

# Clark and Lois — Hope Realized — Matchmaker Chronicle Volume 5

By Ken Janney <ken.janney@kjanney.com>

Rated PG-13

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Summary: After performing his own version of the twelve labors of Hercules, H.G. Wells finally transfers Alt-Clark to a universe where there is a Lois without a Clark, but it is up to Alt-Clark to form a relationship with her. How and why did this Lois lose her Clark? Can Alt-Clark just step into his shoes and take his place?

Disclaimers: The characters in this story are property of DC, December 3<sup>rd</sup> Productions and Warner Bros. No copyright infringement is intended. I have just borrowed the characters for a short time.

Authors note: This is a work of fiction; however, certain characters and incidents contained in this work are based upon real people and actual incidents which have been fictionalized to a certain extent.

This is the third part of a multi part saga and a direct sequel to “Clark and Lois – The Lost Years – Matchmaker Chronicles Volumes 3 and 4”. If you haven’t done so as yet, please read the previous Volumes. You will have a better understanding of the fundamental premises of the set if you do. I wish to express my thanks to my Beta readers Ray Reynolds and Artemis for their invaluable help. I also wish to especially thank Datasprite12 for her invaluable help in correcting my elementary French. This was a VERY rough draft when it first landed in their hands.

By trade I have been a scientist for 30 years and now have been involved in computer network administration for 10 years. I try not to use ‘techno-babble’. I will attempt to substantiate the science I cite although there may be some cases where I need to extrapolate for future discoveries. I promise that I will not simply try to ‘snow’ you with a bunch of hand waving and gibberish. My ‘hard science’ as much as is possible is just that: science fact.

One absolutely critical point: In this entire series I will be dealing with time travel and multi-universe travel. It is therefore critical that you have the concept of alternate universes and be aware of which one the story is currently in at all times. I try to make sure you know where you are by using the “Universal Locator Designation”. Some of the differences in ULDs will be very slight, changing only at the Tau value. If you don’t keep this in mind you will easily become confused as to what is happening and think I am simply changing the story already presented in an earlier volume when it is actually another universe. As far as times, I will attempt to insure that time markers are always present.

This particular story takes place after the episode “Lois and Clarks” and also before the series started. In some cases I will, of necessity, be going ‘between’ the episodes. In this Volume, I am using a number of flashbacks. In most cases the flashbacks are actual transcriptions of the dialog from the show.

These are all volumes of a single story loop. I expect to be publishing a goodly number of volumes so hang on, it’s gonna be

a fun ride.

\* \* denotes emphasis

< > denotes thoughts

(#) footnotes

/ denotes telepathic communication/

[ *playback of a recording or TV Commentary* ]

For reference purposes the following will hold true throughout.

Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 — Canon Lois and Clark universe also called – Prime

Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 036 – Canon Alt-Clark universe also called – Alt 1

As always, comments are welcome. (ken.janney@kjanney.com)

OK, so you’ve already read a book and you haven’t even started the story yet. Thanks for your patience. Now, without further ado I present for your enjoyment:

Clark and Lois – Hope Realized — The Matchmaker Chronicles Volume 5

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What is past is Prologue

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In Volume 4 of this set, Herb Wells had approached Alt-Clark with a request. TTEMPO had been checking many of the universes in the multiverse and had discovered numerous instances wherein the presence of a second Superman had been necessary to the survival of that universe’s Superman or Lois. Herb’s request was for this Clark to be that second Superman. Thus Alt 1 Superman had performed his own version of the twelve labors of Hercules.

Once he had completed these twelve missions he had one final mission ahead, the mission which would unite him with an unattached Lois Lane.

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In a remote section of the Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, a portal opened in the air. Unnoticed, Herb stepped through the portal and proceeded to the area around the Tomb of the Unknowns. Arriving there he spotted Clark, dressed in his normal business attire, and walked over to him. His arrival was timed perfectly and he walked up and greeted Clark just in time to watch the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns. Standing side by side they silently watched the very moving ceremony. When it finished Herb turned away and indicated that Clark should accompany him, so he and Clark strolled away together.

Herb asked, “Well, how did it go, my boy?”

Clark related the story of his latest mission and then finished up with, “Another success, another Lois and Clark together, another universe on the path to Utopia. Herb, how many more of these missions do I have to go on? I mean, yeah, it’s rewarding saving them and bringing them together, but, it’s not helping me. I’m still as alone as the day Lois died.”

Herb replied, “I know, my boy. I have known that this was going to be a strain on you, but, it was necessary. You have performed marvelously. I dare say, you have gone above and

beyond my expectation. As anticipated in each mission, you have saved and brought together the Lois Lane and Clark Kent of that universe. The number of universes which through your direct effort are now on the path to Utopia that would not have been otherwise is significant. You have done yeoman's work, my lad. The good news is that there remains just one final mission. Can you do one more mission?"

"Yeah, I guess so, Herb. What's the situation this time?"

Herb said, "Let's continue our stroll, I have a lot to tell you. This is truly your last mission because this mission is to unite you with Lois."

Herb gave his last statement a few seconds to sink in. He was rewarded by the grin that spread on Clark's face.

Clark, still wary, asked, "Really? You have found a Lois without a Clark?"

"My boy, let's go over there and sit on that bench. We have a lot to discuss."

After they sat down Herb proceeded with his explanation, "My boy, our understanding of the multiverse is improving all the time. Recently I was in a universe which was created by the fact that the Lois in that universe had her life extended by exposure to the Kryptonian aura. Do you remember Schrödinger's cat? At the time that her life was extended there were two possible outcomes. First there was the possibility that her life would be extended and second, that it would not. In the first circumstance the universe continued. That is the universe that you first interacted with and the Lois that taught you how to be Superman. You see, the inflection point which created a new universe was the point at which Lois ceased to age. In the normal course of her life she would have aged as a normal human. When that ceased being the case a new universe was created wherein she aged at the rate of an Earth human while in the original universe she lived many lifetimes."

Herb turned on the bench so that he was more directly facing Clark and gestured with his hands, placing them just a few inches apart palms facing in. "The second possibility turned out to be the cause of the creation of a new universe wherein her life span was that of a normal Earth human. She had a long, happy life with her Clark; however, while she aged Clark did not. When she passed away her soul moved to a new vessel and I was able to reunite them in the future. But, unfortunately, that was not the case in your universe. If it had been, I could have done the same thing for you and simply moved you ahead to be reunited with the Lois soul; however, in your universe when your Lois died her soul ceased to exist. That is why her passing affected you so. The other half of your soul ceased to exist, at least in this plane of existence. Usually at the passing of the current vessel the soul passes to a new vessel. In the case of your Lois I was unable to detect her soul in another vessel. It is, I suppose, possible that her soul passed into another universe. We have no way to tell at this time. As it stands, to all intents and purposes, her soul has ceased to exist and you lost half of yourself."

Clark's expression remained eager, as if looking for an answer.

"In view of this I had to send out a number of field agents from TTEMPO to search for a universe where the same situation pertained, only on the other side. One of the agents finally found a circumstance where a new universe is created when a Clark is in a situation wherein he might or might not die."

"In the second, he is seriously injured, but survives and is united with his Lois. However, as I said, there is an alternate outcome; a universe is created wherein in that particular plane of existence his soul failed to move to a new vessel within that universe. When he dies, his soul in essence ceases to exist as with what happened to your Lois."

Because he had personally experienced this situation Clark understood completely what would happen and knew that if there

was any way he could help prevent that from happening to any Lois he would.

"The timing on this trip is crucial. We must arrive so that Lois does not experience the depths of despair that you were put through. You will need to do whatever you can to promote your relationship with her as quickly as possible. We have nothing to go on as we have no prior experience in these circumstances. We theorize that as soon as you arrive in her universe the connection between your souls will manifest and prevent her descent into the depths of despair."

"Herb, you're a time traveler. Tell me, do I succeed?"

"My boy, I must fall back on my motto at this point. Too much information too soon is not good. I will say this, there is a time constraint. Due to the death of Clark, in order for you to take his place, you must act quickly in order to prevent Clark's disappearance from becoming general knowledge. I will be dropping you off as close to the time of his death as is feasible so that first, Lois will not be thrown into the depths of despair and second, so that Clark's demise can be covered up."

In an attempt to convey his understanding of the situation Clark asked, "Would it be best to drop me off before he dies or immediately after?" Thinking more on it he answered his own question, "I think after, that way Lois won't be offended that I didn't save her Clark. How am I to explain to her that her Clark had to die? I mean, it's obvious that we can travel through time and it would have been just as easy to get there before he died as after."

"This is a truly unique situation. We haven't seen this previously. This universe has some of the character of Prime; however an incident happened in the past which changed the path taken by the Lois and Clark of this universe. You'll have to simply work out what needs to be done once you are there. Are you ready?"

Clark had been obviously getting more and more anxious as Herb had been briefing him. Unfortunately, he had allowed that to distract him to a certain extent and not everything that Herb had said had sunk in. He responded, "I guess so, the sooner the better."

"All right, my boy, here we go." Herb pulled out the TaDT and entered the coordinates. The portal opened and they stepped through onto that street that had become so familiar.

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190

Common name -Alt2

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They proceeded to their usual convenience store to check the headlines. There was nothing out of the ordinary.

Herb said, "It's 7 PM, February 14, 1994. We'll extend this trip. Let's meet Sunday, May 8<sup>th</sup> in the mall in front of the Alamo at 10 AM. Good luck, my boy." Herb extended his hand and Clark took it and shook it.

Clark said, "Thanks, Herb, for everything you've done for me."

"Don't thank me yet, Clark. Wait until you have succeeded in this mission."

Herb exited the store and headed for the alley he always used as he entered the time and space coordinates into his TaDT. The portal opened in front of him and he again stepped through.

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190

Common name -Alt2

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Herb checked the display and it read, May 8, 1994. He was relatively near the Alamo so it only took a couple of minutes to walk there. Herb, seeing that Clark was alone, started the

conversation, “Truly, I was not expecting to find you alone this time, my boy. Can you tell me what happened? Did you succeed in this mission as you have in all of the others or did you fail? Are you and Lois Lane of this universe together? I must admit, this doesn’t correspond with what I know about this universe’s future history.”

Clark had turned as he had heard Herb approach. He gave his question a few seconds consideration and started to walk away from the Alamo before answering, “Well, Herb, in a manner of speaking, yes, we are. Would you be willing to take a little trip? We’d like to have a meeting.”

“My, my, that would be unusual. Are you sure they want to meet with me?”

“Absolutely!”

“Well, okay, if you insist. Where are we to meet?”

“At the Kent home in Smallville.”

“That makes some sense. Shall we use the TaDT?”

Clark’s stroll had taken them to a secluded area where he spun into the Suit before he said, “That shouldn’t be necessary. I can fly us.” Before Herb had a chance to object Clark picked him up and took off. Herb hastily grabbed his derby and held it in place as they took off. The flight only took a few minutes and they landed in the front yard. Clark spun out of the Suit as he led the way to the door.

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## Chapter 1 – Superwoman and Superman

February 21, 1994

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190

Common name – Alt2

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A young couple, Joe and Christie Phillips, were in their VW Jetta going on a dive vacation in the Florida Keys. Both were NAUI — National Association of Underwater Instructors (1) certified divers and had all of their own gear. It was a glorious summer day with plenty of sun and some white fluffy clouds as they drove along. They had the windows up and the air conditioning on and Joe was playing a CD in the background as they drove. Joe was behind the wheel while Christie checked the brochures one last time to see if they could find a cheaper dive boat.

Unknown to them a container ship nearby had lost its steering gear and was moving at 25 knots. It was approaching a passage under the Overseas Highway between Fiesta Key and Craig Key. When he was notified of the failure of the steering, the captain saw that he would be impacting one of the pylons supporting the highway. However the ship had too much way to bring it to a standstill before the impact even at full revolutions in reverse. Knowing that he couldn’t turn the ship, the captain immediately ordered full reverse and ordered the radio room to notify the Coast Guard and police that there would be damage as a result of a collision.

The call went out and the police asked for the Emergency Broadcast System to broadcast a warning. They also dispatched black-n-whites from Key West. The Coast Guard dispatched several cutters as well as divers from the base in Key West.

An emergency call also went out for Superwoman asking her to come and assist in any rescue efforts which may be needed. Formerly the call would have gone out for Superman but recently it had become generally known that he had left on a mission and had asked Superwoman to fill in for him.

Not listening to the radio, Joe didn’t hear about the impending disaster. He also didn’t know about the rescue efforts already under way, even though a disaster had not even occurred as yet.

The Captain could see that the collision at this point was unavoidable and ordered the radioman to give their coordinates to the Coast Guard and tell them that impact with the piling was inevitable. Just as the radioman finished his transmission the impact came. The ship was still making eighteen knots at impact. The piling crumpled which dropped the road surface by at least three feet, fracturing the highway.

Joe had been in the process of passing a bus when the highway suddenly disappeared in front of him. There was no time to brake though he tried. He had slowed to 35 miles per hour when the front wheels dropped off the edge of the roadway. Momentum caused the car to continue off the edge tumbling, as it fell and hitting the water trunk first. Both Joe and Christie had been briefly knocked unconscious by the impact and when they came to, watched in horror as their car drifted into the depths. Finally the car settled to the bottom with a gentle bump. Amazingly the vehicle came to rest in an upright position.

Christie had become almost hysterical but Joe remained calm. By profession he was ‘on the job’ and by training and experience needed to maintain his cool. He released his seat belt and reached over and took Christie in his strong arms. As soon as she felt his embrace she started to calm down.

Joe spoke to her for the first time, “Christie, look through the window. What do you see?”

“Water.”

“Right. Now, what were we coming here to do?”

“SCUBA dive?”

“Right again. Okay, remember your training. You’ve done free ascents before. That is what we are going to have to do. We’ve settled on the bottom, so the pressure will be equalized. Our gear’s in the trunk so we can’t get to it. Let’s get your seat belt off.” Reaching down he unclipped her belt. Then he reached over the back of the seat and grabbed a blanket.

“Once we break a window and let the water in we should be able to open the doors. I’ve got this extrication tool.” He reached under his seat and pulled out the tool and held it up for her to see. “When I use this point,” he pointed at a hardened steel point protruding from the hammer type head, “to hit the side window the tempered glass will shatter. Normally it wouldn’t hurt, but it will be driven in by the force of the water. We need to hold the blanket up behind our seats while I reach around and hit the back window. Now, as soon as I do that the water is going to rush in and we will lose this air pocket. We need to hyper-ventilate before I hit the window. Okay?”

Christie had calmed down under Joe’s influence. “Okay. Whatever you say.”

“Okay, let’s start. Long slow deep breaths. I’ll tell you when to hold your breath. Remember, when you start up exhale the entire way. You won’t run out of breath. Just exhale.”

They both started breathing deeply in preparation. While doing this he spread the blanket. When it was in place he reached around it and said, “Okay. Here we go. Hold your breath.” He watched her take one final deep breath and hold it. He struck the window. The glass shattered and the glass was pushed in like buckshot from a shotgun. The blanket succeeded in protecting them from the glass as the water rapidly flooded the car. He gestured for Christie to try the door. She found that it opened easily. Seeing that her door was opening Joe tried his and it also opened easily. As they both were about to exit the car and start their ascent suddenly the sun, which had been filtering down through the water, was blotted out. Looking up they saw a bus literally on top of them. They were directly under it. It was about to land on top of their car preventing them from opening the doors any farther and at this point they weren’t open enough to pass through. Christi started to panic again.

The weight of the engine in the bus caused it to settle rear first after it tumbled off the roadway. It was fortunate for the few

passengers on the bus that after they had left the last rest stop the air conditioning had failed and they had all opened their windows. Everyone on the bus, including the driver, was looking forward to changing busses at the next terminal. In that oppressive southern Florida heat the only option had been to put the windows down. Since the windows were all down, even before the bus started to sink below the surface, nearly all passengers were out and free.

As the rear of the bus settled on the bottom in front of them, Joe looked at Christie and could see her begin to panic again. Just as she looked over at him in fear he reached for her and put his hand on her shoulder. That contact stilled her fears. The front of the bus was about to come down on top of them when suddenly its downward movement stopped. The bus started to ascend again and a few seconds later they couldn't see it anymore. Sunlight greeted their eyes as they looked up. Joe patted Christie's shoulder and pointed to her door. Now they were able to finish opening their doors and start their ascent. They followed their bubbles up toward the surface. They didn't know how it had happened but they were very thankful. They continued their ascent without further incident, breaking the surface within a few feet of each other.

Suddenly Joe found himself being picked up out of the water and flying through the air. Looking around he saw that Superman was carrying him. He shouted, "No, not me! My wife!" Superman spun him around so that he could see over his shoulder. What Joe saw was Christie in the arms of Superwoman.

Superman landed with his passenger on the deck of the roadway on the Key West side. Superwoman landed right next to them and deposited his wife.

When Joe looked around he saw a number of people standing around in wet clothes like his and Christie's. One of them had a bus driver's uniform on so he decided that they must be the occupants of the bus that almost killed them. He saw the bus off to one side with water still running out of it.

The look on Superwoman's face was one of disbelief. She stood there stunned as Superman took off again and dove back into the water, reappearing shortly with the couple's car which he deposited near them. As soon as he had set the car down he took off and headed north. Neither of them had spoken a single word.

Superwoman was still in shock and it took her several seconds to realize just what had happened before she took off in pursuit of Superman. She pushed herself faster than she had ever flown before but no matter how fast she flew she couldn't close the distance. She could see him with her telescopic vision and watched as he changed course and headed west. She altered course to try to head him off but he managed to stay ahead of her.

She was starting to feel a little frustrated and then she heard a radio broadcast as she was passing over Denver about a magnitude 7.6 earthquake in Japan and realized where they were headed. She pushed herself even more as if that were possible and she slowly closed the distance, though she was still several seconds behind when they arrived. She saw him start pulling people from the rubble and she started doing the same. She heard the cheers of the people when they realized that the superhero pair was there. There was an elevated roadway that was still swaying even some seconds after the main shock had passed. Superman saw that one end was starting to separate from the rest of the roadway and flew up under it to support it while Superwoman helped evacuate that section, physically moving some of the disabled vehicles.

After several hours of concerted effort they were finally finished. Again Superman took off before Superwoman could say anything. She took off after him, determined that this time, no matter how far or how fast he traveled she was going to stay with him. She had to solve this mystery. Just who was this Superman? Where did he come from? How did he get here? Why was he

here? She had to find out.

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Flashback – September 1993

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Lois and Clark had been working together for a while. Through a set of unforeseen circumstances Lois had discovered his secret and had kept it to herself until he had decided that he could trust her with it. When he finally got up the nerve to actually tell her they were at work. Not by design but by happenstance they were both in the supply room at the same time. Clark said, "You know Lois, we've had a few dates now, and I've really had a good time."

Lois replied, cautiously, because she didn't know where this was going, but had some hope that it would be where she wanted it to go, "Yeah, I've enjoyed being out with you, too."

She could see that Clark was actually beginning to sweat as he continued, "I, uh, I don't know how to, uh, well, I've got something to, well, I need to say, uh, well, before we continue, there's something ..."

Lois was feeling light headed. Was he about to tell her? She couldn't believe it. She tried to encourage him, "You have something to say? Something to tell me?"

Clark, before he had a chance to lose his nerve and back out of this, blurted out, "Yeah, I'm him. I'm Superman." As he finished his statement he became very apprehensive, waiting for her to blow up at him.

Instead what happened took him completely by surprise. Lois squealed in delight and launched herself at him and jumping into his arms, kissed him soundly and then she asked, "What took you so long?"

Stunned, he said, "You already knew? How?"

"Remember when we were on that stake out in the honeymoon suite at the Lexor? You threw me on the bed and kissed me. I could never forget that kiss. When I kissed you as you were leaving to deal with Nightfall, that kiss was identical and I knew just who I was kissing. I knew why you kept it a secret and I knew that I would have to help you keep it a secret also."

Clark pulled her in and kissed her before whispering, "Thank you. I love you, Lois."

Chuckling, Lois replied, "I love you, too. Now, I think we need to get out of here before I start to get a reputation like Cat's."

He started to laugh as he replied, "That would never happen. Everyone knows that 'Mad Dog Lane' isn't like that. She's a no-nonsense journalist."

"Ah, but, what if it became known that this no-nonsense journalist was in love with her partner?"

