.

"Okay, so from what I gathered after you dropped me off, there will be five of us here tonight. Chief Inspector Smith, my captain, the Mayor, two of Metropolis's senators, and of course, myself as their highest ranking agent. The discussion will center

around the crime in the South district, but don't be surprised if at some point they talk in code or excuse themselves from the table. They refuse to discuss too much in front of their significant others."

"I will follow your lead," he responded, nodding.

"Speaking of lead... the question might come up as to how we met. We need to have our story straight."

He sighed. "Well, let's just say we were introduced after I cracked a crime story that you were in charge of. That should leave it open without having to provide too much detail."

"And how long have we been together?" she asked

"A couple of weeks. We are still a new couple... which will look believable when we aren't all over each other. They will think we are still in the awkward stages."

She smiled. She looped her arm through his and they made their way inside the restaurant.

"Lois, what are you doing back here? I thought you left?" Perry asked when he noticed it was past 8 p.m. and she was back at the Planet.

"My date cancelled. I have work to do."

"Clark at that dinner with the mucky mucks and Mayson?" he asked.

"Yes," she responded, typing furiously on her computer.

"Lois, it's late; you should be getting home," he insisted.

"Perry, I need to make headway on this case, and without having Clark on my side, it's taking longer. I went home today with what I thought was a lead and I had to come back to check it out. And I was right!" She stood, excited. "I can implicate Mr. Henderson in the NIA cover-up on the war missiles. I can't believe I didn't see it before."

"Well, great job Lois. Tomorrow's another day... we can take a look at it in the morning."

"Chief, this can't wait for morning. The NIA shipment records say here that the missiles have all been disposed of, but according to Henderson's signed shipment records, there's a large shipment scheduled to leave tonight. That could be the missing missiles that he is planning to sell to terrorists. I need to get over there." She stood, grabbing her purse.

"Now, Lois, hang on for one second. I do not want you going down there by yourself. You could get hurt. Maybe we should wait until tomorrow when Clark can go with you." Concern was evident in his voice.

"Perry, Clark is engaged in other business. I can't wait on this. I promise if there is even a moment something doesn't feel right, I will call for help."

She ran toward the elevators, on her way to the NIA headquarters.

"Clark, I read the piece you did on the dangers of mind control. That was nice work you did there. No surprise that you won the Pulitzer on that piece," the senator complimented.

"Thank you. It was an honor to receive the award. Although I wouldn't have won it without the help from my partner, Lois."

"Ah, yes, Lois Lane. We are familiar with her work as well. You two make a great team. Mayson, you might want to hang on to this one." He chuckled as he raised his glass to Clark's.

Lois pulled up close to the building to stay well-hidden. "I know you're here, Henderson."

She got out of the car and made her way to the rear of the building, only to find exactly what she was looking for. Behind the building was a semi-truck with weapons being loaded in the back by men with guns all dressed in black.

"Time to call in the police," she said as she grabbed the phone from her purse.

As soon as she began to dial, she felt a cold barrel on the

back of her neck. "Well, Miss Lane, what a pleasure to see you again. I guess you had more questions for me."

"Henderson."

"So what was it, Lois? What led you directly to me?"

"You had the most to gain: the money, the power, the revenge on all those who called your ideas foolish."

He smiled. "Hmm... and I will have the last laugh. It's a shame that you won't be around to see it." He laughed as he pushed her toward the men with the guns.

"Tie her up," he directed as they approached the men.

"You won't get away with this."

He laughed again. "Somehow, Lois, I think you're wrong about that. By the time anyone puts two and two together, they will be picking pieces of you up everywhere."

"Superman will stop you, even if I don't make it."

"Ah, yes, the Man of Steel. Somehow, I don't think even he will know what is happening. Stick her in the bomb shelter... no one will hear her screams in there."

Lois was tied to the chair with rope. "Superman, help! Superman!" she screamed. After minutes of screaming and no sign of Superman, she knew it was hopeless. She struggled to free herself but it was useless. She was going to die. The last conversation between her and Clark played through her head as she remembered telling him to just leave after he cancelled their date.

Ugh, I wouldn't even be here if he didn't cancel. "Oh, Clark..." she cried.

The door to the shelter opened and Henderson walked through the door. "Well, Lois, as much as I have enjoyed our time, it is time for us to part ways. It's time for fireworks!"

Two men followed behind Henderson. "Grab her, and let's go," he instructed as he walked out of the bomb shelter. She tried to fight the two men off, but they were just too powerful for her. The men tied her to the pole in the loading zone where all traces of the missiles had vanished.

"Now Lois, you know what happens when the fire hits the fuse, right?" Henderson chuckled. "The great Lois Lane — it's a shame such a pretty face has to die so young. Goodbye, Lois."

She waited until he was far enough away, and then screamed at the top of her lungs. "Superman, help!"

"Clark, what a delight you are. I can see why Mayson is so taken with you," Chief Inspector Smith commented.

He smiled. "Ah, thank you. Such a kind compliment. Mayson's pretty terrific too," he returned.

She gripped his hand in hers and smiled back. The gesture threw Clark off, but he quickly recovered and smiled at her. She turned to see the inspector staring at the two of them and then looked away.

"Well, gentlemen, now that our stomachs have been fed, we should discuss the strategy in trying to reduce the crime in this city. Things have gotten out of hand."

"I concur," one of the senators spoke up. "The people of this city are growing tired of the failed attempts and if we don't get this under control soon... we will all be under the gun."

Clark and Mayson listened intently knowing this is the information they were looking for.

"Superman, help!"

Clark's head snapped up as soon as he heard the cry. Mayson looked in his direction, having seen something cross come over his face.

"Are you okay?" she whispered.

"Mayson, I'm sorry... I just remembered that I promised my mother I would take care of her pest control problem, and I'm late... I have to go," he whispered back.

"Gentlemen, please excuse me, but I am afraid I have to go," Clark interrupted as he stood from the table to leave.

"Excuse me," she said as she quickly got up from the table to chase after him.

"Clark, wait!" she called after him.

"Mayson, I'm sorry, I have to go," he said, rushing out the door.

"Clark, this is the reason we are here. I know helping your mom's pest control is important... but this is really important."

"Mayson, I'm sorry. I have to go. I will talk to you tomorrow."

She watched Clark rush out of the restaurant wondering what really could have caused him to leave so abruptly.

"Oh God, I don't want to die... not tonight!" Lois panicked, as the fuse got closer and closer to her feet. She struggled and tried to break free, but nothing worked.

"Lois!"

"Superman, help!" she screamed as he landed in front of her. He blew the fuse out before it reached her feet and rushed to untie her from the explosives behind her.

"Are you okay?" he asked, concerned.

"I'm fine, thank you," she replied catching her breath.

"Who did this to you?"

"It was Henderson. I was finishing the story that Clark and I were working on related to the NIA, and it clicked tonight that it had to be Henderson. I came down to check it out, but he was already waiting for me. He's getting away and we have to stop him."

"You call the police, and I will go get him. Which way was he headed?"

"He left five minutes ago, toward the Metropolis air bay. They were in a semi-truck," she responded.

Superman took off, while Lois called the police.

"Lois!" Clark yelled through her apartment door as he knocked.

She opened the door and was immediately engulfed in his arms. "Are you okay?" Concern etched his face.

"Clark, I'm fine," she said, breaking the embrace. "Luckily, Superman got there in time to save me and catch the bad guys."

"Yeah, he called and explained what happened. Lois, I am so sorry I wasn't there with you. If I had been with you, this might have never happened."

"Clark, you can't blame yourself for this. You can't be with me every waking moment to ensure that I won't be in danger," she said as she took a seat on her couch. He followed, keeping his hand firmly around hers.

"What possessed you to go down there all by yourself?"

"I got my lead and I followed it. I had planned to call for back-up but it just didn't work out that way."

"Lois, if something had happened to you tonight I would have never forgiven myself. I won't always be around to save—he cut himself off before he said more. "You know, make sure you are safe."

"Clark, this isn't the first time I've been in trouble, and I am sure it won't be the last. I'm fine. Relax. How was your dinner with Mayson?"

"Different."

"Different," she repeated. "Different good or different bad?"

"Just different. I mean, we were asked questions about how we met and things... it just didn't feel right. It was like my body was there, but my heart wasn't."

"Oh, Clark," she moaned as she leaned into his chest and wrapped her arms around him. He held her tight and pushed the hair out of her face and kissed the top of her head.

"We're okay, right?" he asked.

She smiled. "Yeah, we're okay. Tonight put it all into perspective. The moment before I thought there was no hope, and

Superman wasn't going to make it... all I could think about was how we left things. I would have never forgiven myself if the conversation we had earlier was the last one we had. I love you."

"And I you, Lois," he said as he captured her lips for a passionate kiss.

"Trouble in paradise, Mayson?"

"James, I have no idea what you are talking about," she responded, dumbfounded.

"The way your boyfriend ran out of here... was a topic of discussion, after the crime issue, of course."

"Well, I appreciate your concern, James, but everything is fine."

"You're not getting soft now, are you Mayson?" he chuckled.

"Chief, unless there is anything else I can do you tonight, I will be heading home."

James grabbed her arm and pulled her back. "Just remember, stay on track with the assignment at hand. Don't make me regret picking you for this."

She removed his grasp and fixed her dress. "I'm not a child, and I don't need to be scolded like one. I know the assignment at hand and will have no trouble delivering. I believe my success rate has proven that. Good night, James," she replied sternly.

"Good night, Mayson."

"Clark! Clark, where are you?" Lois screamed around the Planet trying to locate him. "Jimmy, have you seen Clark?"

"I think he's in the conference room with Mayson."

Lois walked to the Planet's conference room but paused outside the door when she heard commotion on the inside.

What on earth is going on in there? She turned the knob on the door and all but fainted as she stepped in the room. Tears sprang to her eyes as she witnessed Clark and Mayson in a passionate embrace.

"What on God's green earth is going on in here?" she shouted.

"Lois!" He looked at her as he tried to straighten his tie. "We were just... uh..."

"Just ending our relationship as we know it, you double-crossing sorry piece of—"

Mayson hung over Clark as a smile crept over her face. "Did you really think you could keep him satisfied?"

"No.... no.... no..." she shouted.

"NO!" Lois awoke from her dream in a cold sweat. "Clark!" she yelled as she took in her surroundings and realized she was in her bedroom. Relief washed over her that it was all just a dream.

The Daily Planet -Wednesday — 8:30 a.m.

"Good morning, Lois."

"Good morning, Jimmy. Is Clark in yet?"

"Actually, yeah. He was in really early this morning. I believe Mayson called him about something important. They have been working in the conference room for over an hour now."

"They have?" she asked, puzzled.

"Yep. Oh crap, I forgot the Chief wanted to have his copy of the paper by 8:30 a.m. I gotta go, Lois." Jimmy ran off before she could ask another question.

She turned her attention to the conference room with the door shut and shades drawn. The eeriness of her dream the night before left an uneasy feeling in her stomach. She loved Clark, he loved her, and she knew it was crazy to even think that he would be capable of doing what he had done in her dream.

I think I am going insane, she thought as she walked towards the conference room. She paused in front of the door and took a deep breath. *Oh, this is ridiculous*. She knocked on the door and then opened it slowly.

"Clark!" she called as she stepped in.

“Lois,” he said as he looked up from the desk. “I’ll be right back Mayson.”

As they left the conference room, he shut the door behind him. As soon as he turned around, she flew into his embrace.

“Lois, are you alright?” he asked, concerned.

“I’m fine.” She laughed a sigh of relief. “I just had the worst nightmare last night, and I just really needed to see you this morning.” She hugged tighter.

“Do you want to talk about it?”

“No.” She shook her head. “I just want to stay like this.” She burrowed her head into his chest.

The conference room door behind them opened and Mayson walked out.

“Oh, excuse me,” she said as she maneuvered around them with an empty coffee cup.

“Good morning, Mayson,” Lois said as she moved to her desk.

“Lois,” she answered as she filled her coffee mug. She turned to Clark. “We’d better get back to work. It’s going to be a long day, and we have that appointment early this afternoon.”

“Right. I’ll be right there.”

“I guess that answers what your day looks like. Will I get to see you at all today?”

He smiled. “Dinner at 7p.m. I will pick you up at your place.” He kissed her on the cheek and headed back to the conference room.

“Clark, I know this hasn’t been easy, and you have had to sacrifice a lot of your time with Lois, so I wanted to thank you for all that you are doing.”

“You’re welcome, Mayson. Anything I can do for the city of Metropolis.”

“I would like to extend my thanks to Superman as well... for all he has done,” she added.

“I will be sure to pass them along to him.”

“We are going to need him soon. All the leads we have been finding and connecting the dots is leading us to our mole within the agency. He is starting to slip up and make costly mistakes. We think we may have isolated it down to two people within the division.”

“The Chief and the Senator for the South district.”

“Yes. I would rather it be neither, but the Chief would be... be...”

“Betrayal,” he finished for her. “Hopefully that isn’t the case, but we need to be ready to deal with it in case it is.”

“I’ll be fine, Clark. The kind of work that I deal with on a daily basis has cured my shock overtime that anything could happen.”

“So, let’s discuss our next plan of action. You mentioned you need Superman’s assistance. What are you thinking?”

“I’m thinking we can set a trap. It would involve undercover work on all three of our parts.”

“Undercover?”

“Yes.” She smiled. “I need to draw out the mole. What a better way to do that than to let the mole think I crossed to the dark side and want in on the business. I am the lead agent in the agency and I could sell the silence factor along with making sure evidence never makes it to the DA,” she explained, pacing around the conference room.

“That could work. I could end up being an asset since I am the reporter who could persuade the media and the people of Metropolis to believe whoever we want to be the bad guy. We can act as the ultimate inside deal.”

“Precisely.” She beamed. “Is this what it is like when you work with Lois?” she asked.

He smiled. “Yeah.”

She smiled in return and the room fell silent. He cleared his

throat. “The only problem with our method is that they already have a good system in place being kept hidden and covered up.”

“Right, but they know we are getting close. However, if they can add us to their payroll then they would not have to worry about a single thing... and they would have unlimited power to the city. In my experience, people kill for power.”

He nodded. “I think it’s worth a shot. I will fill Superman in on the details and we can coordinate. When do we want to make our move?”

“Tomorrow, which means we may need to regroup later this evening with the details. Maybe I can stop by your place later this evening to discuss?” she asked.

“Mayson, tonight won’t be good... Lois and I...”

“Clark, I know the sacrifices you have to make with Lois, but if we can do this tomorrow you never have to worry about this again. We need to stay focused and finish this once for all.”

He ran his hand through his hair. “Okay, Mayson. Would 8 p.m. work?”

She smiled. “I’ll see you then.”

“Hey, so for dinner tonight I thought we could try this new Thai place that received great reviews.”

“Yeah, about that...”

“Why do I get the impression from your tone that you are cancelling on me?” The frustration in her voice was evident.

“Lois, Mayson and I have a plan to end this. We narrowed it down to possibly two people who could be the mole. We are looking to implement whatever strategy we come up with tomorrow.”

“We?”

“Yes. Our plan is to market a one-stop shop. A dirty top agent (Mayson), a reporter who can sway the people of Metropolis and the media in one direction (me), and the ultimate piece of having Superman as the insurance. A package the current crime leader can’t pass up.”

She turned and faced him. “Do you really think you both will be able to sell this?” she asked. “Clark, I am concerned for your safety. This is dangerous.” Fear was now evident in her voice.

“I think we have a great shot, we just need to nail down the details so it will run smoothly. Besides, I will have Superman protecting us.” They stared at each other for what seemed like a long time. “Lois, you have that look in your eye. Tell me what you are thinking.”

She shook her head. “I don’t have a good feeling about this. This whole process, my dreams, everything. Clark, I’m really worried about you.”

“I know you are. I assure you that I will be okay, and that this will be over before you know it.”

“What time do you have to meet her?”

“She is coming to my place around 8 p.m.”

“And I guess this meeting is invitation only?” she asked.

“Lois...”

“I know, I know,” she chimed in. “Clark.” She placed her hand on his chest and looked him deep in the eye. “Promise me after the meeting that you will talk to me, and tell me what you are planning. I know that you feel like you will have everything covered, but I still think it will be good if you have someone on the outside, like me, aware of the plan in case something doesn’t go as planned.”

“I promise.” He bent down and captured her lips in a kiss. “I have to go. Will you please promise me to stay out of trouble and don’t do anything stupid until I am with you.”

She laughed. “Yeah, yeah... go! I love you.” She kissed him again.

“I love you too.”

Lois’s Apartment-Wednesday-11:30 p.m.

“Coming,” Lois called as she climbed out of bed and made her way to the front door. “Clark, come in,” she motioned as she opened the front door and let him through. “How was your meeting?”

“Long, but good. We have a solid plan for tomorrow. I am confident that we will be able to draw out the mole tomorrow and put this crime wave in Metropolis to an end.”

She made her way back to the kitchen, while he removed his coat and placed it on the coat rack. “Have a seat. I will make us some tea, and then I want to hear all about your plan,” she called from the kitchen.

A few moments later, she returned with two cups of tea and sat down next to him. “Okay, let’s have it.”

Fifteen minutes later

“Clark, I know I sound like a broken record, but this sounds very dangerous. What if the crime boss doesn’t accept your proposal? They know that you and Mayson will know too much, and could kill you, and you might not have time to even reach Superman.”

“We’ve thought about that. We know it is a risk we are just going to have to take. Mayson is good at her job, and I am confident we will be able to sell this.”

“And Superman? How does he feel about this?” she asked.

“He hates it as much as you and I do, but he understands it’s our only option, and will do everything he can to help,” he responded.

Lois sighed and gripped her teacup until her knuckles turned white. The growing feeling in her stomach had not subsided since Mayson Drake entered into their lives and the more this assignment progressed the more the feeling consumed her. Of course, the thought of her being the over-dramatic jealous girlfriend kept playing over in her head as the reason for the feeling in her stomach... but the years of being an investigative reporter told her it was instinct.