"I guess that the Mad Dog reputation might just suffer a setback."

She also started laughing as she said, "Let it!" They exited the supply room, both of them laughing as they returned to their desks.

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A few weeks later

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Lois and Clark were going to the White Orchid Ball. Lois really wanted to nail down a one-on-one interview with Metropolis' billionaire philanthropist, Lex Luthor. Most people knew very little about his background. Through extensive digging Lois had found out that he had inherited his money and LexCorp from his father, Lionel. It had been a rather small and insignificant company until Lex took over and he, through shrewd acquisitions — some of which were questionable — had built it up to the megacorp it was today.

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October 1, 1993

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It was 5 p.m. and Lois and Clark had just left the Planet. Walking hand in hand they were passing through Centennial Park on the way to Lois' apartment. It was a pleasant autumn evening and they were taking their time as they walked, enjoying the time together away from the office.

When they reached the vicinity of the fountain, Clark suggested that they stop for a minute.

As Lois was sitting down on the edge of the fountain she was thinking, <Clark has been acting so strangely today. It's like he's been preoccupied with something. I hope he doesn't feel too bad about leaving me abruptly last night. He really needed to respond to that call for help. How was he to know it was some crazy groupie just wanting to tell him how much she wanted him and propositioning him? I don't blame him, I blame her. What? What's he doing?>

Clark knelt down on one knee in front of Lois and took one of her hands in his before he said, "Lois, I have loved you from the first minute I met you. We've worked together now for a while and you've known my secret for a while. You accept me for who I am. You accept all my flaws. I can't picture my future without you in it."

Lois was feeling light headed. She thought, <Is this really happening? Is he doing what I think he's doing?>

Clark continued, "I don't want a future without you so, I want to ask you to share that life with me. Lois Lane, will you marry me?" As he spoke this line he pulled a little velvet box out of his pocket and opened it, displaying a diamond engagement ring.

Lois was happy, excited, frightened, apprehensive, overjoyed and breathless. Finally she put the hand that Clark wasn't holding up to her heart and gasped for a breath to replace the one she had been holding. Joy became the overwhelming feeling and it manifested as a smile that grew and grew. When she was finally capable of coherent speech she dreamily said, "Yeah, I would, I mean, yes, I do, uh, will, uh, YES, Yes, I will marry you."

Clark pulled the ring out of the box and started to slip it on her finger, but it was slightly too small. Lois said, "Maybe if I used some soap it would slip on."

Clark said, "No, then you might not be able to get it off."

With determination Lois asked, "Why would I want to take it off? Once I have it on, no one is getting it off me."

Chuckling slightly, Clark said, "There may be occasions. What if you get so mad at me that you decide you want a divorce or if you decide you can't handle being married to you know who anymore?"

Looking deep into his eyes and speaking in all seriousness, Lois said, "There is nothing you could do and no problems created by you know who that would cause me to want to end this marriage."

Clark said, "Just the same, why don't I pick you up in the morning? I'll take you to Mazik's Jewelers and have your finger sized and the ring adjusted."

Lois slipped the ring on another finger that it would fit and said, "I'm wearing it here until tomorrow. I don't know if I'm going to be willing to leave it with them."

"If I ask them to rush maybe they could get it done in just a couple of days."

"Ohhhhhh, I guess, if I have to I have to. But I don't have to like it."

They finished the trip to her apartment and spent the evening together. Now that she had a ring she felt more confident in their relationship and that evening they rounded second base and were moving toward third when a fire truck passed directly by her apartment house and he had to go.

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October 2, 1993

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The day of the White Orchid Ball was upon them.

First thing in the morning, Clark took Lois to Mazik's Jewelers and started the process for having the ring made the appropriate size.

Also that morning Lex had called Nigel in. "Nigel, this evening we'll have several members of the space sub-committees in the Senate and House at the ball. Have a meeting room prepared so that I can get them together and try to convince them to throw their support behind my offer to assist with the space program. Have the appropriate libations available. Send in Mrs. Cox on your way out."

A couple of minutes later Mrs. Cox entered. "Mrs. Cox, please contact Mitzie and have her send a few of the girls over to act as hostesses for the meeting I'm planning with the members of the Senate and House sub-committees. It would be nice if she would have the special room, you know, her Presidential Suite, ready if any of the esteemed members of government would like to accompany one of the girls back to her establishment. Tell her to make sure that the girls are dressed appropriately."

"I'll take care of it, Lex."

"I know, I can always count on you."

She sashayed out of his office with a sexy swaying of her hips while he looked on appreciatively.

A few seconds later Lex's intercom buzzed. "Yes?"

"Lex, Miranda is here to see you."

Lex let out a virulent expletive and then calmed himself and depressed a key. "Send her in."

The door opened and in stepped Miranda Michaels. She didn't beat around the bush but came straight to the point. "Lex, what did you think of my little demonstration?"

"What demonstration would that be?"

"The Daily Planet, I used my pheromone spray on the staff. They were incapacitated by love for two whole days and that was a diluted sample."

"Well, yes, it was effective, but what possible use could it be put to?"

"Lex, just imagine the police so distracted by love that they failed to interfere with a bank robbery."

"There is a problem with application, how long the effects would last, would they actually be distracted enough. There are just too many variables to make it feasible."

"All it will take is some more funding and I can perfect it."

"No, I don't think I'm going to continue to support this."

"What about the money you owe me for the work I've already done?"

"No, I don't think so. You were doing this on your own." Lex stood up and stepped around his desk. Once in front of it he leaned back against it.

Moving in closer to him she continued, "Don't give me that! I did this research because you said you'd fund it. You should give me what you owe me." Her tone changed and took on a slightly sultry note as she continued, "If you can't, maybe we could compromise." She reached out and started toying with his tie. "Why don't we do this, the Ball is tonight. I'd be willing to forgive what you owe me if you'd invite me to come as your date. It could be like old times. After the Ball we could spend some time together." This last was said as she glanced in the direction of his private apartment.

Shaking his head Lex replied, "Miranda, Miranda, you know that there is no 'we', not anymore. That's ancient history."

Dropping her hands to her sides she retorted in an angry tone, "In other words there's no us \*and\* no money."

With something of a sneer in his tone and on his face he replied, "That's right." Lex turned around to pick up a cigar from his humidor. When he turned back around Miranda sprayed him in the face with a liquid from a small atomizer she had carried in her pocket. "Ugh, what was that? It smells like old athletic

socks,” he said as he waved his hand in front of his face in an attempt to dissipate whatever it had been.

With a tone of superiority and mystery in her voice she replied, “Just one of my concoctions. I call it ‘Revenge.’” She gave her brew a few seconds to act before continuing, “Are you sure that there isn’t anything that you want to say to me?”

With a tone of finality in his voice Lex replied, “Just good day. You can see yourself out.”

With a more than disappointed air she turned to leave. “You haven’t heard the last of me, Lex.” She turned to give him one last look as she exited only to see him blow a smoke ring and exhibit his obvious pleasure with the cigar.

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After she returned to her shop Miranda checked the contents of the atomizer. She sprayed a male lab rat and then placed it in the cage of a female. The male rat went through the courting ritual normal for rats which consisted of checking to make sure that his companion was a female and then he mounted her, repeatedly.

She started muttering to herself “Why didn’t it work? This compound should have had him groveling at my feet begging me to love him and make love to him. I wonder if it has a delayed response in the human species. It sure worked on \*this\* rat. Why didn’t it work on \*that\* rat in LexTower?”

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Flashback TBC

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## Chapter 2 – Nell and Lucille

Flashback continues

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name – ALT2

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The limo stopped in front of LexTower. The doorman opened the rear door and Clark, in a tuxedo, stepped out. Turning around, he presented his hand to assist Lois from the car. A hand appeared from inside the car, followed by a shapely leg and then the rest of her. She was dressed in a floor-length black gown with her hair swept up in an elegant do. They moved into the lobby and entered the elevator to the floor where the White Orchid Ball was being held. As they exited the elevator they presented their invitation to the coordinator who announced “Lois Lane and Clark Kent.”

Putting on her most sophisticated airs and with her arm hooked through Clark’s, Lois made her entry. They made a handsome couple and all eyes were on them and Clark didn’t even need his superhearing to hear the “Ooohs” and “Ahhhs” of those in attendance as they proceeded down the stairs to the hall.

Lois looked around and said, “I don’t see Luthor. From what I’ve found out, he likes to make an entrance, if you know what I mean.”

“No doubt. We’ll have to wait for it.”

They socialized with some of the other reporters that were here to cover the event.

A short time later Luthor descended the stairs with several members of Congress with whom he had been meeting. He had been proposing to add his support to the space effort and EPRAD. His concern over the attempted sabotage of the Prometheus shuttle had caused him to come forth and offer his assistance.

As he reached the middle of the flight he was arrested by a female voice.

“Lex Luthor! Why haven’t you returned my calls?” Clark had faded into the background to give Lois her moment.

Luthor looked for the source of this question and spotted Lois. She was standing alone in the center of the floor looking very beautiful. Luthor excused himself from his party and made a

beeline toward Lois. He couldn’t take his eyes off of her as he continued the descent on auto-pilot. He felt he had to meet her. He had to possess her. She meant everything to him. He couldn’t live without her. When he reached her he asked “And whom do I have the pleasure of addressing?”

“Lois Lane, Daily Planet.”

“If I had known that the calls were from such a lovely woman I would have returned your calls earlier.”

“I want to set up a time to do a one-on-one interview.”

“What are you doing next Friday evening, say, seven o’clock? I’ll send a car.”

Lois was stunned, this had been too easy. “Seven o’clock will be fine.”

Luthor continued in his most ingratiating and urbane manner, “I look forward to Friday evening.” He turned slightly and signaled to the band. The band started playing a waltz. Luthor turned back to Lois and asked “May I have the pleasure of this dance?”

Lois was blown away and simply nodded her acquiescence.

They started moving around the floor. Seeing them, several other couples began to dance.

As the number proceeded Lois was wondering <Where is Clark?> She was beginning to feel more than a little bit uncomfortable as little by little Luthor pulled her in closer and closer. Just as she was about to lose control and do something which would have really queered the interview, Luthor stopped. He had been tapped on the shoulder and looking past him Lois saw Clark.

“May I cut in?”

“No, you may not! Who are you, anyhow? How dare you interrupt, I haven’t completed the dance! Go away and don’t bother me again! She’s with me!”

“My name is Clark Kent and this is my fiancée with whom you are dancing.”

Luthor froze. His hands fell lifelessly at his sides. He was crushed. He stammered “I, uh, I didn’t . . . I didn’t know. I didn’t see a ring.”

Lois explained, “Clark just asked me yesterday and the ring had to back to the jeweler to be resized. Nonetheless, he is my fiancé so if you please, I would like to dance with him.”

“Of course.” Turning to Lois he bowed again and said “Thank you, Ms. Lane for the dance. I hope you enjoy the rest of the evening.” Luthor turned and left, joining another party in conversation off the dance floor.

Speaking to one of his lackeys he said, “Send my secretary to me.”

A few minutes later Mrs. Cox showed up.

He led her out onto the balcony, leaving the French doors open in the process. “I want you to find out everything you can on Clark Kent. He works at the Daily Planet, I’ve seen his byline. He must be taken care of, but make it look like an accident. In order for me to have her he must be removed because he’s in my way. See to it.”

“But Lex, why her?”

“I have to have her! She must be mine at any cost.”

“All right Lex, if that’s what you want.”

“See to it.”

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The next Friday, before Lois had her ‘interview’ with Lex Luthor, Clark pulled her into the conference room.

He started, “Lois, you are going to have to be very careful tonight. I don’t trust Luthor as far as I could throw him, and with my strength, that’s a considerable distance. He’s dangerous. Do you remember a month or so ago, there was a situation where we had simultaneous jumpers on opposite sides of town? That was Luthor. He was testing me. He did some other things as well, placing innocent people in danger, all just to test me. To see just

what I could do. Do you want me to hang around outside while you have the interview?

“I guess it couldn’t hurt.”

“Well, I want to take care of one thing before this evening.” Reaching into his pocket he pulled out a little velvet box and as he opened it, he got down on one knee and said, “I know I asked you already, but, now I have the ring back. Lois Lane, will you marry me?”

Holding out her hand so that he could slip the ring on her finger she said, “Yes, I love you, Clark. There’s no one else like you.”

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That Friday evening a car picked up Lois at her door and drove her to LexTower. She took the elevator to the one hundredth floor. When the elevator doors opened a slightly portly gentleman with a goatee and an English accent met her and conducted her to Luthor’s private residence where she found a table set for two.

Luthor came in and said, “I hope you don’t mind eating here. André has prepared one of his specialties for us.”

Lois pulled out her mini-recorder, pad and pencil and said, “I guess we can do the interview here as well as anywhere.”

Luthor said, “Let’s have the meal and some pleasant conversation first.” He was thinking, <Ah, to be in her presence. I have to have her but if I move too soon I may scare her away. I have to get her back here, one way or another. She will be mine. I see that she is wearing an engagement ring now. No matter, Kent will be dealt with.>

Lois sat her equipment down and said, “Okay, meal first.”

There followed a meal the likes of which Lois had never experienced before and the conversation was light and interesting. Luthor succeeded in distracting her for quite some time. Finally he said that he was going to summon the car to take her home. She was more than a little angry, partly at herself for letting him distract her so much that she forgot the interview and more at him for distracting her. He said, “I’m sorry about the interview. Perhaps we can reschedule?”

Clark hovered outside and watched. He was fuming. This wasn’t an interview, it was a date. He would have to talk to Lois about this when he got her home.

Clark saw her being dropped off by the car and watched her go up to her apartment. He flew over and tapped on her window.

She opened it to let him in and before he even had a chance to say anything she started pacing back and forth in front of him and began venting, “What a fool I’ve been! How could I let him do that to me? I lost my focus! I let him distract me from my purpose! Ooooooh, you just wait, Mr. Lex Luthor, just you wait! You don’t do that to Lois Lane and get away with it.” She rounded on Clark, “You saw what happened. I let him distract me, ME, Lois Lane, Kerth Award winning journalist! Hah! I’ll get no Kerth nomination for tonight’s fiasco. He made a fool out of me! Well, that’s it. This means WAR! You and I are going to bring him down if it’s the last thing I do! Get outta that Suit. We’ve got work to do.”

Clark smiled and spun into his work clothes.

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A few weeks later

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In a basement workshop the Newtrich sisters were working on a project. Actually, to be more correct,,,,,, Nell was working on a project. Nell was the technical brain of the operation and Lucille was the operational brain. They had both been laid off from their respective positions, Nell as a technician in the Enhanced Optical Weapons Systems Division of LexLabs and Lucille from her position as a reporter for LNN, another subsidiary of LuthorCorp. Neither had been able in the last six months to find alternate employment and their funds were

starting to be depleted. They had been contacted a couple of months ago with an offer of employment, however it was something that neither of them would consider. They had an outstanding loan on their car and had been told that they had better maintain the payments or else. After being informed of this they had been contacted by a woman named Constance with an offer of employment. When it was explained that they would be hired as ‘Hostesses’ they had both flatly refused. They knew the source of the offer and were very angry. They had developed a determination to take out their frustrations on and have revenge against Lex Luthor as the head of LuthorCorp and the author of their difficulties. In order to do that they needed money. They had a plan to rob a delivery truck that would be carrying old money from ATM machines. To do this they needed to dispense with Superman, at least temporarily.

Nell had been working on a laser which was housed in the case of a video cam, very effectively disguising it. Power would be provided by a belt battery pack just like that used by TV crews. The only problem had been the crystal, but that was solved by their brother. Their brother, who was in prison, had told them about a chunk of red crystal that had seemed to cause Superman to become apathetic, though he had no idea as to exactly what it was. All he knew was that should affect Superman. He had told them where to find it, but when they went to get it, it wasn’t red, it was red and green, unlike a ruby which was all red but the crystal should still focus the beam the way she wanted.

Nell wasn’t sure exactly how well it would work though. In the dark, it emitted a muddy brown glow of its own, obviously a mix of the red and green colors, and she didn’t know if that might not interfere with the laser beam. They would just have to try.

Lucille walked in while Nell was working. She was very obviously impatient with her sister. “That truck is on a schedule. If we’re going to make this score we have to have that ready by the day after tomorrow.

“I know, I know. I’m working on it. I just need a little more time. Polishing the ends of this crystal took longer than I had imagined that it would.” The ends had to be perfectly parallel in order to prevent scatter or attenuation due to deflection. She fumbled and dropped the crystal as she was trying to get it placed in its holder within the laser. Fortunately it only fell to the desktop. If it had fallen to the floor it might have shattered. Nell quickly grabbed for it but it skittered out of reach. Lucille reached out calmly and corralled the wayward crystal. Nell was somewhat appalled when Lucille did this because she was not wearing gloves and was getting her fingerprints and body oils all over the crystal as a result. Lucille then handed it to Nell who opened both gloved hands to receive it.

“Nell, be careful! Don’t break that, you know we can’t afford a replacement. I thought you said I could count on you.

“You can! It just slipped, that’s all.” She continued, muttering to herself, “Now I’ve got to clean it again.”

“Nell, things are always slipping with you. You are the most \*clumsy\*, butterfingere person I know. That’s one of the things that got you fired from LexLabs. You dropped that weapon you were working on. What was it called, the Quinton debilitator or some such idiotic name?”

As Nell was busy re-cleaning the crystal she was shocked at the name her sister had given the weapon she had been working on. She replied with some exasperation, “It was called a Quantum Disruptor!”

“Whatever! When you dropped it, it fried the scientist that invented it before he had a chance to complete the drawings just before destroying itself!. Now it’s an incomplete project. They don’t even have the prototype to look at!”

“But it wasn’t my fault! There was a grease spot on the floor and I slipped on it! It was an accident.”

“Nell, you’re an accident just looking for a place to happen.

Now tell me about this laser again. How is it going to work?"

"Well, this is my own design. I needed to take some shortcuts because we didn't have the money to buy what I really wanted. I was able to scavenge some of the parts from old TV sets. I built the circuit board from scratch. Here, you see these? These are the capacitors. The power comes from the battery pack and passes through this inverter which changes the current from DC to AC and then this module steps up the voltage and feeds it to this bank of capacitors. They store the energy and supply it in a burst to the exciter which initiates the source ... "

"Whoa, you lost me back at AC and DC. Can't you put all of that into simple terms?"

Nell, with an exasperated look at her sister, pointed at the power leads and said, "The power comes in on this wire." Pointing at the inverter "It goes through here and gets changed from one type of energy to another." Pointing at the capacitors she said, "The energy gets stored here until the trigger is pushed. Then it lights the lamp and this directs the beam to the crystal." She pointed at the red crystal. "And then it comes out here." She pointed at the lens.

"That's more like it. Don't most lasers use a ruby?"

Nell, starting to lose patience with her sister and her complete ignorance of technical matters almost shouted, "Do you really think we could afford a ruby? Where was I supposed to get the money for that?"

"Okay, okay, no ruby. So we're using this red and green crystal from the stash."

"Yes, but I don't know how well it will work. The thing that concerns me is the fact that it glows in the dark. I don't know if that will interfere with the beam or not. That's one of the things that I need to test."

"There we go back to tests again. When are you going to start testing this thing?"

Nell, her frustration becoming even more evident raised her voice even higher "I'd be able to test it sooner if you didn't ask me so many questions!"

"Shouldn't you be working on putting it together so that you can start the tests?"

Nell said "I know!" as she picked up the crystal and finally succeeded in placing it in the clips, pinching her finger in the process. She let out an "Ouch" and yanking off her glove, stuck the injured finger in her mouth to suck on it.

"How much more needs to be done on this? It looks like you're finished. It's not like this has to burn anything. We just need to expose Superman to the radiation to make it so that he doesn't care about what we are doing."

With her head close to the laser, Nell answered in a somewhat distracted manner as she had her hands working inside the mechanism. "No, it's not finished. I have to check and then confirm the alignment then I have to check the exciter and the power supply. Then I need to check the collimator. Then I have to recheck the alignment and then we have to run a low power test ... "

"Just tell me that this is going to work!"

"It's going to work!"

"Tell me why."

"Because we have to get back at Lex Luthor for firing us and we don't care how we do it. But we need money if we are going to do that."

"Can't we skip some of those steps? It sounds like it's going to take you more time than we have!"