“What can I do?” she asked

He shook his head. “Lois, nothing. I want you as far from this as possible. All you need to do is hold onto the information and if something goes wrong then you write the article that we talked about.”

“Clark, I feel so useless. I can do so much more... be an asset,” she insisted.

“Lois, the more involved the harder it is to keep the cover and for everyone to come out alive. Superman is fast and strong, but he can’t keep tabs on everyone.”

She placed her cup on the coffee table and nestled into his arms, resting her ear against his chest. “I could stay like this forever,” she sighed after listening to his heartbeat and the rise and fall of his breathing,

He wrapped his arms tighter around her, and placed soft kisses on the top of her head. “I could too. I love you Lois,” he responded with adoration and love in his voice.

She lifted her head at that moment to make sure that she could look into his eyes. “Promise me you will come back to me tomorrow.”

“Lois, you know I will move heaven and earth to get back to you.”

“Promise me,” she repeated again. She didn’t know why she wanted to hear those words, but for some reason just hearing him say those words eased her fears somewhat.

“I promise you,” he replied. He took her face within both his hands and kissed her passionately. As they broke apart, he smiled at her and caressed her left cheek with his hand caressing soft circles with his thumb. She leaned into his touch and moaned.

Lois awoke that morning in his arms. He was still sound asleep and she spread the afghan over him. She stood there watching him knowing the events that would take place today.

While her nightmares subsided last night, mostly thanks to falling asleep in his arms, the gut-wrenching feeling in her stomach gnawed at her as bad as a hunger pain.

She got up from the couch to stretch and went in her room to take a shower. When she emerged fifteen minutes later, Clark was already up making coffee for them.

“Good morning!” he smiled as he placed a kiss on her cheek and offered her a cup of coffee.

“Good morning!” she responded, taking the cup from him. “Did you sleep all right? I do not even remember falling asleep on the couch. That couldn’t have been too comfortable,” she said apologetically.

“Lois, last night would fall into one of my *best* nights category.”

“It would?” she asked as she smiled.

“It would. In fact, all my best nights include you.”

“What’s your number one?” she asked, taking a sip of her coffee.

He smiled. “The night of our first date. When I took you to that Italian restaurant and we shared a dessert, and you were so nervous when it came time to say goodbye on whether we should kiss, hug, or give a handshake.” He laughed as he recalled the memory. “When I kissed you... it was magic. It was as if whatever I was searching for in my life was met in that moment. You were all that I needed... all that I still need.”

“Oh, Clark, I feel the same way,” she said, kissing him on the lips before embracing in another hug.

After what seemed like forever, he motioned to leave to go home, change, and prepare for the day’s events.

“And you promise you will be careful?” she asked again tight in their embrace.

“I promise.” He kissed her again. As he pulled apart, he smiled at her, caressed her cheek as he did the night before, and kissed her one more time.

“I love you.”

“I love you more,” he responded.

“Clark!” she called.

“Yes?” he responded, turning back.

She closed the distance between them. “If it’s not too much trouble... can you please ask Superman to meet me here before he has to meet with you and Mayson?”

He looked puzzled, but smiled and nodded. “Of course. I’ll see you in a bit.” He kissed her hand and left the building.

Lois was working on the final changes to her story when the familiar whoosh of air filled her living room.

“Lois,” Superman acknowledged as he stood before her.

“Superman, thank you for coming.”

“Of course. Clark mentioned that you wanted to speak with me,” he responded, his arms in their usual position across his chest.

“Yes, that’s right... I did.”

“What can I do for you Lois?” he asked.

She paced back and forth, sighing at times, unable to process any sentences. “Lois, if you are worried about Clark... I assure you I will see that he is safe,” he said trying to ease her fears.

She finally stopped pacing and looked at him. “Superman, have you ever cared about someone so much that the thought of anything, even the smallest thing, happening to them would end your life as you know it?” she asked as she paced again.

He sighed. “Yes, I can relate to the feeling.”

She nodded again. “I need your help,” she said moving closer to him. “I know that you are helping Clark and Mayson with this case. I have a bad feeling about today. Clark thinks I am overreacting, but I know my instincts. While I hope I am wrong on this... it’s just killing me to sit back, wait, and do nothing.”

“What do you need from me, Lois? What can I do?” he asked

trying to calm her and put her at ease.

"Superman, promise me that you will bring him back to me. The slightest thought of Clark not being with me kills me inside." Her eyes began to tear, and she knew she was on the verge of a breakdown.

"Lois..." He moved closer so there was limited space apart. "I promise you that I will make sure nothing happens to Clark. I swear."

She nodded. "Thank you."

He reached up and wiped the single tear that escaped her eye. She smiled at him and he returned the gesture.

"Lois..." he called after she broke their eye contact and lowered her head. She looked into his eyes.

"Clark loves you... and I know you love him. Everything will be fine." He reached up and caressed her left cheek, tracing circles on her cheek with his thumb.

She gasped. "What? What is it?" he asked looking around the room after her sudden gasp.

She eyed him carefully. "The way you just touched me—"

He waited for her further explanation. "Yeah..."

"The way you just touched me right then... that's how Clark touches me," she answered baffled.

He could feel her gaze upon him. "Lois, I have to get going... I promise you everything will be fine."

Before she could stop him, the whoosh of air told her he was gone.

Clark pulled up to the agency as planned to see Mayson.

"Good afternoon, Clark," the receptionist greeted him upon his arrival to the sign-in to meet with Mayson. This had become a familiar routine for the past week since Mayson introduced him as her boyfriend to everyone.

"Good afternoon, Janet."

"Mayson called down a moment ago, and said she was running behind. She instructed that you can wait for her in her office. I will escort you." She grabbed her badge and locked her computer.

He smiled. "Janet, I know you are busy. I can definitely find my way down the hall to her office. Why don't you just relax," she smiled, giving her a wink.

She thought about it. Protocol was that no visitors were to be left unattended. "Mr. Kent, you know that is against protocol," she scolded him.

He smiled and leaned over her desk. "Janet, do I really look like someone that is a threat?" he joked.

She weighed the decision against her conscience, but looked up at his smiling face and resigned herself. "Okay, Mr. Kent go ahead. But this conversation never happened." She winked back and slithered back in her chair.

He straightened his tie and rounded the corner toward Mayson's office. As he strolled down the corridor, he approached her door. A few agents were headed in his direction and he smiled, making it look like he was on his way to see her. He nodded as they passed and waited until they were gone before he continued on past her office.

"Now Clark, the records room will be two offices down the right from my office. It requires a key in order to get into the room. Once you get past Janet, which I am sure you will... she can't pass up a handsome face," she said, laughing, "you will enter into that room. The code changes on a daily basis so I will call you with the new code once I get into the office. Use this burner phone so that way it can't be traced back to me."

"Are there any other security features inside the room I need to be on the lookout for?" he asked.

"There is a camera, but it will somehow happen to malfunction that day. You want to head to the filing cabinet

toward the back. Our files are coded by districts. We want to use the South district as our selling tool when we meet with the mole. You need to specifically grab the file that is associated with the law enforcement murders. Do you think you can handle this?"

"Sounds easy enough. I have been in far more dangerous situations than this."

She smiled. "THAT doesn't surprise me."

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Clark approached the door and entered the five-digit code that Mayson had given him. The light on the key pad turned green and the door lock clicked open. He quickly entered the room and shut the door behind him. He looked for the security cameras that she mentioned would be disassembled and tipped his glasses to use his x-ray vision to confirm it was, in fact, not working. Once he confirmed it, he went to the back to secure the file.

The Daily Planet-Thursday-3:00 p.m.

"Hey Lois, have you seen CK?" Jimmy asked as he approached her desk.

"No, he's still working on that special assignment with Detective Drake."

"Hm."

She stopped typing and looked up. "Hmm... what?" she asked.

"Nothing. I mean actually... I think you have been pretty cool about this whole situation with CK working with Detective Drake. I mean she is one sexy, hot—"

"Okay, Jimmy, I got the picture," she cut him off, waving her hand. "Besides, I trust Clark and I know he is not interested in her like that." She smiled, confidence evident in her voice.

"Oh, I'm sure... but from what I've heard she's got a way that she can make any man—"

"Jimmy, is there a point to this?" She cut him off, frustration evident on her face.

"Right." He nodded, seeing he had gone too far. "CK asked me to research some of the murders in the South district in Metropolis and cross-reference them with events that included any major political official."

"And I am assuming you found something?"

He nodded. "Oh, I found something alright. Each murder that occurred had both the Senator and the Chief Inspector of the Washington D.C. headquarters in town for special meetings in the same area hours before the murders occurred."

"Let me see," she said grabbing the file from him. "Jimmy, was Mayson the lead detective on each of these cases?" she asked flipping through the files.

"Well, now... come to think of it... yes, she was. Why, do you think she's involved?"