Nell looked away from her work and at Lucille, her hands still buried in the mechanism and said "No, we can't skip any step, not if you want to be sure it's going to work the way it's supposed to."

"When are you going to start the testing?"

"I should be ready to start the testing tomorrow."

"All right then, keep working. Just work faster I don't want to miss the truck."

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Flashback TBC

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### Chapter 3 – The Making of a Superwoman

Friday, December 10, 1993 Flashback continues

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name – ALT2

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A call had come in that there was a child trapped in the wishing well in Centennial Park. Lois Lane and her fiancé Clark Kent were in the bullpen when the call came in.

Lois looked at him. He gave the flying hand signal and she nodded. They both headed for the stairwell. When they got to the vicinity Clark landed and dropped Lois off behind some shrubbery close to the scene and took off again. Lois headed for the wishing well.

When Lois arrived at the wishing well the area had been cordoned off by the police and there was a news crew from LNN on the scene consisting of two women.

As Lois took up her position a red and blue blur dove out of the sky and straight down the well. Seconds later the primary color clad superhero came back up out of the well. He landed near her. She asked, "Is the baby okay?"

A bitter laugh escaped him as he replied, "I think that the batteries need to be replaced." He opened the blanket to reveal a doll with a tape player taped to its abdomen.

"What a sick joke! Who could have done something like this?"

Just then Superman heard the sound of capacitors charging. Looking around he saw that the 'news' crew had their camera aimed at him. A quick check with his x-ray vision disclosed the fact that this was in fact a weapon. He threw himself in between it and Lois and enclosed her in his arms to shield her from this apparent weapon. He felt a burning sensation as the brownish beam impacted his back. When it did, his aura started to flare and manifested as a bright red for a few seconds. At the same time Lois manifested an aura also only hers was blue. This only lasted a few seconds however. Clark's aura moved through the spectrum to purple and then to blue while Lois' aura moved in the opposite direction reaching purple at the same time as Clark's, finally hitting red and staying there. A wave of nausea and weakness swept over him as the beam continued to play on his back. Mystified by this he continued to shield Lois until suddenly he heard a small explosion. As soon as he heard this the beam stopped. He turned to confront the perpetrators and saw that it was too late. They had been standing very close together when the weapon had exploded, killing both of them.

He tried to use his x-ray vision to determine if there was any chance of saving either of them and found that he couldn't see anything other than the bodies lying there. He shook his head because the effort to use his x-ray vision had strained his eyes and it hurt. He could almost understand the failure of his vision, but not the pain associated with the attempt. It wasn't very often that he experienced pain. He decided to try to conceal just what the problem was so he moved over to the bodies on the ground and started to do a quick check for vitals.

Lois knew that this was very unusual behavior for her fiancé so she moved over and knelt next to him. She whispered, "What's the matter?"

Also in a whisper he replied, "I've lost my powers. I couldn't x-ray them. We need to see how much of this weapon we can recover. We need to get it to Dr. Klein to find out just what happened."

Lois started looking around and suddenly she could see each individual blade of grass like it was a tree. She reached out and grabbed Superman's arm. He winced and whispered, "Ouch, not so hard. Wait a minute. How did you squeeze my arm so hard?"

Lois said, "Let's get out of here. We can come back later and find the pieces."

Noting the strained intensity in her voice he replied, "Okay."

Superman said to the policeman on the scene, "I'll be back later to give a statement."

The patrolman replied, "No problem, Superman. We know how busy you are." He stood there scratching his head when he saw Superman run off at normal human speed instead of flying off but thought that he must have a good reason for doing so.

As soon as they were out of sight in an alley Clark tried to fly and only succeeded in a hop of about a foot and a half. "I can't fly. How were you able to squeeze my arm so hard?"

"I don't know. All of a sudden I just feel terrific."

Clark said, "Close your eyes and think about floating like a balloon."

Lois did and Clark watched as slowly she floated first a foot then two feet off the ground. He said, "Lois, open your eyes!"

When she did she saw that she was above him and realizing what was happening suddenly dropped to the ground. "Clark, what happened to me? It's like I have your powers."

Clark was almost thinking out loud as he said, "The beam from that weapon must have been from red Kryptonite. It looks like my powers have been transferred to you. Probably because I was holding you to protect you when it struck, though we may never know how it was done. They were both killed in the explosion."

The strain was showing in her voice as Lois said, "I wonder how long this is going to last?"

Trying to allay her fears somewhat, Clark said, "We don't have any way to know. The effects of red Kryptonite are unpredictable and different every time. Right now I need to get out of the Suit and I can't do my normal change so my regular clothes aren't available. I need to get back to my place. Do you think you could fly me there?"

She was starting to panic and it was coming out in her voice, "How could I do that? Don't you think it would look strange for me to be carrying Superman in my arms? That and the fact that everyone would recognize me!"

Trying to calm her down a little he said, "How about we do it this way. Here, stand next to me. We put our arms around each other ... right. Now, start to fly. It'll look like I'm flying you just a different position."

Lois was sounding more and more panicky all the time. She asked, "How do I do this? I haven't flown before!"

Trying to calm her down some he said, "It's easy. Do it just like you did when you floated only think of a speed and a direction. It helps if you are looking where you want to go. Try it. Just look up and think fast."

Looking up as directed she said, "Okay, here goes nothing." They shot up so fast that Clark almost lost his grip. This time it was Clark's turn to panic and you could hear it in his voice as he shouted, "Slow down! Think hover!"

They came to a stop. After catching his breath and calming down from the fright he said, "Wow! Okay. Whewh, well at least now we know you can go fast. Let's try for direction, accuracy, and controlling your speed. Look toward my apartment and think fast," he hastily added, "but not so fast, okay?"

"I'll give it a try. Where's your apartment? Everything looks different from up here."

Pointing off to the right he said, "That way."

Looking in the direction that he was pointing, she saw a familiar landmark and said, "Okay, I think I know where it is." With a somewhat resigned tone she said, "Well, here we go

again." They started moving, basically in the right direction and not quite so fast. Eventually they made it to his apartment.

Entering from the balcony Clark went to the phone and called Smallville. His mom picked up the phone and said, "Hello?"

"Mom?"

"Clark! Hi, Honey! How come you're calling at this time of the day?"

"Mom, we've got a problem. Can we come out to the farm for a few days?"

"Who? You and Lois?"

"Yeah, me and Lois."

"Of course Honey, you know that you and Lois can come out here anytime you want. This is still your home."

"Thanks Mom, we'll be there in a little while."

With a quizzical look Lois asked, "We're going to the farm?"

"Yeah, you need a crash course in how to control your powers and I can't think of a better place to do it. Besides, you're going to need a costume. I think Mom still has material from when she made the Suit."

"Don't you think that may be a little premature? After all we don't even know if this is going to last!"

"We can't take the chance that it won't. We need to act like this is permanent."

Sounding very worried and in full babble mode Lois asked, "What if it is? What if I can't give these powers back to you!? What if I'm going to have your powers forever? How will this affect \*us\*? You're the one that's supposed to be the hero, not me. I don't \*want\* this. We \*need\* to see Bernie Klein. We need to see how we can \*reverse\* this. Maybe he can build a machine to transfer them back to you. \*I'm\* no hero – that's \*your\* thing. \*My\* job is to \*cover\* for \*you\*."

"I'm sorry Lois, but right now our roles are reversed. You're the one with the powers now."

After placing another call to Perry to let him know that they would not be back at the office until Monday because they were following up on some leads in the wishing well incident, Clark put on one of his business suits over the uniform and packed a backpack with casual clothes for a couple of days. They walked to Lois' apartment where she packed similarly.

Clark changed back into the uniform and after Lois locked up her apartment, they put their arms around each other and left from her back window headed west. Lois had some trouble navigating, she might have been trying too hard, and Clark had to correct their direction several times. They finally landed safely in the front yard of the Kent farm.

Walking into the house they were greeted by Martha who gave both of them hugs. "Okay, what's the special occasion? What brings you out here in the middle of the week? What's this problem you mentioned?"

"You know how I've always wanted to be a 'normal' guy? Well, I just got my wish."

"What? What happened?"

"We're not sure. I think it was red Kryptonite." Clark related the incident at the wishing well.

When he was finished, the ever-practical Martha looked at Lois and said, "Well, I guess you need to go out and start working on learning to handle your powers. While you guys are doing that I'll get out the fabric, patterns and my sewing machine so we can whip up a uniform. Go on, get out of here and let me get to work."

Laughing Clark said, "Okay Lois, you heard the boss. Let's go work on you learning to control your powers."

That started a whirlwind weekend of working on her powers and trying on different costumes until she found one she was happy with.

The uniform that they finally decided on was a very deliberate choice as far as color scheme and they knew as soon as

she had it on that it was the right choice.

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December 13, 1993

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Monday morning they returned to the Planet. Lois had her new uniform and basic control over her powers. Now they just had to wait for something to happen which needed super assistance.

They were at their desks working when Perry burst out of his office shouting, “Turn up the sound!” Obviously he was referring to the big screen TV located off on one side of the bullpen. Jimmy grabbed the remote and kicked the volume off mute. A LNN reporter’s voice came blasting out of the speakers.

[“*The bank robbers have taken a number of hostages and have sealed the building. They are demanding a helicopter to land on the roof to take them to the airport where a plane is waiting for them. They threaten to kill a hostage an hour until their demands are met.*”]

As soon as Perry had shouted for sound Lois had headed for the stairwell. A few seconds later everyone heard a sonic boom and a few started cheering. All eyes were glued to the TV. The cameras had pulled back for a wide shot. Suddenly into the frame came a red and blue blur. The cheering only got louder. The superhero was travelling almost too fast to be seen and was crashing in through a window.

Less than a minute later the front doors opened and the hostages started coming out, followed by their previous captors who had been disarmed and were walking out with their hands in the air. The security guard escorted them out with his gun on them.

After the security guard came a red, blue and yellow clad superhero. At first everyone thought it was Superman but then everyone realized that the individual was too small to be Superman. This was a petite woman in a costume strikingly similar to Superman’s. This was a woman in a blue body suit, almost like a Speedo swim suit, with a pleated red miniskirt, red boots that came to mid-calf leaving the rest of the legs bare, a red cape which only came down to mid thigh and a yellow belt. The same stylized ‘S’ which Superman wore in a somewhat smaller size graced her chest. The main difference was the mask she wore. It covered most of her face from her hairline to a point below her eyes and crossing her nose and was made of the same stretchy material as the uniform.

The LNN newscaster was going frantic.

[“*A new superhero has appeared! This is a woman and her uniform is just like Superman’s! I’m going to try to get a comment!*”]

The reporter shouted to the cameraman to follow as he ran to try to intercept the superhero.

[“*Miss, uh, Miss, would you care to make a comment for the viewers?*”]

Everyone in the bullpen was watching the scene unfold on the big screen TV as with some apparent reluctance the new superhero turned to the camera. Lois thought that it was a good thing that they had taken the time to prepare a story beforehand. Everyone who was watching felt like she was looking directly at each of them as she fisted her hands and placed them on her hips in what was an intimidating stance and looked directly into the camera as she used a strong, impersonal tone to launch into her statement.

[“*I am Superwoman. I came at Superman’s request to fill in for him while he was called away on a special mission. I will be with you until his return.*”]

As she completed her statement she waved to the camera and took off straight up until she was out of sight. The camera followed as well as it could and then returned to center on the reporter. The reporter came out of his stupor, and realizing he was

back on the air, said,

[“*Well, there you have it folks! We have a new superhero in town. Superwoman is going to be filling in for Superman while he is away on a special mission. Don’t forget you heard it first, right here, on LNN – live. We now return you to the Studio and Linda King — Reporting*”]

Just about this time Lois walked up to Clark and looking around asked, “What’d I miss?”

Clark winked at her and responded, “Apparently there is a new superhero in town. It’s a woman and she said that she is going to be filling in for Superman while he’s away on some kind of mission.”

Clark was looking at his watch as if he was timing something. As if on cue Perry shouted, “Lane, Kent, my office! NOW!”

Sotto voce, Clark said, “Twenty seconds. The Chief must be slipping.”

Lois started laughing as they moved together to Perry’s office. Perry was fuming. They both knew what was coming but Lois was still laughing as they sat on his couch after closing the door. He addressed them turning his initial fury on Lois, “You think this is funny, do you?”

Lois sobered instantly, “No, Chief. Sorry.”

Perry wasn’t really mollified by her apparent contrition. He continued, “Okay you two. What’s the story? Why didn’t you say anything about this? With as close as you two are to Superman I’d be very surprised if he didn’t tell you about this beforehand.”

“Well, actually, he did Chief, but he swore us to secrecy.”

“Okay, I might accept that if you hadn’t allowed \*LNN\* to \*scoop\* us! Why’d you let that happen?”

Lois responded, “That was Superman’s request. He felt that there has been too close an association between him and the Planet and that it has put some of us in unnecessary danger, me in particular. He wanted to lessen that so he wants to spread out the coverage some.”

“But, why now? This is such a big story and it should have been ours! Well, at least get out there and find her and get me a follow-up.”

“You got it Chief! We’ll get what we can.”

Across town, Luthor had been watching the coverage of the bank robbery. It hadn’t been one of his robbery teams. If it had they wouldn’t have done anything so stupid and been captured by the local superhero. He was shocked to learn that Superman was no longer around and that a woman had taken his place. He thought, <All that work, all those tests to determine just what he could do, wasted. I’ll need to start all over and test her. I wonder if she will be as powerful. Oh well, let the games begin — again.>

He depressed a switch on his intercom and said, “Nigel, my office, if you please.”

He heard back, “Right away, Sir.”

When Nigel knocked on the office door he heard, “Come in.” He opened the door and entered.

Luthor didn’t beat around the bush. He asked, “What progress have you made on getting rid of Clark Kent? I am growing impatient. I want Lane and he’s in the way.”

Nigel replied, “I have a particular individual in mind. He has the finesse to do the job and make it look like an accident.”

“Hire him; I don’t care how much it costs.”

“As soon as he’s available.”

“Why isn’t he able to do the job now?”

“He’s currently in prison, but, he is scheduled to be out soon.”

“Isn’t there anyone else that could do the job?”

“Not with his level of expertise.”

“Oh, all right, but I won’t wait forever. Get him on the job as soon as he’s available.”

‘I’ll be sure to do that, Sir. As soon as he is out, I will put him to work and rest assured, it \*will\* look like an accident.’

“See to it. Send in Mrs. Cox on your way out.” Lex reached for his humidor and pulled out a cigar as Nigel turned and left.

Mrs. Cox entered his office and stood in front of his desk. Lex said, “I want you to contact Lois Lane and set up a follow-up meeting for that ‘interview’ she asked for.”

Mrs. Cox, because not only of her position but the more personal services she rendered to her boss felt free to challenge him and asked, “Why her? What do you see in her? What can she give you that I can’t?”

“I’m sorry, my dear, you simply are not her, so you can’t give me what she can, herself and her body.”

Resigned, Mrs. Cox said, “As you wish, Lex.” She turned and left his office as he leaned back in his chair and enjoyed his cigar.

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Flashback TBC

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#### Chapter 4 – Valentine’s Day

December 1993 — February 1994 — Flashback continues

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name – ALT2

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Lois had been contacted several times starting the previous month by Luthor’s assistant, a Mrs. Cox, hoping to set up the interview. Now that Clark had shared all that he knew about Luthor she had turned down all invitations. Apparently Luthor either thought she was playing hard to get or else he was just disinclined to take no for an answer because she had received repeated calls. It had almost gotten to the point of Lois putting a call block on that number, but, realizing that as soon as she did the calls would simply come from another number she gave up that idea.

On December 13th, first thing in the morning and before Superwoman made her debut, Superman had walked into the Twelfth Precinct and had asked to speak with Lieutenant Henderson. The desk sergeant had sent him on back.

He knocked on the door and heard, “Come in.” He entered the office and said, “Lt. Henderson, I would like to examine the weapon that was used on Friday in that wishing well incident.”

Bill replied, “Sure, anything we can do to help, Superman. Let’s go down to the evidence room.” Bill got up and moved around his desk to lead the way. As they walked he asked, “Do you have any ideas as to why this incident occurred?”

Superman replied, “I have some theories. What we find in the evidence room will confirm or refute some of them.” As he finished speaking they entered the evidence locker and Henderson spoke to the custodian. A few minutes later the custodian returned with the remains of the camera weapon. In the box was a red and green crystal. Clark immediately recognized it for what it was and asked if he could sign out the crystal and have it turned over to STAR Labs.

The evidence custodian produced some forms and had Superman sign in triplicate with Lt. Henderson co-signing.

Having come prepared, Superman pulled some lead foil out of a pouch in his cape and wrapped it up. He thanked Bill and left.

On December 14th, the day after Lois’ debut, Lois and Clark had gone to see Bernie Klein as Superman and Superwoman seeking his help in returning the powers to Superman. He had run extensive tests and had determined results that he was sure Superman would not like.

“Well, after running the gene study, Superman, it looks like your genetic make-up is exactly that of a normal Earth human. The cells that we got from Superwoman show a similar, but yet

still different genetic make-up. I would say that somehow, Superman, you have been changed and are no longer a Kryptonian human. You are now an Earth human while Superwoman is still a Kryptonian human.”

Clark and Lois had discussed this meeting in advance and had decided that they would need to bring Bernie in on the secret.

Superman spoke up, “Dr. Klein we need to ask you if you would be willing to share a secret with us and maintain confidentiality?”

“Why, of course Superman. You can say anything you want. My lips are sealed.”

Lois reached up and removed her mask. Bernie got a look of startled recognition, “Lois Lane?” Looking at Superman, “and Clark Kent I presume.”

“Right you are, doc.”

“But, how did this happen?”

“That’s what we were hoping you could tell us.”

“Why don’t we start with – did anything unusual happen recently?”

“Did you read about the wishing well incident a week or so ago?”

“Yes, I did.”

“Well, when I responded to that incident I was hit with a laser beam from a weapon handled by a woman posing as a news cameraperson.”

“I read about her. She and her sister were identified from their dental records. Nell Newtrich was a former lab tech in the Advanced Optical Weapons Systems Division of LexLabs. She had been fired because she had been responsible for the accidental destruction of a new weapon and the death of its designer. She had worked here at STAR Labs briefly before going to LexLabs. Apparently she had some talent.”

“We went back to the scene of the incident and also requested that we have a look at the weapon that the police had collected. What we found was this.” Clark reached into a small duffel he had been carrying and pulled out a lead box. “Please don’t open it until Lois moves to a far corner and then hold the box so that the lid is between you and her.”

Lois moved away and Bernie opened the box. What he saw was a crystal with parts of metal clips fused to it. “It looks like this is the crystal that was used to focus the laser beam, but this isn’t like any ruby I have ever seen. It glows and has green striations through it.”

“Your analysis would be correct. We believe it was used to focus the laser beam and it isn’t a ruby. That crystal appears to be a blend of red and green Kryptonite. Green Kryptonite weakens and can kill me, and Red Kryptonite affects me in unpredictable ways, but only once for each piece. They are usually separate but somehow they are combined in this particular piece. When the laser beam that passed through this particular crystal hit me I was holding Lois to protect her from the beam. When the beam was terminated Lois had my powers and I had none.”

“Well, the results of the genetic studies show that your Kryptonian genetic structure has been transferred to Lois. She is now fully Kryptonian human and you are now fully Earth human. The problem is that with no really good idea as to how it was done there is no way to undo it. If it was done by exposure to this crystal I’d say let’s try to reverse it by another exposure.”

“Actually Bernie, we’ve tried that. Yesterday I borrowed a laser from the military and replaced the ruby rod with this and fired it at Lois while she was shielding me the way it originally occurred. There was no change.”

“From what you told me before, that a particular piece of Red Kryptonite only affects you once, then it’s like that exposure happened to her at the same time and it will not repeat. I don’t know what we can do in that case. Perhaps another piece of this Kryptonite might do it.”

“We don’t know where it came from and both of the sisters are dead so we can’t ask them.”

“Can you leave this crystal with me? I’d like to run some tests.”

“Sure, just be careful with it. It may not be usable for restoring my powers but it is still dangerous to Lois.”

“I’ll keep it locked up under tight security.”

They thanked him and left.

Superwoman had been handling emergencies and improving her technique all the time.

Some of the emergencies she had handled had seemed suspicious and she had talked them over with Clark. That was when she found that she was being tested, actually, Superwoman was, the same way that Superman had been, and that \*really\* irritated her.

This went on for a while and eventually the tests stopped as if the tester, Luthor, was satisfied with the results of the testing.

Lois kept getting calls from Mrs. Cox who was still attempting to set up the interview. Each time she called Lois made sure she was unavailable.

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St. Valentine’s Day, February 14, 1994

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The team of Lane and Kent had been investigating organized crime, meaning Luthor, as usual. With Clark’s inside knowledge of Luthor from his interactions with him as Superman, they were starting to get somewhere. The investigation was moving ahead and they were really starting to peel back the layers of obfuscation, getting nearer to the true core. Unfortunately, suddenly, their primary stool pigeon went missing. Two days later he was found, face down in Hobbs Bay.

It had been a relatively quiet afternoon at the Planet. Clark and Lois had left early because they were going out on a date that evening for Valentine’s Day. When Lois arrived at Clark’s it was 4:30 in the afternoon. They heard a report of an earthquake in San Francisco. She looked at Clark and he said, “Go! We’ll grab something when you get back. Or better yet, since you’ll be on the west coast, why don’t you pick up something in Chinatown and bring it back.”

She smiled and said, “You know, I wish I had been as understanding as you have been.” She spun into her Suit and exited through his bedroom, taking off from the balcony. A few seconds later a sonic boom was heard.

Some time later, Clark’s phone started to ring. “Clark Kent.”

“Mr. Kent, I just wanted to see if you were at home. Are you alone?”

Clark said, “Yes, I am. Why? Who is thi ...”

He was interrupted by an explosion which originated from a spot near the heater. It was an obvious attempt to make it look like an accident.

In San Francisco suddenly Lois felt a wave of emptiness wash over her. She saw that the reportage of the earthquake was more than a little exaggerated. There was really no significant damage and that the local EMS could handle it. She thought <Something has happened. I need to find out what’s going on.> With that thought she headed back to Metropolis as fast as she could fly.

When she reached Clark’s apartment she saw smoke rising from the rubble. She landed and sped into what remained of his apartment and she found Clark lying amongst the rubble. He was already dead. Kneeling by his side she picked him up and cradled him in her arms as she broke down and started crying. When she heard the sirens she knew that she had to do something. Whoever it was that had done this had to be found. She didn’t want an autopsy performed because they might find out something that she didn’t want found in an autopsy so she scooped up his body and took off. After flying to a local funeral parlor she deposited

his body in a casket and dropped a note on the floor stating that they should bill the Superman Foundation for the cost of the casket. Picking the casket up she flew off, flying north until she was near the North Pole where she deposited her burden. After landing she stood there and said, “Clark, I’ll find who did this and bring them in. They’re not going to get away with this.”

She flew back to Clark’s apartment determined to check around for clues and found the police already there. Crossing the yellow ‘Crime Scene’ tape when she arrived at 5:30 she allowed Lieutenant Henderson to interview her. She said, “When I first arrived I found Clark Kent’s apartment had been destroyed by a bomb. Clark was seriously injured in the blast and I have taken him to a secure location until this investigation can be completed and he recovers from his injuries, if he does. His partner, Lois Lane, will make herself available for an interview later.”

“Thanks, Superwoman. We appreciate all of your help.”

With that Superwoman flew off and returned to her apartment. Spinning back into regular clothes she threw herself across her bed and started crying uncontrollably. After an interminable time she pulled herself together and called Smallville.

When the phone started ringing Martha picked it up and in a cheery tone said. “Kent residence.”

Lois, upon hearing her voice broke down again and started crying, unable to say anything.

Martha, recognizing just who it was from the sound of her weeping, became concerned. She said, “Lois, Honey, what is it? Has something happened?”

“Oh, Martha ... He’s gone.”

Martha was startled and took a deep breath, beginning to fear what might come. “Calm down Lois. What happened? Who’s gone?”

“Oh Martha, I’m so sorry. It’s Clark, Clark’s gone! I felt it when it happened. I was in California and I felt it. I don’t know how but I did. Suddenly I felt this empty feeling. I rushed back, I don’t think I’ve ever flown so fast, but, it was too late. It was a bomb, Martha, a bomb!”

Fear blossomed in Martha’s heart, but she had to be certain so Martha asked, “Lois, Lois Honey, calm down and tell me again, who is gone?”

“Oh Martha, it’s Clark. Clark was killed by a bomb, just a little while ago. I was in California so I wasn’t with him. Somebody placed a bomb in his apartment. When it blew up he was killed. I found his remains and because I couldn’t take a chance of an autopsy finding anything odd, I hid them so that whoever did this will not know that they succeeded. Superwoman told the police that she had taken Clark to a secluded location. I’m, or actually, Superwoman is going to get to the bottom of this and it’s time I got to work. Time is of the essence here. If I act now I may be able to catch the culprit.”

Lois sat up on the bed and wiped her tears away resolutely. “There’ll be time for grieving later. But oh Martha, I miss him already. How am I going to handle this?” When she stopped talking and listened she could hear Martha crying at the other end of the line. “Oh, Martha, I’m so sorry,” she sympathized.

Hanging up the phone, she spun into her uniform and took off through her open back window and flew as fast as she could west. Moments later she landed on the Kent front porch. She opened the door and found Martha slumped on the kitchen floor weeping, the phone still clutched in her hand. Not bothering to change out of her uniform, Lois rushed to Martha’s side and knelt. Jonathan had heard Lois’ arrival and had come in from the barn. On entering, he saw Martha on the floor.

Concern was in his voice as he said, “Martha?” He looked at Lois and asked, “What happened? Where’s Clark?”

“Jonathan, Clark ... Clark’s gone.” Lois said.

“Gone? What do you mean ... gone?” Jonathan asked.

“It happened a little over an hour ago. Clark was at home. There was a bomb. It exploded. He was killed in the explosion ... I called to tell you ... Martha answered ... I flew out ... I found her like this.”

Jonathan helped Martha to her feet and led her to a kitchen chair where she sat down, heavily. She was weeping inconsolably. “Do you have any idea who did it?”

“I think I do.”

“I’ll take care of her. You go get them and bring them in. Don’t let them get away with this.”

“If you’re sure ...”

“I’m sure. You go bring them in.”

Lois nodded her acknowledgement to Jonathan, exited the front door and as soon as it closed behind her she took off for Metropolis. Her anger was boiling over. She knew that it had been a contract hit. It was up to her to find out just who had set the bomb. She might be able to smoke them out if she appeared as Lois Lane. If she did that they just might try again. The tricky part was going to be avoiding revealing herself while she avoided any traps.

It was 7 PM when she arrived over Metropolis. She zeroed in on the Twelfth Precinct and landed in a nearby alley where she spun into her working clothes. She headed for Bill Henderson’s office. As soon as the desk sergeant saw her he waved her through, saying, “Lieutenant Henderson just got here. We called him as soon as we heard about what happened.” Waving her acknowledgement she proceeded down the corridor to Bill’s office. As soon as she stepped in the door Bill said, “Lois! I was just going to try to get hold of Superwoman to find out where you guys were. She said she had Clark in hiding and I thought you would be with him.”

“I was and I will be going back to him. I decided I should come in and give you an update and find out if you had found anything.”

“We pulled the security camera footage from an ATM across the street. We got an image from it which gave us all we needed, an image of someone breaking into Clark’s apartment. One of our lab boys recognized the individual so we have an APB out for Jack ‘The Bomber’ Duggins. I thought he was still in the joint but when we checked we found that he got out of prison a couple of weeks ago.”

“Can I have a picture? I’ll pass it on to Superwoman and she can keep an eye out.”

“That would be a big help.” He picked up a folder from his desk and extracted a photo which he passed over to Lois. She gave it a good look and committed it to memory.

Going on the assumption that the bomber would be seeking the quickest way out of the city, Lois left police HQ and ducked into an alley.

Spinning into her uniform, she took to the air. She flew over the airport and used her enhanced vision to check departures. Assuming that he would have immediately gone to the airport and purchased a ticket on a flight out of town she saw that there had been three flights since the bombing. Taking a chance that her assumption was correct, she checked the destinations and went off in pursuit of the aircraft.

In just a few minutes she found the first on the list. Using her enhanced vision again she checked all of the passengers.

She came up empty on that one so she headed off to intercept the next one on the list. When she found it she followed the same procedure. Again, no luck.

There was one more to try. She located it and followed the same procedure. This time she hit pay dirt.

She flew up beside the cockpit and using hand signals directed the pilot to change course and return to Metropolis. The pilot refused to comply. Superwoman repeated her message. The pilot continued to refuse to comply. She wasn’t about to take no

for an answer. Knowing that there would be complaints from the FAA and ATC she decided that she would act now and deal with the complaints later. She knew that the pilot would inform ATC about the change to clear the way. Her uniform carried a lot of clout.

She flew down under the belly of the aircraft and taking hold of it, began to exert herself and changed the plane’s course. When she had completed a 180 degree turn she released the plane and flew back up in front of the cockpit. When she indicated what she wanted this time the pilot agreed to the course change.

Superwoman flew next to the cockpit all the way to the ground indicating that the pilot taxi to an unused section of taxiway and park. When this had been accomplished she hovered next to the door and knocked. The head attendant opened the door and Superwoman stepped inside. She asked the attendant for a seating manifest. She saw Jack Duggins in seat 23C. She asked the attendant to bring that passenger forward.

While all of this had been going on Duggins had moved aft to the rear emergency exit, released the door and triggered the inflatable emergency ramp. When he reached the ground Superwoman was there waiting for him. She said, “Jack Duggins, the police want to question you about the bomb that blew up Clark Kent’s apartment.” She picked him up and flew him directly to the Twelfth Precinct.

She kept hold of him and led him into Bill Henderson’s office. “Lieutenant Henderson, Lois Lane asked me to bring this individual to you for questioning.”

Bill jumped out of his seat, “Right you are! Please take him to interrogation 3, just down the hall.” After seating Duggin in a chair in 3, the door was closed and locked.

She turned to Bill, “Lieutenant Henderson, this is personal with me. I want the people behind this and frankly I don’t care how I get the information. If you will give me a free hand I will get that information for you within twenty minutes. All you need to do is pretend that I didn’t bring him in just yet.”

Bill asked, “You brought someone in? I didn’t see you with anybody. Please let me know when you find our ‘person of interest’.”

“Thanks Lieutenant, I’ll have him back to you before you know it and I’ll have the information.”

Bill unlocked the door and Superwoman entered room 3. She walked over and unlocked the window and bent the bars that covered it enough to allow egress. She said, “I’m going to ask you nicely, just once, who hired you to plant the bomb in the Kent apartment?”

“I ain’t talkin’. I know you won’t do nothin’.”

“I wouldn’t count on that if I were you. You see, I’m \*not\* Superman. I don’t have his scruples. I will ask you just once more, nicely, who hired you?”

When Duggins saw the stony expression on Superwoman’s face, he realized how much trouble he was in. The money he’d been paid wasn’t worth all this. But for some reason he continued to deny it. “I ain’t talkin’.”

“Okay, you brought this on yourself.” She picked him up and flew out the window. Once outside the building she headed straight up. When she reached thirty thousand feet she stopped and held him there, looking him in the eyes before she asked in a voice so calm that it was menacing.

“How long do you think it will take you to fall from this height? Of course, as soon as I let you go and my aura isn’t protecting you, you’ll start gasping for air and your skin will start to freeze and what air you do get into your lungs will be deficient in oxygen and so cold it may freeze your lungs. You’ll be unconscious for the first oh, fifteen thousand feet or so when the amount of oxygen is enough for you to survive but then you’ll be able to see the ground as it rushes up at you. When you hit there won’t be much left. They’ll have to use a dustpan and broom to

sweep up your remains.”

A look of stark fear and panic had taken over his features as she had been speaking. He started babbling, “Some English guy, sorta stocky, Vandylke beard, he wanted Kent out of the way!”

“Who was behind it? What’s his name?”

“I don’t know any names. Just an English guy.”

This revelation hit Lois like a ton of bricks. The description fit Lex’s butler. That meant that Lex had to be behind it, but, why? What was he after? Superwoman said, “Thank you. That’s all I needed to know.” She brought the hand she had been holding at his collar in front of him so that he could see the mini-recorder she held. She said, “I promised I’d have you back within twenty minutes. It’s only been five. Henderson should be pleased.”

“Then this was all a bluff!”

“Maybe and maybe not, I’m not sure. You see, Lois Lane and Clark Kent are very close friends of mine.” She flew back to HQ and returned through the window to room 3.

She knocked on the door and Henderson opened it. She handed the recorder to him. “I didn’t start recording until he started to talk. Here’s his confession but he didn’t have any names, just a description. Apparently someone wanted Clark Kent out of the way. He didn’t know why.”

Bill said, “You know, since we didn’t Mirandize him, this will be inadmissible.”

She nodded her understanding as she said, “I know, but I had to find out who was behind it. He’s just the hands, I needed to know who was the brain.”

Nodding his understanding, Bill called for a couple of uniforms. “Read him his rights, book him on attempted murder, conspiracy, destruction of private property, felony theft, arson and anything else you can think of. Get him outta here.” By the time he turned back around Superwoman was gone.

As soon as Superwoman was outside she took off straight up until she was out of sight and then she headed west landing on the porch of the Kent home just a few minutes later. Spinning out of her uniform she let herself in. Martha and Jonathan were still in the living room comforting one another. She moved over to them and wrapped her arms around them both.

The three cried together for a long time. Finally, Lois told them she had found Clark’s killer and delivered him to the authorities, which gave them all some measure of comfort.

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End Flashback

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## Chapter 5 – Another Revelation

February 21, 1994 — One week after Clark’s death

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name – ALT2

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Lois had determined that she would have to remain undercover for a period so she had decided that she would stay with the Kents. They were all grieving over the loss of Clark and it was a comfort to all of them that they could share this time together.

However, she couldn’t avoid her activities as Superwoman. As a result she had responded when she had seen on LNN the report about the ship that was about to hit a pile supporting the highway in Florida.

When she arrived on scene and saw Superman she couldn’t believe her eyes, but in view of the emergency she couldn’t confront him immediately. She had been so startled by his appearance that she was almost frozen in place at first, but then the immediacy of the situation shook her out of her stupor. There were lives at stake and she had to do what was needed.

She was watching every move he made as they were in the

rescue and thinking, <Who is this and where did he come from? He looks just like Clark and he obviously has the powers. I \*have\* to find out!> He took her by surprise when he took off and headed north as soon as they were finished. By the time she got herself together he had several seconds head start on her. He was every bit as fast as she was but she was determined. She had to find out just who or what this was. She started wondering if this could be a clone. She saw him change direction and head west so she changed course and cut the angle, by doing this she cut the distance somewhat, but not enough. She just couldn’t catch him and she was getting very frustrated as a result. The rescue in Japan was a surprise; if she hadn’t heard that radio she would have had absolutely no warning. Her frustration grew again as he managed to get a lead on her again when they finished up in Japan. With Mad Dog determination she set her mind to catching this ‘person’ or die in the attempt. She didn’t think that he would attack her; his actions so far had indicated that his motivation was the same as hers and Clark’s.

This time they were traveling east. They had already crossed the Pacific and were crossing the Rockies when she saw that he was slowing somewhat. Not enough that she would catch him anytime soon but she thought, <If he keeps up this pace when we reach the east coast we will be close together.> As they were getting closer to the east coast she could finally tell that their destination was Metropolis.

Watching in astonishment, she saw him fly directly to 344 Clinton and land on the balcony to Clark’s apartment. She landed seconds behind him and moved into the apartment. She moved through his bedroom and into the living room, picking her way around the rubble. She found him dressed, not in the Suit, but in Clark’s style of clothes. Spinning out of her uniform and into her business suit she walked over in front of him. She said, “Okay, you’ve led me a merry chase and now you are here in my fiancé’s apartment. Just who the hell are you?”

He was standing there surveying the destruction. He spread his hands and asked softly, “Who do I look like I am?”

She said with some menace in her voice, “You look like my fiancé, but he’s dead.”

He had a very sympathetic tone in his voice as he said, “I know, and I am sorry. It was unavoidable.”

She picked up on his statement, “What do you mean unavoidable?”

He replied, “This is going to be something of a complicated story. Let’s go somewhere where we can talk.”

She said, “Okay, let’s go to my apartment.” They both spun into their uniforms and exited through the bedroom.

After arriving at Lois’ apartment they moved into her living room and he sat on her couch while she perched on the edge of the couch across from him.

He started, “I’m going to have to ask you to suspend your disbelief for a time while I explain. Can you do that for me?”

She nodded so he proceeded to tell her the story.

“I \*am\* Clark Kent, I’m just not \*your\* Clark Kent. I’m from a parallel universe. I was brought here because we knew that your Clark was going to die. I arrived just as you were collecting his body.” Clark saw her dubious expression. He finished weakly, “This is going to be hard to explain. I am a traveler. I have been traveling through time and across the dimensional barriers. The purpose of my travels has been to help Lois Lanes and Clark Kents to unite. I have been on twelve missions and in each case the purpose was to prevent the death of either Lois or Clark.”

She challenged, “If that’s the case, why didn’t you keep my Clark from dying?”

With an expression of sadness matching her own he said, “It was meant to be and couldn’t be prevented.”

“What do you mean?”

“In the history of this universe, your Clark had to die, there was no way to prevent it. If I had saved him, your situation would not have changed in the slightest. It’s hard to understand, but, we are inflection points, pivots around which new universes are created. If I had saved him, a new universe would have been created where he was alive, but this universe would have remained unchanged. He would still be dead to you.”

“Would it have been so bad to have him alive, even if it was in another universe?”

“Actually he is. In another universe he survived the explosion and you and he are together.”

“What?!?!?”

“I told you it would be difficult. Yes, He did survive and you are together, in another universe. In this universe he had to die.”

As he had continued speaking Lois’ expression had morphed from dubious to sad. She actually started to cry. On an impulse he got up and moved over next to her. He reached out and took one of her hands. He felt that familiar tingle and was encouraged by the fact that she didn’t snatch her hand away immediately so he continued. “Have you ever met Herb Wells?”

“No, should I have?”

“No, not necessarily. Herb said that somewhere in the distant past a change occurred in this universe which altered the course of events. I guess that’s what he meant. In a number of the universes I’ve been in there had been a curse on the union of Lois and Clark and he had to intervene. I guess that was not necessary in your universe.”

A look of wonder came over her face, “You mean that there are other couples out there, like us, I mean me and ... him?” Her voice broke on that last word.

He replied, “Yes, there are many, many universes and almost all of them have their own Lois and Clark. There are some where there is ... no ... Lois.” She could hear the raw emotion in his voice as he said this and heard his voice break as he said those last two words.

This time it was her turn to reach out. She put her free hand over the hand that was holding hers and looked into his eyes. She could see the same pain that she was feeling at the loss of her Clark mirrored in his dark brown orbs.

She asked very quietly, “That’s what happened to you, isn’t it?”

He didn’t respond verbally. He didn’t trust that he would be able to control his voice so he simply nodded.

She could feel his pain and it was the same pain that she was feeling. Very gently she asked, “How did it happen?”

“We were in the Congo doing an illegal gun investigation. We were captured by the rebels. I wasn’t fast enough to prevent her from being shot. She almost literally died in my arms.” He broke down weeping.

She shifted her position so that she was closer to him and put an arm across his shoulders. She said, “I can imagine how I would feel if that had happened to me. I mean, coming back from California and finding him dead was bad enough, but, to be right there when she died, I can just imagine how that must have felt. I’m so sorry. Do you have anything to remember her by?”

He pulled out his billfold and extracted a newspaper clipping. It showed the two of them at some kind of function. They were both dressed for a hot climate. She asked, “Where was this taken?”

“That’s the mayor’s residence in Brazzaville. We had rescued his wife and family from drowning when their sailboat capsized in a storm on the Congo River. I was hoping that he would marry us but she didn’t live long enough.” Again he was choking up as he related the story.

Lois leaned in and hugged him. He turned toward her and putting his face in her shoulder started to cry. She in her turn put her face in his shoulder and did the same. They both vented their

feelings for a time.

When they were both spent they finally separated. Lois pulled back and asked, “Okay, what do we do now? I need to decide what to do about Clark. How soon do you have to leave to help another couple?”