She shook her head. "I don't know, but this doesn't feel right. I do think there is a cover-up going on... and the fact that the Chief Inspector for the D.C. area is here so much in a small town and at the same time that murders of law enforcement officials occur... is too coincidental. Did Clark say anything as to why he wanted you to cross-reference this data?" she asked

He thought for a moment, but then shook his head. "No, he just said Mayson mentioned something that made him question dates and then asked me to run this."

She smiled. "Thanks, Jimmy."

He nodded and then walked away. She continued to look over the files. "Talk to me Clark... what were you thinking?" she told herself as she continued through each file. "Wait a minute..." She flipped through pages quickly and then turned to her computer to search for additional information.

"Each murder occurred hours after the Chief and senator had business meetings. In each report there were no witnesses and comments made about Superman being nowhere in sight to offer

assistance. Why would that be mentioned?" she asked herself. It clicked in her head at that moment. "Oh my God... this is a set-up. They are going to frame Superman for the murders!"

She grabbed the file and rushed over to Perry's office. "Perry, did Clark fill you in on any of the details today of his assignment?" she asked, barreling in his office.

Perry looked up at her and waved the phone that he had to his ear. "Lois, can't you see I'm on the phone?"

"I know, I'm sorry, but this is important. Did he say anything to you or not?"

He sighed. "Listen, Chuck, I am going to have to call you back... all right... bye." He hung up the phone. "No Lois, he did not tell me. Why?"

"Clark asked Jimmy to look into the murders in the South district and Jimmy was able to cross-reference that each murder occurred hours after both the senator and the Chief Inspector were in town. Some of these meetings were only weeks apart. Now why would an important official need to spend so much time here in the small town of Metropolis?" she asked pacing the office.

"Because they are the dirty moles authorizing the hits."

"Exactly," she said, stopping right in front of his desk.

"There's more... and I am afraid to be right about it." She bit her lip.

"What?" he responded.

"In each report filed, they made sure to make comments that Superman wasn't anywhere around when the help was needed. We all know that he can't be everywhere at once, or there wasn't an opportunity for him to even hear their cries for help. Why would they mention that in their report, unless they were going to try to incriminate him in the murders by saying he was a part of the cover-up by looking the other way? Perry, do you think I could be right?"

He sighed. "Well, Lois, that's a pretty good theory you have there. If that is true... then Superman is walking into a trap."

She nodded. "I know." She began pacing.

"Then why do they need Clark?" Perry asked a second later.

She stopped and faced him. All life in her face was drained away in that moment. "He's the fall guy. Chief, don't you see it? Mayson has been playing us from the moment she walked in our newsroom. She needed Clark to deliver Superman to make this work. But... once he delivers Superman he will know way too much that would incriminate them all in the crime. Therefore, they either have enough to make it stick to Clark as well or... or..."

"They'll kill him," he finished for her. "I'll alert the Mayor. Maybe he can help us." He picked up the phone.

"No!" She shouted as she grabbed the phone from him and slammed it back down. "We do that and Clark is as good as dead. Any hope of catching the whole ring will go down with him." she replied, biting her lip.

"Then what would you recommend, Lois?" he asked.

"I can go... try and get word to Clark."

He shook his head immediately. "Absolutely not, Lois. This is too dangerous," he said sternly.

"Perry, you and I know that I am the best chance he's got. Clark filled me in on some of the details on the assignment so I know where he will be today. Maybe I can slip him word so that he can get it to Superman in time before anything happens."

"Lois, I don't know." He shook his head at her idea.

"Perry, we both know this is the best option we've got."

"Well, I am going on record that I am completely against this."

She smiled. "I promise to be careful. This will be a big story when all is said and done." She turned quickly and left his office out through the newsroom and out of the Daily Planet.

The hostess showed Clark to the table where Mayson was waiting for him. She smiled as soon as he reached the table.

"Hello, dear!"

"Hi," he replied taking a seat.

"Did you have any trouble finding the place?" she asked, her innuendo evident.

"No, no trouble at all," he replied patting his left jacket pocket.

She smiled and traced the top of his hand with her finger. "On second thought, darling... what do you say we pack up our lunch to go?" she asked seductively.

Clark smiled and signaled for the waitress. "Check, please!" he called.

They left the restaurant arm in arm. "Clark, this is it. We are going to be meeting them within the next fifteen minutes. If you want to back out now... I understand," she said sincerely.

"I appreciate the concern, but I plan to see this through."

She smiled sadly. "Thank you again."

"You're welcome," he responded.

"Is Superman ready?"

He nodded. "He's ready."

They continued to walk until they made their way into the South district. They entered an abandoned alley behind one of the corporate buildings currently in foreclosure.

"This alley cries like a really bad scene out of a movie," he joked while they waited for their contact to show.

She laughed. "I know. Cheesy, huh?"

A man in a long black trench coat appeared, a hat and sunglasses hiding the majority of his face. Clark did a quick scan to see if he had any weapons and noticed he was carrying two guns in both his holsters.

"Well, I'll be damned. If it isn't Detective Mayson Drake and prize-winning reporter Clark Kent," the man said sarcastically. "I'm not sure if the boss man will believe this," he added.

"Let's skip the dramatic 'I can't believe it' speeches. We don't have long, so either we do this deal or we don't," Mayson replied.

"Wow, sweetheart, slow down. My boss is very much interested. We just need to make sure first this isn't a set-up... if you catch my drift." He looked between the both of them.

"I assure you if this was a set-up we would be wired and there would be agents hiding in the buildings," she replied as she pointed to the buildings. "As you can see, there is no one around," she moved closer within arm's length of the contact, "and I'm not wearing any wires. Feel free to be thorough if you need to," she added seductively.

The contact gave her a once-over, and Clark could tell that he was blushing having thought about the opportunity to give her the once-over. He smiled. "While I would love to, darling, I'm sure your boyfriend over there would have a problem and we don't have the time. My boss is in a hurry."

Clark stepped forward. "Then enough with this pointless conversation and let's get on with business."

"As I mentioned based on our conversation, Mayson, my boss is interested. Since I confirmed that you aren't being followed or trying to set him up, we can move this meeting to a more 'private' setting." He motioned as a limo pulled up in that exact moment. "Get in," he instructed them.

"Excuse me!" Lois called when she did not see anyone behind the receptionist desk. She noticed the 'please ring' bell sitting on the counter and must have hit it five to six times before an older woman came out of the office and slapped her hand on top of Lois's to stop her from ringing the bell.

"Can I help you, miss?" she asked sweetly.

"Ah... yes," she said as she withdrew her hand. "I am here to

see Detective Mayson Drake.”

“Well, do you have an appointment?” she responded.

She laughed. “No, I don’t have an appointment. You need an appointment to see her, really?” she asked sarcastically.

The woman just looked at her, obviously not amused.

“Detective Drake is not in at the moment. You will have to come back later, or you can make an appointment.”

Now it was Lois’s turn to not look amused. “Look, this is important. Can you tell me where I might be able to find her?”

“I’m sorry miss; we are not obliged to release personal information of our agents. She shouldn’t be too long though. She just stepped out to lunch with her boyfriend Mr. Kent.”

“Well, thank you for your help.”

“Any time, miss. Have a good day!” she replied before returning behind the back room.

As soon as she was gone, Lois looked down the hall to see that no one was in sight. She made it seem as if she was headed to the rest room and then quickly ran in the other direction, down the hall. Once out of view of the receptionist area, she slowed to look at the nameplates on the door. Halfway through she stumbled upon Mayson’s office. The door was locked.

“Ugh!” she scrambled through her purse for anything that could open the lock. Once she found the pin she began to jimmy the lock. She heard voices approaching and worked faster on the lock. She finally was able to jimmy it open as another agent rounded the corner. She quickly walked in the office and shut the door behind her.

She rummaged through the desk but did not see anything with regards to today’s events. All the drawers and cabinets were locked and required an access code versus picking the lock with a pin. She was about to leave when she noticed a small folded piece of paper next to the phone on her desk. She took the piece of paper and opened it.

Metropolis Library, Thursday-4 p.m.

“Metropolis Library. That’s where the meeting must be taking place.” She folded the piece of paper and put it back by the phone. She took her phone out of her purse. “Jimmy, it’s Lois. Those files you gave me earlier, was there anything cross-referenced with the Metropolis Library in them?” She paused, waiting for a response. “There was... when? Okay, thank you Jimmy. Tell Chief I am headed there. I think that is where Clark and Mayson will be. Bye.”

She hung up the phone and quickly made her way out of the station.

Clark and Mayson exited the limo once inside the building.

“You took us to the Metropolis Library?” he asked after a moment to take in his surroundings.

“Nothing like catching up on your town’s history, Mr. Kent?” a man said as he approached from the shadows.

“Chief Inspector Smith?” Mayson confirmed, not believing what she saw before her eyes.

“You looked surprised,” he responded, smiling.

“Surprised?” She recovered quickly. “More like shocked that it would be this easy to get to you. I guess you aren’t as protected as you think you are,” she said confidently.

“I guess you aren’t the model agent we thought you were either,” he responded slyly. Her smile faded. “You know what shocks me the most?” he said, turning away from her and moving to Clark’s direction. “That our Pulitzer Prize-winning, crime-fighting news reporter Clark Kent turned out to be working on the dark side,” he finished as he sized him up from head to toe.

Clark huffed. “Well, inspector Smith, you of all people should know that the cover of being a good guy is the best way to hide all the criminal activity that goes on around here. My job just provides an extra benefit.”

She nodded at him in encouragement. “And what of Lois

Lane?” he asked, looking from Mayson to Clark.

Clark’s head snapped up, an obvious sign that he had just touched a nerve. “What of Miss Lane?” he responded.

The Chief laughed. “Just comical to know that the famous writer has been duped all along with her partner being a bad guy.”

He tried to contain his composure. “Are we here to do business or chat?” Mayson interjected. “I have a very busy day... and we need to get back before someone gets suspicious of our absence.”

Chief Smith turned his attention back to her. “Now why, for one second, should I believe that this isn’t a set-up Detective Drake, or that you could be of some assistance?” he asked.

She knew this was her moment to sell their cover and sell it good. His bodyguards had guns pulled on both Clark and her and she needed to get this right. “The fact that we constructed this deal in broad daylight seen by many should tell you that this isn’t a set-up. As far as the assistance that we can provide... I think you will be more than pleased with our offer,” she said as she walked over to Clark and stood by his side.

“I’m listening,” he encouraged.

“Well, as you mentioned I am your top agent here in the agency, and I have been assigned all the murder cases as well as the cleanup issues particularly in the South district. The fact that we are having this meeting at this moment tells me that you, or your men, have gotten sloppy. The fact that I figured out how dirty you are means it will only be a matter of time before everyone else does too.”

He straightened his tie. “I assure you that those responsible for failing to do their jobs have been dealt with. Haven’t they, Jack?” He motioned to his bodyguard holding the gun.

“Fish food,” the guard responded.

The Chief winked at Clark before turning his attention back to Mayson. “Hmm... not impressed. For a Chief, I thought you would have picked smarter associates.”

“And that would be you?” he interjected.

“You see, I could protect you by cutting off all evidence and making it disappear before it even gets to the D.A. You of all people know that I have the highest clearance at the agency,” she added.

“And what benefit does Mr. Kent add to this equation?” He again turned his attention from Mayson to Clark.

She nodded to Clark to take the lead. “Well, you are familiar with my work — my ability to solve crimes and put evil people behind bars. Wouldn’t it be in your best interest if you had someone at the head of the most popular newspaper in Metropolis persuading the readers away from any negative press, towards you and to anyone of your choice?” He finished now taking his side by Mayson.

The Chief rubbed his jaw and smiled. “I don’t know whether I am more impressed or shocked to find out that two of our top crime-fighting citizens are making a deal with the devil,” he joked. “Well, it’s a tempting offer... but I’ll have to pass. Jack, kill them!” he instructed as he walked away.

“Wait!” she called. He turned around.

“Yes?”

“You really didn’t think that was all... did you?”

“Mm, you always seem to have this way of impressing me. Go on,” he encouraged.

“So besides having a top agent and reporter on your side, what if we could ensure that Superman is also an asset and working with us?”

He smiled. “Then I would say you have my full attention, Detective Drake.” He took her hand and kissed it.

Clark cleared his throat. “Superman is a very close friend of mine. He would do anything I asked him too. All Mayson and I have to do is ask him to disappear and you won’t have any problems with your plans being foiled.”

He laughed. "I have a hard time believing that the Man of Steel, the boy scout who is all for the right side of the law, would help out someone like me?" He sent questioning glances between the two.

"What would it take to prove it to you?" she asked.

"I want to see Superman himself. Here... and from his own mouth," he responded.

Clark nodded. "That can be arranged. I can get word to him and have him meet us wherever you want."

Smith smiled. "Jack, take Clark here to the phone. Tell Superman he has twenty minutes to get here and confirm your story... or you and Mayson here will be the next unfortunate victims of the crime wave in Metropolis."

Lois pulled up a block away from the library. She grabbed her purse and left the car, careful to ensure that no one would see her as she approached the library. As she rounded the corner, she saw a limo parked out front with two men in black suits standing next to it.

"Well, they are definitely here," she said to herself. "Now how do I get in?" She looked around and noticed a good-sized rock on the sidewalk. She slowly bent over and picked it up and put it in her purse. "Here goes nothing."

She quickly crossed the street to the front of the library. Both men noticed her coming at this point.

"Excuse me, but I need your help," Lois called to them as she approached.

"We're not in the helping mood. So beat it," one guard said dismissively.

"Please... my car broke down back there, and I am really late for an appointment. Can you please just take a look at it, and see if you can fix it," she begged.

The man drew closer. "I said beat it!" he repeated more aggressively this time.

"Okay, okay. God, you would think male chivalry—"

She was cut off by the guard grabbing her arm. She squealed, but managed to grab the rock out of her purse and crack him over the head with it. The other guard quickly rushed over, but Lois swung and hit him on the head too.

"On second thought, my car is working just fine. Thank you for your assistance." She smiled as she dropped the rock on the floor and entered the library. She stayed close to the walls until she figured out where she might find Clark and Mayson.

"There has to be a back room or an underground basement," she said, looking around the library. She pulled out her phone and dialed the Planet. "Jimmy," she whispered. "Yes, I made it in, but I don't have a lot of time. I need you to pull up the blueprints of the Metropolis Library and tell me if there is an underground basement or back room here that is not being used. One that would be private enough to conceal gunshots," she finished as she moved from spot to spot to find a more secure location to hide. "There is... two floors below. Stairs near the south end of the building. Thanks, Jimmy — you're a life saver."

She disconnected the call and made her way to the stairs.

Jack escorted Clark by gunpoint to the room outside of where he and Mayson were being held. He shoved the gun barrel in his back toward the table where the phone was located. "You have two minutes," he warned as they approached the phone.

Clark looked to the side and then turned around, knocking Jack to the floor immediately. He slid him behind the table and turned into Superman within seconds.

"Well, that was fast," Chief Inspector Smith called as Superman entered the room where he was waiting with Mayson.

"I told you we would deliver," Mayson spoke a moment later.

He smiled. "I must admit, I had my doubts that the Man of Steel himself would be on the dark side. You must be irresistible,

Mayson," he insinuated coolly. "Where's Clark?" he asked.

"I thought this meeting would go a lot smoother without guns. Clark is keeping him occupied while we finish the deal."

Smith chuckled. "Same old Superman. Always have to call the shots."

"Enough games. We kept our end of the deal. We showed you what we have to offer, now do we have a deal or not?" Mayson interjected.

Smith took a long deep breath and looked at the two of them. "I think not," he responded smugly.

"Wrong choice," Superman answered as he took a step back.

Smith placed his hand up, stopping him in his tracks. "I wouldn't do that if I were you."

"And why is that?"

He smiled. "Did you really think I would believe all this?" He gestured around them. "My top agent blackmailing me, the prize reporter gone bad, and above all... the super hero turned villain? Do I look that much like a fool?" he chuckled.

"Give up now, Smith, and I might put a good word in for you with the D.A."

He laughed. "Ah, the same old Superman. Thinks he is indestructible, walking around with this unlimited power and no one can stop him. This town isn't big enough for the both of us and I am tired of you getting in the way of my operations. It's time you leave for good," he said with animosity.

"You're a sick man. The only place you are going is jail... to rot there for the rest of your existence," he replied as he moved closer.

"Ah, ah," he said grabbing Mayson and holding a gun to her head. "Another step and she's dead."

He knew he would get there in time before anything could happen, but the scared look on Mayson's face told him something was off.

"You don't think this was planned? Have those tights of yours cut off all circulation to your brain cells?" he laughed.

"I'm out of patience with this game you are playing."

He laughed harder. "Does it occur to you, Superman, that you are the one being played tonight?" he challenged.

He looked between Mayson and Smith, and knew the moment she lowered her head she was involved in this orchestration.

"Ah, realization just hit home, didn't it. My top agent reaches out to Clark Kent with this sob story that we are out of options and the people of Metropolis need Clark and Superman to save the day." He released his grip on Mayson and shoved her to Superman. "The fact that it was so believable makes this all worthwhile."

"I'm sorry," Mayson whispered as she reached his side. He didn't even look at her, but kept his attention on Smith.

"Now... for the master plan: rid the world of Superman. Mayson, if you would be so kind," he instructed.

Superman looked over at her, and she shook her head. "No, I can't do it," she whispered.

"We talked about this Mayson, you don't and your family dies. He can't be everywhere at once. You have the proof."

She turned back to Superman. "I'm sorry... he has my family and he'll kill them. I don't have a choice," she cried.

He nodded. "Do it now, Mayson," he ordered again.

She reached up to the large necklace around her neck and opened the locket. Superman winced as soon as the locket revealed a large chunk of kryptonite. Smith moved around the other side of the table to a cabinet where he produced a black box. Once he had the box in hand he came closer to both Mayson and Superman. He grabbed him by the shirt but he was losing his full strength. Just then, Smith opened the box and produced a larger chunk of kryptonite — causing Superman to fall on his knees wincing.

“Stop it, you’re killing him,” she shouted.