“I don’t. This mission was specifically for you ... and ... me. I need to tell you about ... us. Do you feel a tingle like an electrical current where we are touching?”

“Yeah, I felt it with Clark too. I never was able to figure it out.”

“You don’t need to. I know what it is. It’s the soul mates connection.”

“Soul mates connection, what’s that?”

“Let me explain. Do you acknowledge the existence of the soul?”

“Yes, everyone has a soul, don’t they?”

“Yes, they do, but there are some that are special. The soul is eternal and at creation at least some of them were split into two parts. Those two parts cannot rest content until they have been reunited. Our souls, yours and mine are two parts of a whole. That tingling sensation is an indication of the connection our souls share. We were not only meant to be together, we were never meant to be apart. That is why the death of one of us hits the other so hard. Half of our soul has been removed.”

“Even though we are from different universes, our souls are recognizing each other. Even though we only met a few hours ago, I ... I can’t help loving you. You complete me, the way no one else can. I’ve felt this connection with each Lois I’ve encountered, but it has only been this strong with my Lois. It’s probably because their Clark’s were still there. This has to be because your Clark is dead. It’s like two like signals interfering with each other. In this case the interfering signal has been removed.”

“Usually, when one of us dies, our soul passes to another vessel. On rare occasions when the body dies, the soul dies with it. That is what happened with my Lois. When it happened, I almost didn’t survive it. The same thing almost happened to you. We timed our arrival so that I arrived before you could experience the full depth of the loss.”

“Now, you expect to just walk in here and take his place, is that it?”

“No, I could never do that the same way you could never just take my Lois’ place. There’s a place in your heart that is reserved for him and in my heart for her. You are a different person from her as I am different from him. There are bound to be similarities though and I would hope that we could build on those to create a new relationship with each other. I’d like to try, if you’ll let me.”

Thinking about what he had said she replied, “You know, I \*have\* been grieving with the Kents. They lost their son, you know.”

Gently, Clark said, “Yes, I know you felt grief. But it is like a pit that gets deeper the longer you are alone and without him. Trust me, it’s better this way. I almost didn’t make it. It was only the thought of you that kept me alive.”

Startled she asked, “Me?!?”

“Well, you, but, not you in particular, you as in Lois, you see, I knew that there were other Lois Lanes out there. You didn’t know that there were other Clarks.”

“In Brazzaville I had two friends, twin girls, who worked at the local Daily Planet office with me. After the twins nursed me back to health, one of the things Suzanne said struck a bell. She said something like, ‘Maybe there’s another woman out there that you could love.’ That got me to thinking about the possibility of another Lois. From that point on, having that goal sustained me. It was my reason to continue living.”

With a tone of wonder in her voice she said, “Wow, you went through all of that. When Clark was killed, I felt him die. It was

an empty feeling and I almost tumbled into those depths you were talking about, but, it didn't last too long. That must have been when you arrived. Since that point I've been grieving but it hasn't been the soul shattering grief you have described. I guess I am grateful to you for sparing me that experience. I guess it's at least partly due to that that I was able to find and bring in the perp."

With a somber tone Clark said, "Really, you do need to go through the grieving process. You need to deal with your loss, before you can move on. I have dealt with my loss. You have yet to completely deal with yours. In many respects we have followed the same pattern. Immediately after my Lois died, I was able to function in such a way that I interfered with Lex Luthor's machinations in the Congo. In your case you were able to bring in the bomber. I liked the way you handled locating Clark's killer and extracting that confession from him. But, it really wasn't until the funeral and actual burial that the grief finally really hit me. Perhaps, if you were to have a funeral for Clark?"

Lois asked, "How can we? I can't take the chance of his body being examined and have them find something unusual in his body chemistry."

Clark suggested, "Perhaps a 'private' funeral. It would probably help his parents as well."

"I'll need to talk to Jonathan and Martha about that." You could hear the surprise in her voice as she continued when she asked, "You saw that?"

"Yeah, like I said, I got here shortly after Clark was killed so I was able to follow you around. Did you find out who was responsible?"

"I think I know. From the description I got from the bomber it was Lex Luthor's butler that set up the hit. The bomber said that Clark was 'in the way'. In the way of what I don't know. I found out that shortly after I left for California, he must have gotten a call because the phone was still in his hand when I found him. It must have been a trap because while he was on the phone the bomb went off. If he had still had his powers it wouldn't have been a problem."

"How did he lose his powers anyhow?"

"We aren't sure as to the motivation, but, he was attacked by a couple of women using a laser which used a Kryptonite crystal. The crystal they used was a blend of red and green and when he was hit by the beam; his powers were transferred to me, permanently. We went to see Bernie Klein and he did a genetic study. My genetic structure became Kryptonian while his became Earth human."

"You said you would need to ask Jonathan and Martha. His parents are still alive then?"

"Yes, they are." When she said this she observed his reaction. She had a hard time determining just what it was however, so she asked, "Why do you ask?"

"I'm really sorry that they have had to go through this."

Lois, with her reporter's instincts sensed that this was not all that there was to it and asked a follow-up question, "How do your parents feel about you being away so much on this mission?"

Her instincts were confirmed when she saw the look that came over his features, infinite sadness. She gave him some time to compose himself.

He finally answered, "My parents were killed in an auto accident when I was ten years old. I saw it happening and just like with Lois, I wasn't fast enough to save them."

Lois once again took him into her arms to comfort him. She asked, "Would you like to meet Clark's parents?"

"I don't think that would be right, I mean, so soon after he died."

"I think I know them well enough to know that they won't have a problem with it. In fact, when they find out that you were orphaned twice, they will want to do whatever they can to help."

"You really think so?" Clark asked. Clark had met several Jonathan and Martha Kent couples while on his missions. He felt he knew their nature, but in this circumstance he couldn't be sure how they would react. He was surprised and pleased that she seemed to believe that they would be so generous.

"I know so. Come on; feel up to a little flight? I'd like to introduce you to them."

"As long as you don't think I'd be imposing." He looked a little unsure and then answered decisively. "Okay, I would like to meet them."

They both stood up and Lois spun into her Superwoman uniform and Clark spun into Superman, they walked to her back window and took to the air. Moving too fast to be tracked or seen they headed for Smallville. When they landed behind the barn they spun back into regular clothes and Lois said, "Let me go in first. I'll call you when they are ready."

"Okay and ... thanks, I appreciate it, but, perhaps you should discuss the possibility of a funeral first."

With a look of compassion she reached out and put her hand on his arm and said, "I'm glad I can do this. Maybe a funeral for him will help and then your presence will be healing for all of us and meeting them will help to heal the old wounds of losing your parents when you were so young." Lois walked around the end of the barn and disappeared from view.

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## Chapter 6 – Meeting the Kents

February 21, 1994 — One week after Clark's death

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name – ALT2

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Clark was apprehensive about this meeting. Sure, Lois had said it would be okay, but people can be unpredictable and it might be too soon after their son's death. There really was no way to predict how they would take his presence. Not able to take the suspense, he tuned in with his super hearing.

Lois had just entered the house. She called out, "Martha? Jonathan? Martha?" Then she heard a response from the kitchen and then the door was opening and Martha came into the living room followed by Jonathan. Jonathan helped Martha to a seat on the couch and then settled down next to her in preference to his favorite easy chair so that he could comfort her.

Lois settled down on the other side of Martha and put her arm around her before saying anything else.

Jonathan beat her to the punch and asked, "Did you manage to take care of that problem in Florida?"

Lois responded, "Yes, as a matter of fact I finished that a few hours ago. I had to respond to an earthquake in Japan after that."

Martha spoke up, "You've been one busy lady."

Lois was cautious now as she said, "You know, it has been several days now and I've been thinking about it and I think that perhaps we should have a funeral. I mean, a private funeral, a very private funeral. We can't take a chance on somebody finding something unusual with his body. There really is some need for closure so I think that he should have a decent burial. Is there a portion of the farm that could be set aside as a private cemetery?"

Jonathan and Martha thought about it for a few seconds, then Jonathan spoke up, "There's a small clearing in the middle of a small copse of elders on the back section. Because of the trees it isn't plowed and planted."

"Would you want to bury Clark there?"

Martha said, "Yes, that would be a fitting location. He always liked that area. He had a tree fort there. He called it his 'Fortress of Solitude'."

Jonathan agreed, "Yes, that would be a fitting location."

Lois said, "Yeah, I think he'd like that. The problem is,

though, he hasn't been embalmed. Listen, I... I brought someone back with me, someone that I'd like you to meet, if you feel up to it. He may have a solution to this problem."

Jonathan asked, "Is he a friend of yours? How did you meet him?"

"I just met him today but I am sure I can call him a friend and I think that you will too. I met him while I was on a rescue. If you don't mind, I'll call him."

Martha said, "I'm not really that presentable. I've been crying and I probably look a mess."

"Oh Martha, I don't think he'll mind that one little bit. In fact I think that he'd be happy to see you in any condition you may be in. Let me tell you something about him. He was an orphan, just like Clark and was adopted by a loving couple just like you and Jonathan, but, he was orphaned a second time when they were killed in an auto accident. Do you want to meet him?"

Martha's heart had gone out to this man that Lois had been talking about because of his being twice orphaned and looking at Jonathan for approval turned back to Lois and said, "Yes, we'd like to meet him."

Lois said, "All right. I'll call him." Martha and Jonathan both noticed that she continued in the same conversational tone of voice, "It's all right, you can come in now."

A couple of seconds later there was a knock on the door and Lois said, "Come on in."

When the door opened, because of the light behind him, Jonathan and Martha couldn't see more than a silhouette. They thought that it looked familiar somehow, but, no it just couldn't be, but the similarity was unmistakable.

Lois spoke up, "Martha, Jonathan, I'd like to introduce Clark Kent."

They both jumped to their feet and shouted, "Clark!" and rushed to his side. Martha threw her arms around him and was weeping uncontrollably. Jonathan had one arm around Martha and the other around Clark. Clark just stood there dumbfounded. Lois came over and put an arm around Martha then she and Jonathan led her back to the couch.

Clark came over and stood by. When Martha calmed down some she looked at Lois and asked accusingly, "Why did you tell us he was dead? Why all this talk about having a funeral?"

Lois replied, softly, "Martha, this isn't your Clark."

To which Martha replied, "What do mean 'this isn't our Clark'? I have two eyes! I can see that this is Clark. Who else could he be?"

Lois said, "This is going to be hard to explain ..."

Clark interrupted her at this point, "Perhaps I should try."

With a relieved sigh, she said, "Go ahead. You'll probably do a better job anyhow."

Clark addressed the elder couple, "Mr. and Mrs. Kent, my name \*is\* Clark Kent, however, I am not from here, I'm a visitor. I'm from another dimension or universe, an Earth parallel to yours. I have been going on a series of missions oriented toward saving either the Clark Kent or the Lois Lane of the universe in question. I actually came here because we knew that your Clark was going to die in that explosion. You see there is a strong concern that the fundamental course that the history of this universe should follow has been disrupted by his death and yet it was unavoidable. I can only guess how you must feel, especially with me here. I'm sure it only brings your loss home to you all the more. That is yet another reason to have a proper burial for Clark."

Clark continued, "I am aware of the problem and I think I can handle that. I can have a special chamber made which is air tight and we can purge it with nitrogen. That should prevent decay. I think that as Superman I should be able to have one prepared within just a few hours. Why don't we do this, I'll go have the chamber prepared while Lois goes and retrieves Clark from the

arctic. We can meet back here. I will bring a bottle of nitrogen for the purge and we can do that just before we bury him."

Lois asked, "What's the purpose of the nitrogen purge? Why not just allow the normal decay process to occur?"

"Since we are not going to bury him in a regular cemetery, if for whatever reason a search were conducted, cadaver dogs would alert on the scent and we don't want that. It's the same thing I did with my Lois."

All were in agreement, so Superman flew off to acquire the special coffin, which was in actuality a chamber used in scientific experiments. The wood and metal coffin local Clark was currently in would fit inside.

After he left, Martha asked Lois, "What did he mean 'with my Lois'?"

Lois took Martha's hand and said quietly, "He lost his Lois in his universe. Just like I lost my Clark in this one."

An hour later they all gathered at the site. Alt Superman had dug the grave. He and Lois placed Local Clark's coffin inside the chamber and Alt Superman hooked up the nitrogen and purged all of the air out. He and Lois lowered the chamber into the pit and each said their goodbyes. Jonathan gave an eloquent eulogy and then read a passage from the Bible. Lois, Martha and Jonathan each dropped some soil into the grave along with some tears, leaving the rest for Clark to fill.

They spent some time at the grave side comforting one another and allowing themselves to vent their grief. Clark felt something like an outsider as he looked on, but, he could sympathize having gone through this process with the death of Lois. When they were finished they all returned to the house.

Their grief having temporarily been spent at the grave side, Jonathan returning to their previous conversation spoke up, "Let me get this straight, you are from a parallel dimension and you have been going on missions to save Clark Kent or Lois Lanes but you came here to try to save our universe and make sure it follows a certain path?"

"Yes sir, that is correct."

"Just what would that path be?"

"That would be the path to a utopian society brought about by his descendants."

Jonathan thought about that for a second and then asked, "If you've been able to save other Clarks, why not our boy?"

With a look bordering on despair, Clark replied, "I really wish I could explain it better, but, as I understand it he had to die because in the future of this world he is dead. I wish Herb was here, he could explain it better."

Changing tracks, Jonathan asked, "How did you get here?"

"A friend of mine brought me here using a device which is able to cross the dimensional barrier. His name is Herb Wells. I just mentioned him."

"How long will you be here?"

"The plan is for me to be here for three months."

Martha, who was not completely understanding, asked, "Why are you doing this, why are you going on these missions?"

"Actually, in this case, I was looking for a universe where Lois is alone. You see, my Lois was killed while investigating illegal gun shipments into the Congo and Herb thought that if I could find a universe where there was a Lois and no Clark, perhaps we could then get together. My previous missions have actually been oriented toward rescuing the Clark or the Lois of that universe from a situation which could result in his death. This is about my twelfth mission and in each of my previous missions I have been able to rescue Clark or Lois and actually facilitate the relationships between them. In one case I was able to be best man at their wedding. I can't express my sorrow and I weep with you at the loss of your son."

Martha spoke up, "Will we see you after today?"

"Hopefully, I will be staying here, permanently. The purpose

of my presence is to see if I can establish a relationship with Lois. I would like to also establish a relationship with you, if I may. If you want to see me again, I'm sure I can be here."

Martha responded, "It might take some time, but I think we'd like that. You do remind us of our son. How are you able to go on these missions? You said that your Lois had died, but what about your parents?" Clearly, in her grief at the loss of her son Martha had forgotten some of what Lois had told her.

Clark, at this question got a very sad expression on his countenance as he replied, "My parents ... uh, I think Lois told you that my parents died when I was ten years old. They were killed by a drunk driver."

Martha and Jonathan both gasped at this repeated revelation, suddenly remembering what Lois had told them and Martha simply stood and reached out to him. Putting her arms about him she, with obvious grief in her tone said, "Oh, that's right, she did, I simply forgot that with all that's been happening. You poor boy, to lose your parents so young. What happened to you after that?"

"I was placed in the foster home system until I was eighteen. Wayne Irig was made executor of the estate."

Jonathan asked, "You even had a Wayne in your universe? What about Nellie?"

Clark replied, "Wayne was a widower in my universe. Nellie died in childbirth when I was a child."

Martha had been observing Lois while all of this had been going on and she turned to her and asked, "He's very much like our Clark, isn't he?"

Lois mutely nodded her head in response. She was starting to feel more than a little guilty about what she was feeling. She could feel an attraction to this man. She knew that he wasn't her Clark, but he was so much like him that she at times forgot that he wasn't the same man. To say the least, she was conflicted. There was an unaccountable attraction, well maybe not unaccountable; he was, after all, identical to her fiancé. Seeing how Martha and Jonathan had taken to him was making it even more difficult for her to separate them.

Lois excused herself, "If you'll excuse me for a bit, I have some things I need to sort out. I'll be back." She turned and as she was exiting the door she spun into her uniform and took off.

Clark said, "In view of this situation, maybe it would be best if I returned to my apartment."

Jonathan asked, "Just how long have you been here?"

"I've been here for almost a week. I arrived shortly after the bomb exploded. I've been living at the Apollo Hotel in Metropolis under the name of Charles King. Please tell Lois that I'll meet her here in a couple of days."

Jonathan asked, "Could you come by each day, at least for a while? We'd like to get to know you better."

Clark replied, "I'd like that. Sure, I'll come by. Please tell Lois that I'll see her tomorrow some time."

"Okay, I'll do that."

Martha spoke up, "You could join us for dinner."

With a grin, Clark replied, "How could I turn down a home cooked meal? I'll be here." Clark took off for the Apollo. As he flew he was thinking about Lois and what she was going through.

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## Chapter 7 – Let's Talk

February 26, 1994

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name – ALT2

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It had been five days since the funeral and Clark had been spending a portion of each day with Lois and the Kents. Clark was aware of Lois' problem with reconciling Clark's death and his presence. He could understand and sympathize with her

because he was also struggling with the same thing. He could feel the attraction to her and he couldn't help feeling that he was being disloyal to the memory of his Lois. He thought that she was probably feeling the same thing. They had spent a lot of time in conversation; however, little had been said about Clark. On the fourth day suddenly Lois, without saying why, took off. They put LNN on and there was no emergency being reported so it had to be something else.

It was getting late in the day so, after Lois left Martha asked, "Have you had anything to eat? Are you hungry?"

Clark shrugged one shoulder and replied, "I really don't want to put you out."

Martha came back with, "No, it's no trouble at all. We have to eat anyhow."

Clark replied, "If it's all the same to you, I'd kinda like to wait until Lois returns. If it's too late maybe we'll go out to dinner."

Martha gave Jonathan a look and he nodded in return.

Martha said, "Instead of going all the way back to Metropolis, do you want to stay here tonight? You can use Clark's room."

"That's really nice of you. Are you sure you won't mind?" asked Clark.

Jonathan said, "You're so much like our boy; it'd almost be like he was still here with us."

"As long as it won't be putting you out and making you uncomfortable ..."

"We'd love to have you here. You've been flying in each day and spending time with us and we sort of feel like, well, almost like you could have been Clark's twin brother or something. You've been so nice and supportive to us with the funeral and all that has been happening. We've been getting to know you and we like you. We'd still like to get to know you better, though." Martha said.

With tears in his eyes, Clark said, "I'd like that and I'd like to get to know you better. I did meet another Jonathan and Martha Kent in another universe when I went to help out. Their son was trapped in a time bubble and Herb was trying to rescue him while I filled in for him trying to defeat the criminal, Tempus, who had trapped him. There was a brief time when they mistook me for their son but when it was explained to them, even though I wasn't him, they accepted me the same way you have."

With a soft chuckle Jonathan said, "Well, I'm glad to see that we are the same in these other universes."

"I really appreciate this. It's a chance for me to get to know what my parents might have been like if they had lived." Clark was almost choked up with emotion as he finished his statement.

Jonathan said, "Tell you what, if you don't mind I still have some projects around the farm that I could use some super assistance with. You can use some of Clark's work clothes. If Lois doesn't drag you away that is." He was chuckling as he finished up this last line.

With joy evident in his voice, Clark said, "I'd like that."

Martha said, "Well, why don't the two of you go ahead and plan while I make dinner." So saying she got up and moved toward the kitchen. At the doorway, she turned and looked back and said softly, "This feels like Clark is back with us." Then she went into the kitchen and started dinner.

Clark said, "Can you excuse me for a couple of minutes? I need to step outside."

Clark had just had an idea. When he had been with Lois the last time in the other universe she had told him about New Krypton and the other Kryptonians. She had told him about their ability to communicate telepathically. He had used it on a previous mission to communicate with the Clark of that universe. As far as he knew it should work with anyone with the powers so he decided to try communicating with Lois that way. He had only

used it once before so it took a few minutes of trying before he was sure that he had it right. He broadcast a thought, /Lois?/

A bewildered thought came back, /What's that? I thought I heard something./

Clark replied, /You did. It was me, Clark. In one of the other universes I was told that Kryptonians were able to communicate telepathically and decided to try to contact you. Are you all right?/

/Yeah, It's just that I'm still a little confused./

/Me too. Do you want to talk about it? Maybe if we put our heads together we can come up with a solution./

/Okay, I'll be there in a few minutes./

/Should I tell Martha that we will be joining them for dinner ... or ... would you like to go out to dinner?/

/Clark, are you asking me out on a date?/

With a mental chuckle he replied, /I guess I am. Do you mind?/

/No. I guess not. Tell Martha that we'll be going out and not to wait up for us./

/Okay, where do you want to go?/

/Honolulu./

/Okay, I'll let them know we're going out./

Clark went back into the house and saw that Jonathan had moved into the kitchen with Martha so he went to join them. He said, "Lois will be back in a few minutes. We are going to go out for dinner as long as you don't object."