“That’s the idea. Come on!” He grabbed her from the floor as he placed the rock next to Superman, who had fallen to the ground. He shoved Superman to the wall where he handcuffed him to a standing table with restraints and placed the kryptonite in a coded device.

“There. By the time anyone can figure out how to get this out, you will be dead. As I said, there isn’t room for the two of us.” He circled him like a shark circled its prey. “The thought of the Man of Steel dying at my hands gives me all the power that is needed to demand anything and everything I need in this world. Enjoy your last minutes on this earth, Superman,” he laughed.

“Nooo!” she shouted as she struggled to break free.

“Quit your struggling or your family will end up the same.” He pushed her as they made their way to the door.

Lois found her way towards the basement and a long corridor. She started checking to see if any doors were unlocked, but had no luck. Finally, after the sixth door she found one unlocked. She opened it to find a study room. She closed the door behind her and noticed a man dressed in black knocked out cold on the floor. She searched for any trace of a weapon, but there wasn’t any.

Just then, she heard a scream. *That sounds like Mayson.* She panicked as she moved to the door. She looked for anything in the room that could help her, grabbed a small letter opener, and shoved it in her pocket before she headed out the door and down the corridor.

She moved as quietly as she could closer to where she heard the scream. She isolated the voices behind a large room at the end of the corridor. She placed her ear against the door to listen to the voices.

“Stop it, you’re killing him,” Mayson shouted.

“No!” Lois whispered as she heard Mayson shout. She continued to listen in, trying to determine her next move. She wanted to barge into the room and take control, but the fact that Superman was in trouble and possibly on the verge of death told her that every decision she made needed to be to her advantage.

The commotion seemed to die down and she couldn’t hear anything. Just then, she heard the creak of the door as it began to open. “Oh, no!” she whispered as she turned to see where she could hide, but knew she was as good as dead.

“Lois Lane!” She heard the voice come from behind her and stopped in her tracks. “Well, it must be my lucky day to be in the presence of all these important people,” he said sarcastically.

She turned around and gave him a withering look. “You’re a disgusting piece of a human being.”

“I’ll take that as a compliment. Why don’t you come in and join us?” He motioned to the room behind them.

She moved slowly, giving both Smith and Mayson an evil look as she entered. As soon as she did, she saw Superman chained to the wall with kryptonite lodged near his body. He was struggling to maintain consciousness.

“Superman!” she yelled as she ran over.

“Stop!” Smith shouted behind her. “If you wish to spend the last few minutes with him you will turn around and come back now,” he ordered.

She looked at him painfully and then turned around. Superman struggled to stay conscious as soon as he knew Lois was in the room.

“Let... let... her... go...” he struggled to get out.

“Oh, how sweet,” he mocked. “On the verge of death and still trying to protect the citizens of Metropolis.” He turned to Mayson. “Tie her up,” he ordered.

Mayson walked over, grabbed the rope, and began to tie her hands together. “I’m sorry, Lois,” she whispered as she tied her.

“Don’t!” she replied coolly.

Once Mayson was done tying her up she returned to Smith.

“Well, I would love to stay and chat, but all this killing in one day has put me behind schedule. Sorry Lois, you just happened to be investigating the wrong story at the wrong time,” he mocked.

“Just to be sure...” He placed a metal box on the table with a clock starting at ten minutes. “Well, when the clock strikes zero,” he laughed. “I think you know the rest.”

“You...” he yelled, looking over at Mayson. “Find Kent or I am adding your family to the list. Move,” he shouted. “Goodbye Lois.”

He slammed the door behind them, leaving Superman and Lois to die. She struggled to break free from her restraints. “Superman, can you hear me!” she yelled. He moaned, but made little movement. “Superman, if you can hear me... I really need you right now.” She looked at the clock on the table. “We have nine minutes before we all get blown up.” She continued to struggle with her restraints.

“Lois...” he said weakly.

“Yes, yes I’m here. Hang on,” she begged. Just then, she remembered she had the letter opener in her pocket. She struggled through her restraints to try to reach into her pocket. She looked back at the clock that now ticked down to eight minutes.

She finally was able to get the letter opener out of her pocket onto the floor. She used her feet to scoot the opener to her hands and positioned it between both palms to start sawing through the ropes. She looked back at the clock that now ticked down to seven minutes.

“Oh, come on!” she whined as she sawed back and forth as quickly as she could. She was getting closer she could feel the strains of the rope starting to come undone on her palms. She realized in that moment, that Mayson hadn’t tied her restraints as tight as she could have. She looked back at the clock: six minutes.

“Lois...” He barely got her name out.

“Hang on, I am almost there... just please hang on,” she begged.

She finally broke free of the restraints and ripped them away from her wrists. Five minutes. She rushed over to him and cupped his face in her hands. “Please stay with me,” she called to him again. His head dipped back and his eyes kept fluttering shut.

She looked over to see the kryptonite in a coded box. “This day can’t get any worse.” She tried to pry it out of the device, but it was stuck. “I can’t get it out!” she sighed, frustrated.

“Lois...” His head bobbed back and forth. “Go!” he whispered.

“No, I’m not leaving you.” She looked back at the clock that now showed four minutes.

“Lois—”

“No!” She cut him off. “We are going to make it through this. I just need to get this kryptonite out of here.” She struggled to keep her tears back. She was trying to remain positive, but at this point, she was fighting a code device with no code and a clock that showed their impending doom in less than four minutes.

“Superman, if you can hear me, I need to know if you have any strength at all that you could freeze the code device on the wall next to you?” she asked.

His head continued to bob, but managed to lift it up. “Yes,” he whispered.

“Okay, it’s just to your left here.” She pointed. She looked at the clock to see they were down to three minutes.

He took as big of a breath as his body had left and blew in the direction of the device. He managed to freeze it sufficiently that Lois grabbed a chair nearby and smashed it against the box crushing the kryptonite in pieces. Thanks to the rock being frozen, the pieces were so small they no longer could pose a threat to him. Lois looked back at the clock. Two minutes.

“Come on, we have less than two minutes to get out of here,”

she said as she removed the restraints from each of his hands. Once he was free, he fell right to the ground. “No, come on, we have to go. I need you to get up.” She tried to place his arm around her shoulder and use her body weight to help him walk.

“Lois, I can’t.” He fell back to his knees.

Lois fell next to him. She looked back at the device. One minute. She grabbed the device off the table and brought it to him. “Okay, we can’t run out of here; our only chance is to stop this. We have 45 seconds left.”

He took the device from her hands. “Lois, listen to me. I need you to run. There is not enough time to stop this and I am not strong enough to contain the blast. You need to go,” he said sternly.

She shook her head and tried to hold back the tears threatening to escape her eye. “No, I am not leaving you.” She repeated again. Thirty seconds.

He smiled at her. “You’re so brave, but you have done all that you can. Lois, you need to go... please. I would never forgive myself if you got hurt,” he pleaded.

The tears finally escaped her eyes. “I can’t.” She shook her head.

He reached his hand up to her face and caressed her cheek, and then placed a soft kiss on her lips. “Go!” he whispered as he broke the kiss. Twenty seconds.

She didn’t know how she managed but she rose to her feet. “Go!” he repeated again. Fifteen seconds. She took one last look and ran as fast as she could. As soon as he saw her down the corridor, he placed the device under his chest and wrapped his cape around him. “I love you, Lois.”

BOOM!

Lois was knocked to the ground due to the force of the blast. She used her hands to cover her head, but after a few seconds realized there wasn’t any debris from the blast falling around her. She sat up a little groggily... but with hope that Superman was okay and still alive. She rose to her feet and ran back down the corridor to the room.

The smoke filled the room, and it hurt her eyes to look inside. “Superman!” she shouted as she tried to make her way through the room. “Superman!” she shouted again as she coughed through the smoke. She searched around the room for any sign of him when her eyes caught the red cape lying on the floor. “Superman!” she shouted as she ran over to him.

She sank to her knees and turned him over. His eyes were shut and he had bruises and cuts all over his face. She checked for a pulse... it was thread and weak, but there. She could see with the rise and fall of his chest he struggled trying to breathe. “Please... can you hear me? Hang on!” she yelled as she stroked his face.

“Somebody help me!” she shouted as tears rolled down her eyes. “Somebody help me please!” she cried as she rocked his limp body back and forth.

“Lois.”

“Yes?” She stood as soon as Dr. Klein entered the hallway.

“If you would like to come with me, I would like to give you an update on Superman.”

She followed him through the ER doors and down the hall to a special wing for high profile individuals. There were three officers outside of the glass room guarding the door. Lois stopped just outside and looked into the room. There were five nurses in the room setting up his monitors and machines.

Dr. Klein followed her gaze to the monitor. “The monitor is all we can do for him. He has regained most of his strength; therefore, we cannot inject him with anything or run any tests,” he said.

“Is he in pain?” she asked as she wiped a tear from her cheek.

He sighed. “We don’t know. His body was extremely weak

from the kryptonite when he used his body to absorb the blast. From the few tests that we could do, I have determined that he is in a coma.”

“What are his chances of waking up?” she asked sniffing.