With a very curious look on her face Martha asked, "How do you know all that?"

With a somewhat sheepish expression he replied, "It's something I learned in one of the other universes. Kryptonians can communicate telepathically. I just had a telepathic talk with Lois. We're going to Honolulu for dinner so we may be quite late. If you want me to stay somewhere else that'll be okay with me."

Jonathan said, "No, our invitation still stands. Let me take you up to Clark's room so that you can freshen up, maybe change clothes before you go. Clark always kept several changes of clothes here."

Clark was again choked up as he replied, "You will never know how much this means to me." The generosity displayed by the Kents continued to amaze him and all he could do was shake his head as Jonathan led him upstairs.

A few minutes after Clark had showered and changed, Lois arrived. She too had changed clothes and when she spun out of the uniform she was wearing a cocktail dress. It was a little black number with a floaty, flirty skirt that ended above mid-thigh and the front was halter style with a gold ring in the center. It was backless to the waist with a thin string across the back holding the bustline in place. It definitely showed off her assets.

Clark was surprised by what she was wearing. None of the other Lois Lanes he had interacted with had dressed quite this provocatively. He caught himself staring in awe at this vision of loveliness. When his brain started to function again he said, "My, my, don't we look nice this evening."

She did a little pirouette so that he would get the full effect.

He turned to Jonathan and Martha and said, "If you'll excuse us, we have to be leaving." He crooked his arm to Lois and she had a smile on her face as she placed her arm through his and they headed for the door.

When they had left Martha said to Jonathan, "He's just like our boy, isn't he? I think Lois sees it too. You know, I've been thinking, what if we asked him to stay. I mean, our boy is gone and he doesn't have any parents. It would almost be like having never lost him."

Jonathan gave it a few seconds thought before replying, "I'd like to get to know him a little better first. I do like what I've seen so far, but you can never be too careful.

"I know, there are going to be differences, after all he grew

up without any parents, in the foster care system. He didn't turn out too bad from what I've seen."

"Yeah, I wonder just who he wound up with in the foster care system."

"Why don't you ask him tomorrow?"

"I'll do that. While you finish dinner I'll go out to the barn and put things away."

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When Superman and Superwoman arrived over Honolulu it was mid afternoon so they knew that it would be a while before they would be going to dinner. Clark led the way and they landed in a secluded part of the Hanauma Bay Marine Preserve. They both spun out of their uniforms and started to stroll around seeing the sights and talking. Eventually they found themselves on the wide beach and both kicked off their shoes and walked on the sand.

Up to this point they had been limiting the talk to more impersonal subjects but knowing that eventually they needed to really talk, Clark asked, "Do you want to talk about it?"

Reluctantly Lois replied, "There isn't much to talk about, well, maybe there is. I'm really, really conflicted. My fiancé has been killed and then here you are and you are so like him it's like I'm actually here with him, yet you're not him and I have these feelings for him and they want to come out to you but should they, I mean, they should be for him, but he's not here and you are here and I miss him so much but with you here I don't miss him nearly as much as I should because you're just like him."

When she had finished this babble Clark said, "I can understand, completely, really I can. I was only with my Lois for a few months before she died." The grief welled up in him as he continued, "At least I was able to tell her that I loved her before she died. And just before she died, as she was passing out she said, 'Charlie, I lo ...' That was the last thing she said. I can only hope that she was trying to say that she loved me too."

"Why did she call you Charlie?"

Clark replied, "We were undercover and at that time she didn't know my real name. I was going by Charles King and she was Linda King. We were pretending to be married. We had only met a couple of months earlier. You see I'm from 1997 and Herb had taken me back in time to 1992. My Lois had been investigating illegal gun shipments into the Congo."

Lois interrupted him at this point, "I remember that investigation. I almost got caught."

Clark resumed, "It is really complicated, but, somehow, I feel that I was responsible for her death. If I hadn't been there to facilitate the investigation she might not have been shot and died."

Lois interrupted again, "If Clark's powers hadn't been transferred to me, he might not have died when they bombed his apartment."

With wonder and sadness in his voice he agreed with her, "Yeah, I guess you are right. In some way we each feel that we are responsible for the death of our partners."

Clark took off his jacket and laid it over a drift log so that they could sit down without dirtying their dinner clothes. After settling themselves, they continued the discussion. "We had only been together a couple of months but we had gotten really close. If she hadn't died I feel certain that we would have been getting married. I know how I felt and I can only hope that she felt the same way."

"Clark and I were going to be married in April. Oh, Clark, what am I going to do? I miss him so much and yet with you here, it's like he isn't gone at all. I feel so conflicted."

Clark reached out and put an arm around her shoulders before he said, "Well, I'll be here for a while. I can fill in for him at the Planet until we can decide what to do. Would you mind me doing that? I mean, will that be too hard on you, me reminding you of

him and all?”

Lois thought about this for a minute before replying, “No, actually I think I’d like that.”

They both lapsed into silence for a while, both thinking about the near future.

After a while Clark spoke up, “What do you want to do about the investigation that you were working on? How far had you gotten? Maybe I could help. Since I’ve been to some of the other universes I know some things that may come in handy. Let me ask you a few questions. Have you had to deal with Lex Luthor?”

“Lex Luthor, yeah, I had dinner with him. It was supposed to be an interview, but that never materialized. After that Clark told me all about Luthor and I’ve been avoiding him ever since.”

“Wow, okay, that pretty much parallels most of the other universes. Lex Luthor made a play for Lois Lane. He would stop at nothing to possess her, uh, you. He even tried to kill Superman a number of times because he was interfering in his criminal operations. Believe it or not, Lex Luthor is the criminal mastermind behind all of the rackets here in Metropolis.”

Lois was very thoughtful as she replied, “So, that confirms what I already found out. Nigel St. John, Lex’s butler, was the intermediary. Lex had Clark killed.”

Clark asked, “You say you just had dinner with him recently?”

Lois replied, “Yeah, but, never again!” Lois, with an eager expression looked at him and said, “You know, with everything you know, you would be a tremendous help. We could make Luthor think his little trap failed. Do you want to team up with me while you’re here? We could get the final low down on Luthor and put him behind bars where he belongs.”

Clark replied, “I thought you’d never ask. I’d love to. It’ll be just like when I was working with my Lois.”

“Okay, how do we go about it?”

“You’ll need to fill me in on the specifics of this universe. For instance, in my universe the Daily Planet was bought by James Olsen, a billionaire who made his money in computer software, while in another universe I’ve been in, Jimmy Olsen is a research assistant/photographer for the Daily Planet. Do you have a Jimmy Olsen?”

“Yeah, Jimmy is kind of our mascot. He’s the gofer/researcher/photographer like the second one you described.”

“Who is Editor-in-Chief?”

“That would be the irascible Perry White.”

“So far so good, what does Clark call Perry?”

“We all call him either Perry or Chief.”

“Good, who owns the paper?”

“Franklin Stern.”

“Check. Tell me about some of your co-workers.”

They spent some time going over the information Clark would need to fill in for the other Clark. When they had finished they went out to dinner and then caught a movie.

When they arrived back in Smallville Clark asked Lois to spend a couple of days there. She agreed and he grabbed a blanket and pillow and headed for the couch while she settled in Clark’s bedroom.

In the morning Martha came downstairs to find Clark on the couch and looked up the stairs as if to see who was in the bedroom. Immediately she knew without looking just who was in Clark’s bedroom, it just had to be Lois. He had managed to get her to stay. With a look of understanding, Martha turned and headed for the kitchen. Jonathan would be down shortly and she needed to get his breakfast ready.

Clark woke to the aroma of coffee brewing and just continued to lay there on the couch enjoying the feel of being home and having his parents back after all these years. Okay, they weren’t really his parents but in a way they really were. He

thought, <Maybe they’ll allow me to be their son while I’m here.>

After a while Lois and Jonathan both came downstairs. Lois was dressed in the cocktail dress she had worn the previous evening. Clark sat up and Lois sat on the end of the couch. She said, “I think I really need to get back to work. As far as anyone knows you’re still recovering from your injuries sustained in the bombing. You might as well hang out here as anywhere.” She turned to Jonathan and Martha and asked, “Are you guys okay with that?”

Martha answered, “We already invited him to stay.”

Lois said, “Okay, good, well, I uh, I guess I can come by every night.” She looked at Clark and said, “Maybe we could spend some more time together, you know, getting to know one another.”

Clark answered, “I’d like that.” Looking over at Jonathan he said, “We have some fence to mend today, right?”

Jonathan smiled and said, “That’s right.” Chuckling he looked over at Lois and said, “I’m going to put him to work. Good honest farm work, not like what you call work in the big city.”

Knowing that he was kidding, Lois went along with it and asked, “Can I expect to find a dirty, sweaty, callused farm hand when I get back?”

Clark chuckled and said, “I don’t know about the sweaty and callused thing but I just might get dirty.”

Teasing, Lois said, “I’ll check when I get back this evening.”

Martha said, “If you’re going to be spending any time here, perhaps you should bring some changes of clothes to keep here.”

Lois said, “That’s probably a good idea. I’ll bring some this evening. I think all I’ll have is a cup of coffee. I really need to get to Metropolis.”

For the next three weeks Lois went in to work while Clark was at the farm and commuted in each afternoon. They were getting to know one another and building a relationship. Though they thought they were taking their time about it, because of their prior relationships things progressed rapidly.

On Friday night when the three weeks had elapsed Clark had convinced Lois to stay at the farm rather than going back to Metropolis. She went to bed in Clark’s room and he slept on the couch.

In the morning Martha came downstairs and saw him on the couch again and she started to chuckle softly. She went into the kitchen and put the coffee on.

A few minutes later Lois came downstairs wearing a football jersey she had found in one of Clark’s drawers. It came down to just about mid-thigh and Clark couldn’t take his eyes off of her. Unbidden memories of his Lois dressed in a short skirt, showing plenty of leg, came to mind, but he found them being overlaid by the more recent memory of this Lois in her cocktail dress. When that happened, he started feeling some guilt for allowing this to happen.

He sat up as Lois came over and this time instead of sitting on the opposite end of the couch, she sat down next to him. Unexpectedly she snuggled up close to him and pulled up her legs and tucked them under herself as she did.

Martha came out of the kitchen just as Lois got settled and got an amused smile on her face when she saw them. She walked over and sat in Jonathan’s chair. Once she was settled she said, “Jonathan and I had a talk last night. We’ve been together now for several weeks and we’d like to know if you would consider being our son while you are here.”

Clark was stunned to silence by this.

Almost as if Martha had talked it over with her beforehand and before he was able to respond, Lois added, “If you accept, it means that you have to be my fiancé as well.”

Jonathan had just reached the bottom of the stairs as Lois

made her statement and chimed in with, “We were wondering if you might be able to extend your stay.”

“With you here it’s like we never lost Clark,” Martha added.

Lois reached up for his arm and pulled it across her shoulders and said, “I feel the same way. I don’t know why because you really aren’t him but in a lot of ways, you are. I am feeling more and more comfortable with you as time goes on.” She started playing with the fingers of his hand, lacing and unlacing her fingers in his absently as she spoke. “I’d like you to stay too. You told me that your missions were to help the Clark Kents of the various universes to stay alive so that they could marry their Lois Lanes, but, this time it was to rescue me from the despair that you suffered when you lost your Lois. We’ve been hanging out here at the farm for a while now and if you were to ask me out on another date I probably wouldn’t turn you down. I had a very nice time the other night.”

It didn’t take any thought to reply to this, “I enjoyed our date too.” Looking around at Lois and the Kents, Clark said, “What can I say? Thank you for your acceptance. I’ll do my best not to make you sorry for asking me to stay.”

Martha stood up and said, “All right, now that that’s settled, let’s have breakfast,” and she led the way to the kitchen.

### Chapter 8 – New Family

March 11, 1994

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name – ALT2

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It was now late March and it had been five weeks that Clark Kent had been hiding out and living with the Kents while ‘recovering’ from his injuries. It had been almost four weeks since the rescue in Florida. Lois had been back at work for several weeks and was still dodging calls from Luthor’s secretary. Superwoman had been keeping in contact with Detective Lieutenant Henderson on the progress of the case and spending the evenings making sure that Clark was prepared. They had been spending all of their time together, had a number of dates and were developing their relationship.

After the five weeks had elapsed, Superwoman stopped in to talk to Henderson and he said, “The lawyer for the bomber, Jack Duggins, is trying to impeach his confession on the basis that it was obtained through coercion.”

Somewhat sheepishly Superwoman replied, “Well, much as I hate to admit it, he might be right. Okay, we still have his image on the security tape. Did the forensics team find any fingerprints, like from the door or something else he might have touched when they examined the apartment?”

Henderson replied, “Yeah, we have that image. He apparently was too cagey. Either he wiped down any surface he touched or else he wore gloves because they didn’t find any prints, other than those that would be expected, Lois’ and Clark’s. How far do we want to go with this thing? So far all we have to charge him with is malicious destruction of Kent’s apartment and possibly attempted murder. You did tell me that Kent is alive, just in hiding, correct?”

After a brief hesitation Lois replied, “Yes, actually he’s in Kansas visiting his folks and Lane is spending a lot of time with him. I’m flying her back and forth. How soon do you want them back here?”

“Frankly, I don’t think they need to be hiding any longer. With Duggins in jail there isn’t much more of a threat. What do you think?”

“Actually, if I were to bring Lois and Clark back they may try again and if they do, we might be able to get more evidence against Luthor. They may be willing to act as decoys to draw him

out. Okay, I’ll talk to them and see what they want to do.”

That evening when Lois flew back to Smallville she spotted the Kents and Clark at the grave and she landed next to Jonathan and Martha. Clark was standing off to one side allowing them some time with their lost son and her fiancée. Over this time the emotional impact had lessened as they had been able to adequately say their goodbyes. It still hurt, but, the hurt was fading with time and also to a certain extent the presence of Alt-Clark. After a time they returned to the house and they all had a meeting.

Lois said, “I had a meeting with Henderson today and he thinks that it’s time that Clark came back to Metropolis. Do you think you’re ready?”

“I guess I am. I guess I’m as ready as I’ll ever be. You’ve been going over details about the people at the Planet and other friends. It’s late in the day, why don’t we go back tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow is Saturday; it should work out better to move over the weekend.”

They had a pleasant evening with the Kents.

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The next morning March 26, 1994

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As they were preparing to leave, Clark looked at the Kents and said, “I’ve enjoyed the time here with you and I will be back.” Turning to Lois he said, “One thing though, could I stay with you? My apartment isn’t in any condition to live in right now. I’ll take the couch. It’ll be easier that way.”

After giving this some thought Lois said, “Well, as far as anyone else knows we are engaged so I guess no one would question it if we moved in together. Yeah, I guess I could. You don’t need to sleep on the couch because I have a spare room that Lucy usually uses when she is in town. You’ll have to see how much is salvageable at your apartment.”

Martha stepped over to him and gave him a hug and said, “Come back soon.”

Jonathan chimed in, “Yeah, I’ve got some more fence I need a hand with,” as he clapped Clark on the back.

With tears of joy in his eyes Clark said, “I don’t know what to say. I can only hope that my parents would have been as nice as you. Thanks, from the bottom of my heart.”

Martha looked at Jonathan as if to get permission and at his nod she said, “We’d like it if you’d call us ... Mom and Dad.” This was the first indication that they were ready to move on.

With a startled look Clark put his arms around both of them and said, “You don’t know how much that means to me.”

“It’ll mean a lot to us too. We know that you didn’t grow up with us, but you are so like our son, it’s like he never left. You are just as sweet and caring as he was.” Martha couldn’t say any more because she started weeping.

Clark wrapped his arms around her in a hug and then reached over and Jonathan wrapped both of them up in a hug of his own.

After a few minutes they all separated and Clark stepped over to join Lois. They both spin changed and exited, taking off from the front porch.

When they arrived in Metropolis, Clark went to his apartment to pack. Lois had given Clark her Clark’s keys and wallet so that he would have proper ID.

He packed up what he could and after hailing a cab took his bags to Lois’. Once they had him moved in they went shopping for groceries and picked up enough to stock the refrigerator and freezer.

When they got home Lois put the groceries away and proceeded to start dinner. Clark was amazed, this Lois could cook! Since he had been spending all of his time at the Kents, Martha had done all of the cooking. Lois made what he considered to be one of his specialties, a shrimp stir-fry. Even the rice was perfect. She noticed the surprised look on his face and

asked, “What’s so funny?”

“Well, there are some differences between the universes. Lois, \*my\* Lois wasn’t a cook. She could make a few things, as she put it, ‘I can make exactly three things and two of them involve chocolate.’” They both started to laugh.

Lois said, “I learned a long time ago that if I wanted to be able to save some money, I needed to depend less on take-out so I took a cooking class. What about you? Do you cook?”

Clark nodded, “In one of my foster homes there were a lot of kids and we all learned to cook. I found that I enjoyed it and continued to learn new recipes.”

They moved over to the table and continued the conversation as they ate.

Clark told her, “After high school, I didn’t know what I was going to do with my life so as soon as I turned eighteen and before I started college I started traveling. As a result, I’ve been all around the world and everywhere I have been I’ve learned the local cuisine. I have to say, you did a nice job on the stir-fry. It’s perfect.”

Blushing prettily Lois replied, “Thank you. That is a difference. Clark wasn’t much of a cook. Martha had always cooked and he hadn’t shown much interest. I guess we can share the cooking duties. Maybe you could teach me about some of those foreign dishes.”

With a smile on his face and in his voice he said, “I’d love to.”

When they had finished eating and cleaning up they moved to the couch. Before sitting down Lois suggested, “Why don’t we change and get comfortable?” She headed to the bedroom and Clark headed for the spare room.

When he came out he found her wearing some sweats which pretty well matched what he had on and they settled on the couch together.

After he was seated Lois snuggled up to him and pulled his arm around her shoulders and twined her fingers in his. She said, “I’m glad you’re here. When Clark died, I just didn’t know what I would do. I didn’t really want to go on. I thought I would die of loneliness. There couldn’t be anyone else and then you came along and it’s like he never left.” She started tearing up as she thought, <I remember what I said when Clark slid the ring on my finger, “There’s no one else like you.” How much more wrong could I have been?> She finished up with, “He was a pretty unique guy and I didn’t think there was anyone else like him but, here you are.”

“When my Lois died, I went into a profound depression. I didn’t eat or sleep for over a week. I just knelt on the ground at her graveside and wept. One of my friends from the local Daily Planet office found me and took me home with her to her apartment. She and her twin took care of me until I came out of it. Their thoughtful care is what brought me back from the brink. I almost died. I’m glad I was here for you.”

“If you were to leave, it’d be like he died again.”

Decisively, Clark challenged, “You know, I think that we both have to stop doing what we’ve been doing. We have both been comparing the other to the ones we’ve lost. I think that we’ve seen that there are enough differences between me and him and you and her that we need to start to develop a new relationship with each other. We need to get to know each other and stop the comparisons. If we are going to be together it can’t be with me being a replacement for him and you a replacement for her. We are different people. I like you as you and I’m trying not to compare and I hope you can do the same.”

Thoughtfully, Lois added, “I’ve been thinking along the same lines and I’ve been trying to do that too. I have to admit that I do slip occasionally but that’s becoming less and less as I discover more about you.”

“We still have a few weeks until Herb shows up. I think that

before he shows up we need to make a final decision. I know that I want to stay and the Kents have accepted my continued presence, but, you and I, we, need to decide if this is going to work, if I’m going to stay . . . if \*you\* really \*want\* me to stay.”