“My hopes are good, but I can’t tell you for sure. His body is getting stronger every day, but his mind and body are two different pieces of anatomy. He should regain his full strength by this evening, but may never wake up,” he answered.

Lois gasped as she wiped another tear from her eye. Dr. Klein handed her a tissue. “Can I see him?” she asked.

He nodded. “I know that you two are extremely close. You are the only visitor that I am permitting at this time, unless you tell me otherwise. I’m sorry, Lois,” he said sincerely as he placed a hand on her shoulder.

She nodded and placed her hand over his. “Thank you, Dr. Klein.”

“I’ll be right over here in my office if you need me. Take all the time that you need. I think it would be good if he heard your voice.” He walked away at that moment leaving Lois to stare at Superman through the room.

After what seemed like forever, she turned and move towards the door. She was tired, her body ached, but her mind and her heart felt numb. When she reached the door, the guards moved aside and nodded at Lois.

“Miss Lane,” they acknowledged.

She nodded, and walked through the door before the officer shut it behind her. Her feet froze and she was within reach of him. She listened as the heart monitors beeped, his heart rate steady. A nurse walked over and slid a chair next to his bed, and then walked up to Lois.

“Miss Lane, please feel free to sit next to him. Sometimes hearing the voice of friends and loved ones helps them heal faster.” She smiled. “We’ll be right out there if you need us,” she said and gently squeezed her hand before letting go and walking out of the room.

Lois stood there for a moment just staring. She finally found the courage to move and reached the edge of his bed. She looked down at him as tears escaped her eyes. She grabbed his hand, lifted to her lips, and kissed his hand, before holding it against her chest. She sank down into the chair.

“I... I... I’m not any good at this.” She sighed. “I’ve never had to sit here and watch someone I care so much about lie here trying to fight for their life, and there’s nothing I can do to help,” she choked out as her voice started to crack. “I owe you my life,” she smiled. “It seems as if I owe you that all the time for how many times you have saved mine.” She squeezed his hand tighter. “I’m sorry I couldn’t get there in time to save you from this.” A tear rolled down her eye.

She held onto his hand, and used her other hand to trace her finger across his cheek. “How many times, I have touched you like this... and I never... never realized...” She sighed. “I’ve never met anyone like you. So strong, so brave, but yet so gentle. That’s why I love you so much.” She choked again, and paused to listen to the heart monitor continue to beat steadily. She moved closer to him and bent closer to his ear. “Clark, if you can hear me... please come back to me. I cannot imagine my life without you. You once told me that being with me was stronger than being alone. Hold onto that strength now... and find a way back to me,” she whispered and kissed him softly on the lips.

She gently eased herself on the bed next to him and laid her head against his chest. “I love you,” she whispered before sleep took her over and her eyelids shut.

“Lois... Lois...”

Lois stirred at the sound of her name being called. She rubbed her eyes and took in her surroundings. It wasn’t a dream. She was in the hospital and Clark was still hooked up to

monitors, unconsciousness.

"Perry?" she questioned as the grogginess began to fade.

"Hey, kid," he replied, offering her a hand to help her up.

"What time is it?" she asked

"Nine a.m. Dr. Klein didn't have the heart to wake you. After all the trauma you had... you should be sleeping for days." He paused and looked down at Superman. "How's he doing?" he asked a moment later.

She looked back down at him. "I don't know. He gained his strength back, but there don't appear to be any changes. Have you spoken to Dr. Klein?" she asked.

Perry shook his head. "No, he wanted to wait until you woke up. He will be in any moment." It was silent for a moment before he spoke again. "Lois, where's Clark?" he asked, noticing his absence from the room.

"Ah..." *It was too early for this*, she thought. "He's following up on the finishing touches on the case. He knew I would look after Superman. I'm sure he will check in when he can," she responded.

He nodded. "Lois, I just want you to know that you can take all the time that you need here with him. I mean, the *Planet* will miss you like crazy... but Metropolis needs its hero."

"Thank you, Perry." She smiled weakly, giving him a hug.

"He's going to make it through this, Lois, you'll see," he assured as he hugged her.

"I sure hope so. I... Metropolis won't know what to do without him," she replied.

Dr. Klein knocked on the door and then entered. "Good morning, Lois, Perry."

"Good morning, Dr. Klein," she replied. "Thank you for letting me stay with him."

He smiled. "It's my pleasure."

"Have there been any changes?" she asked after glancing from Clark to him.

"I'm afraid not." He shook his head sadly. "As we predicted, he did get his full strength back, but he is still in a coma. We saw strong improvement to his brain waves, which could be a good sign for activity... or just tell us that he is still catching up with the trauma to his body," he replied.

She nodded. "I just don't want you to get your hopes up for something that none of us have control over. When he is ready, he will wake up. We just need to be prepared for when that will be. I assure you that I will do everything to keep him comfortable," he added.

"We have all faith in you, Doctor. We thank you," Perry said.

"I'll be back to check on him in a few. Feel free to page the nurse if you need anything or if you need to get a hold of me."

"Thank you, Dr. Klein," she said before he left the room.

"Ah, Lois, I need to get back to the Planet, but Jimmy and I are going to take turns coming down here to check on you and Superman."

"Thank you, Chief."

"Hang in there, kiddo. He will come back."

"Perry!" she called and stopped him from walking away.

"Yes?"

"About Smith and Mayson..."

"They're in custody. Mayson is cooperating fully with authorities. They are in the process of rounding up everyone that is involved. I can't begin to tell you the number of government officials involved in the cover-up." He shook his head.

"Good," she responded.

"You know, part of me feels bad for that Detective Drake. Her family was being held hostage by the Chief Inspector and he threatened to kill them if she didn't do what he said," he said sadly.

"Yeah, well..." she sighed. She wanted so badly to hate Mayson. Clark was lying here struggling for his life because of

her, but she had realized last night that she would do whatever was possible to save him.

"Jimmy will be by later. If you need anything... you promise you will call, right?" he asked.

She nodded. "I promise."

Perry left the room, leaving Lois with Superman. She looked back at him and then at the clock. She stretched and sat back down in the chair, and dozed off again. A few hours later, she woke up in a panic.

"Oh my God... Martha... Jonathan, they don't even know."

Lois ran from the chair, grabbed the phone in the room, and dialed the Kents.

"Hello?" Martha answered the phone.

"Martha... it's Lois."

"Lois, how are you? Is everything alright?" she asked.

She paused and took a long deep breath in and out. "Martha, I need to tell you and Jonathan something. Is he around?"

"I'm here, Lois," he responded, having picked up the line earlier. "Is everything okay? We haven't heard from Clark in two days."

"No, I'm afraid I have some bad news. Can you both make it out on a flight to Metropolis?" she responded.

"Lois, what is it?" Martha asked.

"I'd rather discuss it in person... I'm sure you understand. I assure you that for the time-being things look promising, but if you can get here when you can that would be best. Just call me when you arrive," she finished.

"We'll be on the first flight out there. See you soon," they responded and hung on the phone.

Four hours later

"Miss Lane?"

"Yes." Lois turned around as a nurse approached her in the hall.

"I have a Martha and Jonathan Kent asking to see you. Do you want to authorize access?" she asked sweetly.

"Yes, Betty. Thank you."

A few moments later, the double doors opened, and Martha and Jonathan walked through. As soon as they saw Lois, they rushed over and pulled her into an embrace.

"Thank you for coming," she said after they broke apart.

"You look exhausted, dear. Tell me what's going on," Martha asked nervously.

"It's Superman. He was hurt badly while working the undercover case regarding the criminal activity that linked the Chief Inspector to the murders in Metropolis."

"Yes, we heard about that. It's national news," Jonathan responded.

"Yes, well, both Superman and I were trapped in the library. It's a long story, but they trapped him with kryptonite which weakened his body. To try to finish us off they rigged a bomb to explode. I was able to free him from the kryptonite... but he wasn't able to regain his strength in time before the explosion. He's in a coma."

Jonathan and Martha looked at each other. "Are his chances of waking up any good?"

Lois shrugged, and wiped her eyes. The stress of the last few days had taken its toll mentally and physically on her body. "They don't know," she whispered as the tears threatened to fall again.

Martha looked over at Jonathan and he nodded back to her. "Lois, honey, you look beat. Why don't you go home and get some sleep. We can look after him and call you of any changes," she offered.

She shook her head. "No, I would rather stay here." Her tone let them both know there wasn't any possibility of changing her mind.

“Well, then how about you and I go get some coffee. I know I could sure use a cup after the day of travel we had. I’m sure you could use one too,” she insisted.

Lois looked through the window of Superman’s room at him sleeping and the rise and fall of his chest. “I guess one cup of coffee couldn’t hurt.” She smiled back at her.

“I’ll let you know if anything changes,” he assured both of them.

Lois gripped her cup of coffee, basking in the warmth it provided. She didn’t have the stomach to actually take a sip... especially since the last time she ate anything was more than twenty-four hours ago. The truth was she didn’t have the appetite to stomach anything. She was sure that anything she did eat would just come right back up.

Martha squeezed the top of her hand followed by a gentle smile. “He will make it through this,” she said reassuringly.

“How do you do it?” she asked, amazed.

Martha laughed. “Sometimes, I wonder myself. I think it’s just part of being a mom. You know that the worst is possible, but you only hold on to the hope that everything will work out... or else—”

“Or else what’s life worth living for,” she finished for her.

“Exactly.” She smiled. “How long have you known?” she asked a moment later.

Lois looked at her, confused. “How long have I known what?” she asked back.

She smiled. “About my boy.”

She nodded. “Since yesterday.” She paused. “When Clark kisses me he always touches me in such a loving way,” she said touching her cheek where he had caressed her not more than twenty-four hours ago. “I asked Superman to meet me before Clark was to go on assignment, and he touched me the same way. It clicked in that moment.”

“It’s about time.” She laughed. “It’s nice to know that I have someone I can talk to about my boy,” she said genuinely.

She was quiet for a moment. Martha caught the sudden change in her mood. “Martha, why didn’t he tell me?” The hurt in her eyes showed.

“Oh, honey...”

“I look at him lying in the hospital room, and my heart aches. I want nothing more than for him to open his eyes and hold me.” Tears fell from her eyes. “The other part of me wants him to open his eyes so I can yell at him... scream at him. I’m furious with him... that he didn’t trust me with this secret. I mean we were partners for three years!” Her voice rose higher.

Martha squeezed her hand again. “Lois, you have every right to be upset. I am not going to make excuses for why Clark did not tell you sooner. I know he loves you, but his whole life he grew up knowing he was different and that he would never fit in. My heart used to break for him when he couldn’t do some activities like other kids could do. He chose to rise above those setbacks and use his powers for good.” She paused and smiled at her. “But that also meant that he had to make a decision that this secret of his would also mean danger for those he loved and cared about. He made that decision to fit in... and protect those that he could,” she finished.

She sighed. “I understand his reasons, I do. It just feels like everything I knew about him... I don’t.”

“Give it time, dear,” she reassured. “You have been through enough traumatic events in the past twenty-four hours. You two will work this out... he loves you, and I know you love him. You’ll see.”

Lois smiled. “Thank you.”

“Thank you.” She laughed. “I have been waiting for over twenty-seven years to have this type of conversation with my son’s girlfriend. I couldn’t have asked for a better person to have

it with.”

They hugged each other and laughed as Martha began to share stories of Clark from his childhood.

Two days later

It had been a week since the bomb explosion and Superman had fallen into his coma. Lois stayed by his side every day, every waking moment, day and night. Martha and Jonathan finally dragged her home last night against her will to shower and get a good night’s rest. Dr. Klein had promised to call her if any changes occurred.

By morning, there weren’t any changes, but Lois felt so much better. She even managed to stomach eggs and toast that Martha had insisted she eat or wouldn’t allow her to leave to visit Clark.

“Thank you, Martha. I haven’t had a home-cooked breakfast in a long time.”

“You need your strength my dear... for when my boy wakes up.”

After the kitchen had been cleaned and everyone was dressed and was ready to go, they made their way back to the hospital to hear the same prognosis from Dr. Klein.

“His brain waves look good and strong. Promising, but no changes as of yet. He is still in his coma,” he informed them.

Lois took her usual seat next to Superman while Martha and Jonathan sat on the opposite side. Nurses came in and out and checked on him throughout the day. Night fell and it was time for Martha and Jonathan to make their way back to Clark’s apartment.

“Lois, are you sure you don’t want to come with us? I think you will get a better night’s sleep if you come home,” Jonathan encouraged.

She shook her head. “Thank you, but no. I want to stay with him.” She smiled.

They hugged and kissed each other before the Kents left them together. She got up from the chair that she had occupied all day and climbed in the bed with Clark. The warmth of his body made her feel so safe, and just as she had the previous nights before, she draped his arm over her as she rested her head against his chest.

“Clark...” she moaned in her sleep. She spoke his name repeatedly.

“Lois...” he murmured back.

She awoke at that moment with hope, only to see that his eyes were still closed, monitor beeping steadily. She rubbed her eyes, and looked down at her wrist to see it was 3:00 a.m. She laid her head back down on his chest and traced her fingers up and down his chest.

“Clark, I don’t know if you can hear me — I hope you can, because I am starting to feel like a crazy person.” She laughed. “Please come back to me. I know I may not be the easiest person to live with. Heck, I don’t know anyone else who is more prone to dangerous situations than I am. I know you get frustrated with me when you tell me to stay put, and I don’t listen to you, end up in danger and you need to save me.” She sighed as she looked up at his face. “I know we have a lot to work through. The fact that I found out that my boyfriend is a super hero is a big one... but I couldn’t imagine my life without you. I don’t want to imagine my life without you. I promise that if you come back to me, I will spend the rest of my life as your partner... to have and to hold... in sickness and in health. A this point, I think we’ve spent enough time in the sickness category.” She laughed, and then nuzzled her head back to his chest. “For richer or for poorer...” she continued, “as long as we both shall live. I might even listen to you and stay put. Just come back to me.” She sighed again.

She squeezed him tighter, closed her eyes and drifted back to sleep.

It was six hours later before Lois would open her eyes again. She stretched as she opened her eyes and looked down to see that Clark was missing from the bed. She looked up to see him sitting in the chair that she had been occupying for the past week.

"Cla... Superman?" she said in disbelief.

He smiled. "I didn't have the heart to wake you. You looked so tired," he whispered.

She sat all the way up and swung her legs off the side of the bed. "Am I dreaming?" she asked. She pinched herself a moment later. "Ouch, that hurt!" she cried as she rubbed her arm.

He smiled. "No, you're not. I'm here."

She pictured herself running into his arms and never letting him go. In that moment, she felt paralyzed, unable to move. "Dr. Klein, your parents?" she asked.

"They're down the hall. They know I wanted to see you... talk to you..." he sighed. He stood from the chair and slowly made his way to her. She thought she had never seen anything more gorgeous in her life. He looked healthy, alive, and so sexy back in his gear.

"Lois..." he whispered as he came close.

She extended her hand and rested it on his chest stopping him from coming any closer. He was a little taken back, not expecting her reservation. "Say it again," she demanded as she lifted her head to look in his eyes. He looked at her questioningly. "I have spent the last week of my life wondering if you were ever going to open your eyes again... and all throughout that time all I wanted to hear was my name from your lips. Please say it again."

He grasped her hand with his and placed a kiss on the back of her hand. "Lois..." he whispered. She gasped as her lips parted. "Lois..." he whispered again as he inched closer to her lips.

When they were inches apart, he took his other free hand and caressed her cheek with his palm rubbing soft circles with his thumb. He felt her shiver under his touch as she leaned in. Her eyes were closed and for the first time in a long time, he could appreciate the beauty that stood in front of him. The woman that loved him, stuck by him, and risked her life for him. He closed the remaining distance between them and captured her lips to his in a slow, soft, sweet embrace.

Within seconds, the kiss deepened and Lois threw her arms around his neck pulling him closer to her. He was her oxygen and in that moment, she needed him to breathe. Finally after a minute she had to pull away to catch her breath knowing that he could have continued on with his ability to hold his breath.

She finally opened her eyes and their eyes connected as they stared into each other's souls. There was no need for words in that moment; their looks said it all. Everything they needed to say was said within that embrace. He positioned himself next to her as he took a seat, and hugged her closer as she snuggled into his embrace and rested her head on his shoulder.

A short time later, after many kisses and embraces, he finally spoke. "Lois, I love you."

"I love you," she responded kissing his fingers.

"I heard you. I heard you calling me. Nothing was going to keep me from coming back to you," he said sternly. She smiled. "Did you really mean what you said about listening to me and staying put?" he joked.

She laughed. "After everything, that is what you took away from my declaration of love?"

He kissed her hand. "Well, since you tend to put yourself in harm's way every minute of every day... yes." He laughed back. "Lois..." He willed her eyes to meet his. "I know we have a lot to talk about. I know that you have a lot of questions and answers you want from me."

"Clark—" she interrupted.

"Wait," he said, cutting her off. "Lois, I have never ever felt this way about someone as I do about you. I wouldn't even know how to function or exist if you weren't by my side." She

squeezed his hand within hers encouraging him to continue. "My life hasn't been easy... my choices haven't been easy... but of all the things that I am sure about... it's you." He smiled. "I love you, more than anyone could possibly love another person. I want you by my side as my partner... to have and to hold... in sickness and in health which I think we have already had practice with... for richer for poorer as long as we both shall live," he finished.

"Clark," she said, her voice barely a whisper.

"Marry me."

She smiled at him after a moment of silence. "Lois Kent," she responded, smiling.

He smiled. "I think it has a nice ring to it." He smiled as he reached behind his back and produced a small velvet box. He opened the box, and she gasped as she looked up at him.

"Marry me... and make me the happiest man in the world."

She smiled. "Yes," she responded. "Besides... being Mrs. Kent would come with its advantages." She laughed as he scooped her into his arms and kissed her passionately.

"I love you, Clark Kent."

"I love you, Lois Lane."

THE END