Turning in his arms so that she could look him in the face Lois said, “When Jonathan and Martha asked you to call them Mom and Dad, I realized that they had come to the point where they were ready to move on. They have their memories of Clark, as I have mine and we will never forget him, but, now, you are here and we are making new memories, of . . . us. Seeing that I realized that I too am ready to . . . move . . . on. My Clark is gone and I miss him and I will continue to miss him, but, here you are, so, I can answer that question right now and I think I can speak for the Kents when I do, yes, we want you to stay. I already feel a connection to you and it is every bit as strong as that which I felt with him but, it’s been getting stronger. I can’t explain it.”

“You don’t need to. It’s what I told you about before; it’s the soul mates connection getting stronger the longer we are together.”

The expression on her face displayed her wonderment at all of this. She moved so that she was sitting in his lap. Her arms drifted up and around his neck as she moved in closer. Slowly, inexorably their lips closed on one another. The soul mates tingle manifested itself even stronger than before and immediately she moved to deepen the kiss. As she did her body moved closer and melded to his. She reached out with her tongue and touched his lips. As he parted them her tongue slid past the portal of his lips and caressed his tongue as a moan of pleasure escaped from the back of her throat.

After several minutes they separated to catch their breath and just sat there holding one another. Finally, Lois got up off his lap and standing reached for his hand. When he had placed his hand in hers she pulled him up and then led the way to the bedroom.

Once there she grasped the hem of his sweatshirt and pulled it up and off of him. For a brief time she stood there drinking in the sight of his naked chest, admiring the play of his muscles as he moved his arms. Then she grabbed the hem of her own sweatshirt and pulled it off. She pulled it up slowly, revealing herself a little bit at a time. When she reached her chest her breasts sprang into view because she had been braless since they had changed.

Clark couldn’t believe what he was seeing and he simply stood there in stunned disbelief as she proceeded to remove her sweatpants. She stood before him for a moment before moving into his waiting arms and initiating another kiss. The soft pillows of her breasts were being crushed into his chest as they pulled one another closer and closer.

Breaking the kiss she said, “Let’s move this to the bed.”

Once they were lying next to each other she again initiated a kiss which led to a period of intimacy.

Finally they were kissing again and after several minutes she broke the kiss and said, “Oh, wow that felt so good. I haven’t been able to really let myself go, ever since Clark’s powers were transferred to me.”

“You mean that you and he were intimate?”

“We were engaged to be married. We have been making love for some time. This time, with you, wow, soooooo much better! I can’t believe how fulfilling it was.”

Chuckling he asked, “When was the wedding planned for?”

She replied, “We were going to be married on April thirtieth, about five weeks away, why?”

He asked, “Would you like to move it up a bit, say, two weeks from now, April ninth?”

With an arched eyebrow and a wicked little grin she said, “Why, Mr. Kent, I hardly even know you,” and then she initiated yet another kiss and as she did she started raking the soft pillows of her breasts across his chest. This led to another period of intimacy.

Lois resumed the conversation right where they had left off, just as if it hadn't been interrupted by their sexual activity. She said, "Yes, let's do that. Tomorrow we can make the changes to the arrangements for the church and hall. I can let the bridesmaids know of the change. They already have their dresses. Everything is ready to go. Jimmy is acting as your best man and Perry is giving me away. We can fly your folks in." After she had said this she marveled at just how easy it had slipped out. It just seemed the most natural thing to think of the Kents as his parents.

"Did you or he ever fly them anywhere?"

"No, I never did and I don't think he did either."

"It will be a new experience for them then. I'll need to make sure they enjoy the ride."

"Good, I know that they will be pleased. We can tell Perry and Jimmy tomorrow when we get to the Planet." As she was talking her hand moved up his stomach in ever widening circles mapping the planes and ridges of his abs and chest until her fingers met his right nipple. Pinching and tweaking it, she pushed him on his back and initiated another kiss. This time it was slow and languorous, deepening slowly but finally reaching a fever pitch. There followed yet another sexual encounter.

"I just don't know what to say. You are fantastic. Making love with you is incredible. I never knew that it could be this good!" She asked, "Didn't you and she ever ..."

He replied and as he did she could hear the pain in his voice, "No, we never did. She died before we could ..."

Sensing his pain she rolled over so that she could pull him into her arms with her naked breasts again pressing into his equally naked chest. He started kissing the side of her neck and slowly worked his way to her mouth finally capturing her lips again as they started kissing again. They slowly started drifting back down to the bed.

Once there they broke the kiss and she reached up and stroked the side of his face. Gazing intently into his eyes, she said, "I'm with you now and I'm not going to die the way she did."

He replied, "Now that we are together I can see how much we are meant to be together. I can't tell you how much in love with you I am. I can't wait until we are husband and wife. It will be my dream come true. By the way, I \*like\* how you mix business with pleasure." He gave her a wicked smile.

With a smile and a wink Lois said, "It can't be too soon for me either. Tomorrow we'll announce the change in plan. I'm sure everybody will understand. At least there is one thing we don't have to worry about. Superman has already announced his return from his 'mission' by joining me on those rescues. That does bring up another question. What will the relationship be between Superman and Superwoman? If they get married at the same time we do, it could generate a lot of questions."

"I really hadn't given that much thought. Perhaps Superman should court Superwoman for a period before announcing their engagement. When did Clark tell you just who he was?"

She laughed and replied, "He didn't tell me until after I had figured it out on my own. We had been on an undercover assignment pretending to be newlyweds in the honeymoon suite of the Lexor. We were in the bedroom sorting out some equipment when suddenly Clark threw a blanket over the equipment and then threw me on the bed. It was so sudden and unexpected I didn't know what was happening and I started to struggle and then he started kissing me. When he started kissing me I just melted it was so wonderful. I wanted it to go on forever. Unfortunately after a short time he stopped and I heard the maid excusing herself. He had just done it to cover our activities, but I could never forget that kiss.

"Later he was going off on a dangerous mission, you know, Nightfall, and I was there when he was going to leave and I kissed him. It felt very familiar and I realized just who it was that

I was kissing. I didn't say anything. When he came back he had amnesia. When I found him he didn't remember me. I called his parents and told them what had happened. They came to Metropolis and helped him get his memory back. I told them that I knew and asked them to keep it a secret."

"From then on he didn't realize it but I helped cover for him by helping with his excuses for his disappearances. Eventually he got up the nerve to tell me. He was so cute, he was so nervous! He thought I'd be mad at him and that I'd hate him for the rest of my life because he'd lied to me and kept this secret."

"We were alone one day when he finally said, 'I'm him. I'm Superman.' I couldn't help it, I squealed and asked, 'What took you so long?' as I jumped into his arms and started kissing him. He had this dumbfounded expression on his face and asked, 'You already knew? How long?' I told him and we kissed some more. It was fun and funny and romantic and I've loved every minute I had with him. I do want you to know that I love the time I now have with you, every bit as much. I love you Clark Kent."

Clark replied, "I love you Lois. I never got the chance to tell my Lois about myself. You see we were in the past, 1992, and Superman wasn't around as yet. If she had lived I would have been telling her. We were going to be picked up on February 28<sup>th</sup> to move to 1997. There would have been a problem with that though. You see, I am unique among the supermen, It appears as though I am the only one whose secret identity has been revealed. That means that any spouse would have to be protected constantly from attack or kidnap. You wouldn't have that problem. Since you are super you would be safe."

With a very thoughtful expression and sound Lois said, "You know, that presents a problem. We have two separate universes with a superhero. Now one of them will have two and the other will have none. Can we really do that?"

Clark for his part was becoming worried as she pointed this out and said, "You know, you're right. I for one do not plan to let that stop us from being married."

With conviction Lois echoed his sentiment, "Now that I have you, I'm not letting you go without a fight."

Clark proposed, "Maybe Herb will have a solution. We can talk to him when he shows up to pick me up. In the mean time we can see if we can come up with a solution of our own and follow through on our plans." He pulled her in close and kissed her again. When they separated they composed themselves for sleep and still naked, they drifted off in each other's arms, the bed in the spare room completely forgotten.

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## Chapter 9 – Working Together

March 28, 1994 – Twelfth Precinct

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name – ALT2

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On Monday morning, Lois dressed in a beige skirt that was flouncy and came to just above her knees. Her long slender legs ended in beige pumps. She had a matching jacket which she wore over a turquoise sleeveless blouse with a scooped neckline which revealed just a hint of cleavage. Clark was dressed in one of his normal GQ style suits in brown with a beige shirt and a turquoise tie that matched Lois' blouse.

When they entered the Twelfth Precinct, Lois and Clark presented themselves to the Desk Sergeant and Lois said, after reading his name tag, "Hi Sgt. Tartaglia, I was expecting Sgt. Cooper. I hope he's not sick." Lois was already aware of the change on the desk, but that was as Superwoman, so she had to feign ignorance of the change.

With a thick Italian accent Sgt. Tartaglia replied, "No, Ms. Lane, Coop is not sick, he is retired. I, on the other hand, have

not yet reached the age at which I can retire, but, I am not so fast as I used to be, so I have now been assigned to this desk in his place. My name is Tartaglia, Gino Tartaglia. Please feel free to call me Gino. I have seen you and Mr. Kent around a lot and I must tell you that of all of the reporters that report on police activities, you are the most fair in your reporting. You both have my respect and that of the entire force because you give all of us an even break and we appreciate it. I would imagine that you wish to see Lieutenant Henderson who does not happen to be in his office currently. If you would choose to wait a couple of minutes, I do expect him to be here shortly. In the mean time would you like a cannolo? Mrs. Tartaglia makes them from scratch. “

“Why, thank you, Gino. I would love one.” she said as she reached in and picked up one of the cannoli she said, “They look delicious. Clark?” Then she took a bite and got a rapturous expression as she said, “These are wonderful!”

Clark said, “Thank you, sergeant and please thank your wife for us.” He took a bite of his and echoed Lois’ previous sentiment, “They are delicious!”

Sergeant Tartaglia was beaming in appreciation of the compliments to his wife’s cooking. Gino saw a light come on on his panel and said, “Lt. Henderson just walked in. Third door on the left. I will let him know that you are here.” He picked up the phone and dialed an extension as they turned and started walking away finishing their pastry and licking their fingers, appreciating every morsel.

When they got to Henderson’s door they knocked and heard, “Come in.”

Opening the door, Lois greeted him, “Hi Bill, we just got back into town. Superwoman said that you thought that we ought to return. What’s the story? She told us that she got the bomber for you. What have you gotten out of him?”

Noting the powdered sugar on their lips, Henderson started to laugh as he said, “I see that Gino brought in some more cannoli. I hope he saves one for me. They are out of this world. Clark, I’m glad to see you back in one piece. To answer your question, yeah, we got the bomber and we have a statement but we may not have enough to hold him and all we have to charge him with at this point is malicious destruction of property. We might be able to make a case for attempted murder.”

Clark spoke up, “What do you want us to do?”

“At this point all I can say is go back to work. Look, Luthor probably knows that we’re on to him now. I think he’s going to lay low for a while. Go back to business as usual, live your life. Let’s see what happens.”

Lois looked over at Clark before she said, “Bill, this has brought one thing home to us. One or the other or both of us could have been killed. We decided that we are going to move up the wedding. It’ll be in two weeks, April ninth, and you’re invited.”

Bill, with a huge grin, said, “Well, congratulations, you two. I’ll be there, count on it.” He reached out and clasped Clark’s hand and shook it. As he did so he remembered the cannoli and said, “How appropriate! You had the cannoli, right?”

They both had mystified expressions as Lois cautiously said, “Yeah, we did. Why?”

Bill was laughing as he replied, “Here’s some trivia for ya, Cannoli were historically prepared as a treat during the [Carnevale](#) season, possibly as a \*fertility\* symbol,” and he started laughing harder than ever as Lois and Clark exchanged looks.

They thanked him and left hand in hand. Next stop was the Daily Planet. Lois thought at Clark, /You did good with Bill. You sounded like the old Clark./

Clark smiled back and squeezed her hand.

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Newsroom at the Daily Planet

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Perry White was on the floor of the newsroom giving directions to Jimmy about some prints Jimmy had been showing him. “I want you to reprint this one, improve the contrast and crop it for the person in the center and burn him in while you dodge out the people in the background. Son, you’re eventually going to be a good photographer if you keep this up.”

Jimmy was beaming with his praise and said, “Thanks, Chief! I’ll get back to the lab and get these done right away.”

Perry replied, “You do that, son.”

Just as Jimmy was turning away Perry heard the ding of the elevator as it arrived. Jimmy and he both turned to see who was on the elevator. As soon as the doors opened and Lois stepped out they both got huge grins on their faces and when they saw Clark come out right behind her they were even more pleased. Perry shouted, “Clark, it seems like I haven’t seen you in a month of Sundays. What are you doing back here? Have you healed up? More importantly, is it safe?”

Jimmy shouted, “Hey guys, long time no see! I’ll see you later, got to get down to the lab, got some prints to doctor.”

Lois replied, “Okay Jimmy, see you later. Make sure you come see us we need to talk.”

Worried now, Jimmy asked, “Oh, okay ... something serious?”

Lois tried to reassure him, “No, nothing bad, just a change of schedule.”

Relieved, Jimmy said, “All right, as soon as I get out of the lab, I’ll come by.”

Lois said, “Chief, can we see you in your office?”

“Sure,,,,,,,,,,,,, Lois, come on in.” He led the way, moving around and sitting down behind his desk as they followed and Clark closed the door.

Perry noting this thought, <She’s got a bee in her bonnet, I wonder just what it is.>

Without preamble Lois said, “Chief, you asked if it was safe for us to be back. Superwoman has been keeping in touch with the police while Clark was recovering. We were both staying with his folks in Kansas. Now that Clark is fit again the police asked Superwoman to tell us that we should come back. Now, what are you doing two weeks from last Saturday, on the ninth?”

“Well, since Alice and I have gotten back together we decided that we would have some time to date. We are planning to go to a movie. They’re showing ‘The Cool Surface’ at the Palace. Why?”

With a serious tone, Lois asked, “Do you think you could change your plans?”

Worried now, Perry asked, “We might be able to, what do you have in mind?”

With a somewhat lighter tone she said, “With what happened, we decided not to wait so long and we want to move up the wedding date. You’re supposed to give me away, remember?”

All of his apprehension fled with these words and he smiled very broadly as he said, “I think Alice won’t mind rescheduling for such an excellent reason. What made you decide to change the date?”

“It was the bombing of Clark’s apartment. Clark or I or both of us could have been killed and we don’t want to waste any more time by being apart. Actually, over the weekend we moved in together. If you need Clark, call my apartment.”

“That’s wonderful news. I can understand how it is. Sure, no problem. I have my own monkey suit so it isn’t like I have to change a rental date, besides Alice always likes to see me in it, she says she can’t wait to get me out of it, if you know what I mean.”

They all laughed at this comment and then Clark changed the topic. “Chief, we found out just who was responsible for the bombing. It was Lex Luthor.”

Perry sat forward in his chair with a look of incredulity on his face as he said, “What?!?! Luthor is a pillar of the community, a philanthropist! He’s been the man of the year! Are you sure?”

Lois said, “Superwoman got a confession out of the bomber. Remember, he named Lex Luthor’s butler as his contact and the man who contracted the hit. I’ve been following up on that since I’ve been back. Luthor is still having his secretary call me, almost on a daily basis.”

Being a good reporter, Perry asked, “Do you have independent confirmation? The bomber could have been lying.”

Clark said, “That’s why we want you to assign us to the investigation, full time. We were working on a story that could possibly have been related, but we want this to be our only assignment. We want to devote all of our time to it. Can you do that for us?”

“Okay, you’ve got it. You’re full time on Luthor. Go get me a story.”

“You may not like what we find, Chief.”

“Like it or not, if it’s the truth, we’ll print it. Just make sure of your evidence.”

“We will Chief.” They both got up and exited his office.

They went over to Lois’ desk. She sat in her chair and he perched on the corner. He leaned in and said, “By the way, do you happen to know Clark’s password?”

“L01s L@n3”

Chuckling he said, “I should have guessed.”

Clark went over and caught up on the e-mails that had accumulated in ‘his’ absence and didn’t see anything that he couldn’t handle with the exception of one. He called Lois over to take a look at it. “Lois, you got a minute to look at this?”

She got up from her chair and moved over to his desk. She perched on a corner and leaned in, crossing her legs as she did. This all had the effect of hiking her skirt up a notch and causing her blouse to gape open revealing the creamy flesh of the upper slope of her breasts. He found himself staring and could feel his pulse starting to race. His breathing started coming in short sharp gasps. Lois reached over and stroked the side of his face and then cupped his chin, lifting his face and eyes to her face. She giggled as she said, “You had something to show me?”

Coming out of his stupor he said, “Uh, yeah. Here, look at this e-mail.” He maximized the display.

“From: BobbyB@Metro.com  
To: [Clark.Kent@DPlanet.com](mailto:Clark.Kent@DPlanet.com)  
Subject: help  
Greetings, Mr. Kent.

I understand that you recently lost your main stool.

Meet me in Centennial Park, 6:30 tonight, picnic bench near the fountain. Bring a lasagna dinner from Travaglini’s. We might be able to do business.

Bobby”

“That’s interesting; I just got a similar note.” She switched users on his machine and brought up her mail program and selected the message in question.

“From: BobbyB@Metro.com  
To: [Lois.Lane@DPlanet.com](mailto:Lois.Lane@DPlanet.com)  
Subject: help  
Greetings, Ms. Lane.

I understand that you recently lost your main stool.

Meet me in Centennial Park, 6:30 tonight, picnic bench near the fountain. Bring a lasagna dinner from Travaglini’s. We might be able to do business.

Bobby”

“What do you make of it?”

Clark looked around and saw that there were several people within earshot. He looked at the conference room and saw that it was empty and said, “Conference room.” He stood up and guided her through the door. Once the door was closed he said, “In that

other universe, the one that Herb calls Prime, the Lois and Clark there have a source that has to be the best that there ever was. His nickname is Bobby Bigmouth. He never asks for money! Every time he has information the pay he asks for is food, usually, expensive food. This could be him. If it is, he can be an invaluable source on just about anything.”

“Okay, let’s take a chance; after all, all it’s going to cost us is a lasagna dinner.”

Clark laughed, “From what the other Lois told me, since he sent the note to each of us, I think he expects two dinners!”

At first Lois gave him a look of disbelief, but, seeing his reaction she said, “You’re serious, aren’t you? \*Two\* dinners?”

Still laughing he replied, “I’d be willing to bet on it.”

Clark looked around to confirm that they were alone and asked, “Since we are in here and have some privacy, let’s talk. How do you want to proceed on the investigation?”

Lois thought for a second before replying, “We need to get the goods on Luthor. From what you have said, he’s behind all of the major rackets here in Metropolis.”

With assurance Clark replied, “A lot of what he did was centered around Lois, uh, you. He tried to destroy her, uh, you, your support systems so that you would depend on him. First he forced advertisers to pull their copy from the paper so that financially it was in trouble, then he coerced the board of the Planet into approving the sale of the Planet to him and then he bombed the Planet so that you would be out of work so that he could offer you a do-nothing position at LNN.”

Lois was astounded, “All of that just so that he could get me?”

“He wants to possess you. He doesn’t love you, he wants to break you and control you. That’s his thing and it may also be his Achilles Heel. If we can make sure that his control falters and fails, we may be able to break him.”

Lois had a thought and said, “I just had an idea,” and walked over to the door. She opened it and looked around the bullpen. Spotting the object of her search just coming out of the stairwell door, she shouted, “Jimmy!”

His head snapped around and he spotted Lois in the conference room door. He shouted, “Be right there!” He took the prints he had just finished to Perry’s office and then headed for the conference room.

When Jimmy came into the conference room Lois said, “Two things, first – we are changing the date of the wedding to two weeks from last Saturday. Can you change the date of your tax rental?”

If Jimmy could grin any wider he would be splitting his face in two. He said, “No problem, I’ll call and change it today.”

Lois continued, “Okay, good, now next, I need everything you can get on Lex Luthor. All of his businesses, even those that he’s a minor partner in, those should be an extremely short list. See what you can get on banking transactions, mostly from his personal accounts, but check his businesses as well.”

Jimmy had at first been excited, but, realizing the scope of this assignment started to get worried. He said, “Wow, all of that? That’ll take a while.”

“Let it. We need it to bring him down.”

What she said finally hit home, “Wow! You’re going after \*Luthor\*!?!?”

Lois clamped a hand over his mouth. She said, “Not so loud. You never can tell just who might be listening. Luthor could have spies anywhere.”

Jimmy, quieter now said, “Right, mum’s the word. I’ll get right on it.” He left the conference room.

Once he had left, Clark said, “We could possibly do some super surveillance to try to get evidence against Luthor. What do you say to that suggestion?”

With a grin, Lois said, “I’d love to. When do you want to

start?”

He suggested, “How about this evening? We can get a feel for how he does things. We could fly up to the roof and listen in to some meetings.”

“Sounds to me like a perfectly enjoyable date. We could get some take out.”

Clark chuckled and said, “I know this little place in Hong Kong that has the best Chinese food you have ever tasted.”

She said, “We can do that after we meet with Bobby.”

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That evening, after a visit to Travaglini’s to pick up two lasagna dinners, they headed to Centennial Park. They sat on a bench near the fountain talking when a lanky individual that looked very much in need of a decent meal approached. He sat down next to Clark and introduced himself, “Kent, I’m Bobby. I see you got my message. I heard you were back in town and thought I’d take a chance and contact you. I smell the delicate aroma of lasagna. Is it from Travaglini’s?”

Clark picked up his bag and opened it so that Bobby could get a better smell. After doing this to tempt him he asked, “What do you have for us?”

Bobby reached for the bag but Clark snatched it away. Clark said, “Information first.”

Bobby, with the appearance of one being put upon, said, “You’re looking for information on the current rash of fires on the waterfront, right?”

Lois replied, “Actually, we are on a new assignment now. Lex Luthor. What can you do for us?”

Bobby asked, “Is that a second lasagna dinner I see there?”

Lois opened her bag so that he could get a whiff. Bobby closed his eyes and took a deep sniff and with a rapturous look on his visage simply enjoyed what he smelled.

Clark brought him back to Earth. “What do you have for us?”

Bobby came back and opened his eyes. He glanced back and forth between them and then said, “Okay, you already know that an Englishman commissioned the bombing of your apartment. Superwoman got that information out of Duggins. That Englishman’s name is Nigel St. John and he works for Lex Luthor.”

Lois said, “Tell us something we don’t already know.”

Bobby was surprised at this response. “Okay, how about this. Luthor wants to build a high — class marina in the Hobbs Bay area. That’s where the information on the fires comes in. He is all set to snap up the properties in that area at fire sale prices.”

Skeptically Lois asked, “How’s he going to do that? Those are valuable properties; no one is going to be selling, especially at fire sale prices.”

“That’s where you’re wrong. Luthor has commissioned the Toasters, a group of firebugs with some hi-tech gear, to start some fires. Their gear creates fires without the use of accelerants so there is no way to prove that it’s arson. After a few places are burnt to the ground there will be a panic sale that Luthor will capitalize on.”

Lois handed over her bag and said, “Bon Appetit.” And Clark handed over his.

Bobby grabbed them and opening one stuck his face in the neck of the bag and inhaled again. With a rapturous expression he pulled back and said, “Heavenly. They make the best lasagna in the city. If I hear anything else I’ll either call or send a note to set up a meet.”

Clark said, “Okay Bobby, we look forward to a long and mutually beneficial association.”

“As long as you guys are willing to meet my price, we’ll get along just fine. I’ll be in touch.”

Lois and Clark looked at each other and after he was out of earshot they both broke out in laughter. When Clark calmed down somewhat he said, “Just like the other one. I can’t get over it!” He

sobered somewhat and continued, “In the other universe he is an invaluable source. I’m glad we have him here as well.”

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## Chapter 10 – The Investigation

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name – ALT2

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That night, they both dressed in ‘snooping clothes’ which consisted of black pants and turtleneck tops, rather than their usual costumes.

As it was getting dark they flew up to the roof of Luthor Tower and settled directly above Luthor’s office. They used their enhanced vision to check and found that Luthor liked to keep late hours. They listened in as they watched.

They heard Luthor call in his butler. Luthor depressed a switch on a console in front of him and said, “Nigel, my office.”

A few seconds later there was a knock on Luthor’s door and Luthor shouted, “Come in!”

Nigel St. John entered. His manner was not the obsequious behavior one usually associates with a butler. There was more arrogance like that of a chief hireling or second in command.

Luthor spoke, “Nigel, we have a problem. Duggins failed. Kent is still alive and apparently unharmed. I need him out of the way so that I can have Lane. We need to try again. What do you suggest?”

Nigel suggested, “We could try a more direct approach. Perhaps it could be a mugging that turns ugly and fatal.”

Luthor mulled this over for a few seconds before he responded, “Yes, that might just work. Make sure that the men you chose are reliable. You know, there is a possibility that it was Superwoman that saved him from the bomb.” He reached into a desk drawer and pulled out a lead lined box. He opened the lid and even though they were many yards away, they could feel the effects of the Kryptonite. He said to Nigel, “Give this ring to the leader of the team. Superman is back now so if Superman or Superwoman shows up it’ll incapacitate them and allow the team to complete the mission.” He closed the box and handed it to Nigel.

“Will do, Sir.”

Lois looked at Clark and said, “Okay, we’ve got a problem. How are we going to handle this?”

“I think that as long as we can keep the Kryptonite at some distance, even if I temporarily lose my powers I can handle them. While we were on the trail of the gunrunners, Lois taught me Tae Kwan Do. As long as there aren’t too many, I should be able to take care of them. Since we know about the Kryptonite we know to keep you out of its range. You can work from a distance. Here’s what I have in mind ...”

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A few days later, Lois and Clark were walking home from the Planet. It was late evening, almost dark when they both felt the pain that the Kryptonite generated. Clark whispered, “Duck into that alley, change and take off.” Lois did just that.

As the pain increased Clark could feel his powers fading. He heard, “Give us your wallet,” as he turned to confront his attackers.

He saw that there were four of them. The one standing in the back appeared to be the leader and he could see the green glow of the ring on his finger.

Suddenly the leader started shouting in pain and shaking his hand. He shouted to his accomplices, “Get it off! Get it off! It’s branding me! Get it off!”

One of his cronies stepped over and grabbed the ring and screamed in pain as he grabbed it shouting, “It’s red hot!” He grabbed the ring and pulled. As soon as it was off the leader’s

hand he dropped it. It started to glow cherry red even as they watched.

While all of this was going on Clark had been active. Since one of the thugs had stopped to help the leader that left only two to deal with. As soon as he had turned he had assumed a defensive stance and as the first thug came at him he blocked his fist and using a sword hand, chopped the side of his neck right where there was a nerve plexus, which paralyzed that side of the thug's body. A well placed reverse punch to the solar plexus put him down for the count.

While he was dealing with the first thug, the other one had been approaching. Clark received a thought, /Behind you! Knife!/ He spun to face the other assailant just in time to change his stance. The second opponent had a knife raised for a downward stroke. Clark stepped inside the arc of the man's arm and took the impact on his crossed forearms. As soon as contact was made, Clark spun his hands and grasped his opponent's forearm and wrist and used his arm as a lever to flip him on his back. The mugger hit the pavement with a sickening thud.

By this time the leader and his helper had discarded the ring on the ground and were afraid to touch it. Seeing what had happened to the other two men, they decided it was time to finish this. The leader pulled a gun. He shouted, "You've had it, Kent!" But he never got a chance to use the gun. As soon as it cleared his clothing it flared red hot and the rounds in the magazine cooked off, exploding and ruining his hand. He grabbed his wrist and started screaming in pain as blood started pouring from his torn and bleeding hand. Seeing this, the remaining thug ran.

Clark walked over to him and gave the injured man an uppercut which put him out. Clark then pulled out a handkerchief and used it as a tourniquet to stop the bleeding.

Clark then walked over, and taking a sheet of lead foil out of his jacket pocket, reached down and wrapped up the Kryptonite ring. Once this was done, Superwoman landed next to him.

Clark pulled out his cell phone and called 911. The dispatcher answered, "911, what is the nature of your emergency?"

Clark said, "I would like to report an attempted robbery. Corner of 9th and Siegel. One of the muggers is hurt. I think that he will need an ambulance."

The dispatcher asked, "How is the victim?"

Clark's reply took her by surprise, "Oh, I'm okay but they are a little the worse for wear."

Even before he finished speaking he could hear sirens in the distance. He handed the lead encased ring to Superwoman and she hurled it straight up with all of her might and watched with her telescopic vision as it left the atmosphere and continued out into space.

A few seconds later an ambulance drove up and parked. The lead medic popped out of the back, bag in hand. He assessed the situation and started with the thug with the damaged hand by applying a compression bandage and an ice pack. Meanwhile his assistant brought out the stretcher. Between them they managed to load the injured thug onto the stretcher and strapped him down. The lead medic then started an IV and they loaded him into the ambulance. Knowing that this was a crime scene, the medics stood by until the police would dispatch them.

Just as he had been finishing up on him the first of several police cars pulled to a stop. The first officer, spotting Superwoman, walked over to her and asked, "Was it you that took them out?"

It was hard for Lois to hide her pride in Clark as she said, "No, I can't take credit for this one. Clark Kent defended himself. I was prevented from interfering by the fact that one of the thugs had some Kryptonite and I had to keep my distance. It's just as well. As you can see, Mr. Kent is quite capable of defending himself."

The officer said, "Thanks, Superwoman." As he turned to

Clark, Superwoman excused herself and took off. He asked, "Okay, how did this happen?"

Just as Clark was about to reply, Lois came out of the alley and asked, "Is it safe to come out now?"

Clark turned to her and said, "I'm sorry Lois, I should have called you." He turned to the officer, "When I realized that the muggers were about to attack us I had Lois hide in that alley where she would be safe." Lois walked up to him and put an arm around his waist. It wasn't apparent but she was actually helping him to remain on his feet. Clark continued, "Well, they came out of nowhere. I sent Lois off to safety and as they came at me I simply did what I had been trained to do, Tae Kwan Do, I took them out, one at a time. Fortunately, Superwoman came along because the leader pulled a gun. He was too far away for me to deal with but she heated up his gun. She probably just wanted him to drop it, but the cartridges exploded damaging his hand, but she saved my life. Apparently this wasn't a random mugging because when the leader pulled the gun, he called me by name so to me it looks like it was a contract hit disguised to look like a mugging."

The officer that had been interviewing Clark turned to the other officers that had joined them and said, "Cuff 'em and read them their rights." Then he pointed at the thug with the damaged hand and told a young officer, "Roberts, follow the ambulance and as soon as they finish working on him he can be arrested. Cuff him and bring him in as well." Turning back to Clark he said, "I'll have this statement written up when I get back to the station. How soon can you come in to the station and sign it?"

Clark responded, "Would it be okay if we just come in and see Lt. Henderson in the morning?"

The policeman replied, "That would be fine. It sounds to me, from what you've said, it was an attempted homicide, which is his jurisdiction anyhow."

Clark said, "Thank you. I guess we'll go on home then."

Clark and Lois had their arms around the other as they strolled down the street. After they were out of sight Clark visibly weakened and almost collapsed. Lois had to hold him up to keep him from hitting the ground. She led him into an alley and let him go for the instant it took her to spin into her uniform and then she put her arm back around him and took to the sky. She didn't stop until they were in Smallville where she landed on the front porch. Opening the door, she carried Clark inside and laid him on the couch.

Martha and Jonathan had heard the door open and had come out of the kitchen just as Lois was placing Clark on the couch. He was clearly unconscious as she stood up, looking down at him with worry in her eyes.

Martha seeing this, became very concerned. She rushed over to the side of the sofa so that she could get a better look at Clark and was practically screaming at Lois, "What happened?"

Lois spun out of her uniform and knelt next to Clark before answering. "It was Kryptonite. We knew this would happen. We were warned. This was the way he wanted to handle it. I tried to talk him out of it, but he wouldn't listen." Lois was in tears and holding his hand the entire time she was speaking. "We need to keep him warm and let him rest. He made me keep my distance but he went right up to it to wrap it in lead foil so that it wouldn't hurt me. He protected me at the expense of his own safety. I don't know how he stayed on his feet and he even gave a statement to the police making it look like he wasn't affected. One of the thugs pulled a gun. I was so desperate to keep him from shooting Clark that I used more heat vision than was called for and the cartridges exploded." Now she started crying not only from worry about Clark but also from self-recrimination as she added, "He may lose his hand as a result."

Martha took her in her arms and said, "Lois, Honey, you just did what you had to do. That thug brought it on himself. He was

going to harm Clark and you couldn't let that happen. Don't worry about the criminal; just be happy that you saved Clark."

"Oh, Martha, I know, you're right. I just keep thinking that I should have moderated the heat vision a little so that the gun wouldn't explode."

"Now, Lois, look, you had to be sure he couldn't use that gun on Clark, now stop beating yourself up over it. You didn't do it on purpose; you were simply reacting and protecting the man you love. Besides, you haven't had your powers nearly as long as Clark. That kind of control will come with more practice."

With a look of dawning comprehension Lois said, "You're right, Martha, I do love him. We've only been together a few weeks, but I do really love him. I still feel bad about blowing up that gun; he has always tried to avoid hurting anyone, as long as he could help it."

Clark was sweating and pale but he awoke and said, "Lois?"

She grabbed his hand and her anxiety was evident in her voice as she said, "I'm right here!"

He looked around and saw that he was in the living room of the farm house. He asked, "Are Mom and Dad here?"

Jonathan said, "Right here, son. How are you? Lois has been telling us what happened."

Clark tried to relieve their anxiety by saying, "I'll be okay. I just need to rest ... a ... while." With the last word his eyes closed and he fell asleep. Lois continued to kneel there holding his hand.

Martha said, "You know Lois, he loves you too. He'd do anything he could to protect you, you know. He'd even risk his life if he could protect you."

Lois was staring at his face and didn't look away as she replied, "I know that. I just hope he knows that I feel the same way about protecting him."

Jonathan replied to this one, "Trust me, he knows. Now, come on, let's get out of here and let him get some rest. I think Martha could use a hand in the kitchen. I think I'll sit over here and check the Farmer's Almanac to see what kind of weather we can expect over the next couple of weeks."

As Lois placed Clark's hand in a comfortable position on his chest she laughed and said to Jonathan, "You old softie, you're just as worried about him as I am."

He retorted, "Well, what if I am? You two go on and do something useful. I'll keep an eye on Clark. I'll call you if he wakes up."

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An hour later while Martha and Lois were drinking a cup of coffee and chatting in the kitchen they heard Jonathan call. They immediately set the cups down and moved into the living room to see Clark sitting up on the sofa.

Lois sat down next to him and snuggled in close. He put his arm around her shoulder and she grabbed his hand and intertwined her fingers with his. "You gave us a little bit of a scare there."

He said, "I'm sorry I worried you. This wasn't my first exposure to Kryptonite. I'll have to tell you about that experience some time. \*A\* Lois, the Lois from Prime, was the one that rescued me from it. I should be just fine in a little while. You know what would be the most help? It would really help if you could fly me where I could get some sunlight."

Lois thought for a few seconds and then said, "It should still be a few hours before sunset in Hawaii. We could lie out on the beach, together."

With a grin on his face Clark said, "Hmmm, lying out on a beach with Lois in a bikini. I'm not about to turn that offer down. Let's go."

Martha and Jonathan were both laughing as they had observed this by-play.

Martha said, "You kids, run along and have some fun. We

won't wait up."

Lois went upstairs and picked out towels and suits for each of them that they kept there so that they could go to Smallville Lake on the spur of the moment and came back downstairs. Lois put the towels and suits in a daypack which Clark picked up and held. Lois spun into her uniform and Clark, more slowly, changed into his uniform and they left via the front door. They landed in a secluded area just off Waikiki beach and put on civilian clothes over their uniforms. Then they went into a fast food franchise and got a sandwich and drinks and then used a rest room to change into their swim wear and cover-ups. After admiring the statue of Duke Kahanamoku, they walked down to the water's edge, hand in hand, and laid out on their towels. After putting out their towels they sat down in the sun and ate their sandwiches. When he had finished his sandwich Clark laid down.

Lois noted that after just a few minutes Clark was asleep again. She rolled over on her side so that she could look at him while he slept. The look of adoration on her face and in her eyes were evident to all who passed by, even those guys that looked very admiringly at her, taking in her striking figure and beautiful long legs and the looks of jealousy from the other women that didn't quite measure up to her standard.

After a couple of hours Clark woke up. He saw Lois looking at him and said, "Hi. How long have I been asleep?"

Her reply surprised him, "Long enough for me to get horny laying here looking at your nearly naked body. How are you feeling?"

"I feel pretty good. Let me check." He started to listen and he heard her heartbeat, loud and clear. It was a little accelerated so he said, "Well, I can tell just how true your last statement was. Pulse and respiration elevated, pupils dilated. Definite signs."

He rolled over on his side, facing her. As she watched he gave her a very intense appraisal which told her that he was feeling better.

In a sultry tone he said, "Let's go for a dip."

He stood up and, reaching for her hand, helped her to stand. They ran down the beach, hand-in-hand and dove into the surf. They swam out beyond where the surf was starting to break and simply floated for a time. Suddenly, while her back was turned, Clark sank below the surface and a few seconds later Lois yelped and disappeared below the surface too. Clark had grabbed her foot and pulled her down. As soon as she was underwater he pulled her in and initiated a kiss. Her body melded to his and as her lower body came into contact with his she felt very relieved. He was getting back to normal.

After they resurfaced they played in the surf for a while and then they returned to their towels. The sun was going down and people were leaving the beach.

When she felt that a sufficient number had left so that they had a modicum of privacy Lois threw herself on top of him and started kissing him. The body contact and the kiss were turning both of them on, so Clark broke the kiss and said, "Let's get out of here. I think I can fly again. Shall we stop in Smallville or go all the way back to Metropolis?"

"I don't think I can wait until we can get all the way to Metropolis, let's stop in Smallville."

He stood up and they picked up their towels. They restrained themselves, with difficulty, until they were in a secluded area off the beach. In a secret compartment of the daypack their uniforms, all but the boots, were stored. Previously, because of what a Superman in another universe had done, Clark had asked Martha to sew Suit material into boot-like socks. They looked like boots but didn't take up nearly as much space. With them on the uniforms at least looked complete. As soon as Lois and Clark were in uniform, they took off and headed east.

When they got to Smallville, Clark saw that the lights were out in the farm house. As they were landing he led the way into

the barn. Lois giggled and said, "I've never had a literal 'roll in the hay' before. This is gonna be fun!" He silenced her by initiating another kiss as he floated them up to the loft.

After a while they moved to the house and Lois went to Clark's bedroom while Clark slept on the sofa.

In the morning, Martha came downstairs and wasn't surprised to see Clark on the sofa. She went into the kitchen and started breakfast.

Clark awoke to the aroma of coffee brewing and he sat up. A couple of minutes later Lois came downstairs and sat next to him on the sofa, snuggling up to Clark.

Martha came out of the kitchen with a couple of mugs of coffee in hand. She set them down on the coffee table and started chuckling. Turning to Clark she asked, "Why do you insist on sleeping on the sofa?"

Clark was speechless. He had not expected to have to answer this question.

Martha continued, "You know, we aren't naïve. You two might as well be sleeping comfortably together."

Clark started to stutter an excuse but was stopped by Martha. Still chuckling, she reached over and pulled a piece of hay out of Lois' hair. "It's obvious that the two of you can't keep your hands of each other and it's normal. You're getting married in less than a week. We understand."

Jonathan hit the bottom step as Martha was plucking the hay out of Lois' hair and he burst out in laughter. He asked, "You two didn't scare the cows, did you? I guess I'll find out if I they don't give any milk." He started laughing even harder while Lois and Clark both blushed bright red. Still laughing, Jonathan continued, "I agree with Martha, you're getting married in less than a week. We know how it is. When you're here you might as well be comfortable and sleep in the same bed. Besides, that way Martha won't disturb you when she comes down to start breakfast."

This lively banter had all been brought about by their relief that Clark was indeed back to normal, or more precisely, what passed as normal for him. Martha asked, "Who wants breakfast?"

Lois and Clark looked at each other and simultaneously said, "We do!" and broke down in laughter.

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## Chapter 11 – The Hero of 9<sup>th</sup> & Siegel

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name – ALT2

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After breakfast, Lois and Clark dressed and flew back to Metropolis, landing in an alley near the Twelfth Precinct. They spun into their business clothes and entered the precinct.

As soon as they walked in and Sgt. Tartaglia saw them, he stood up and started to clap. When he did the other officers that happened to be in the office looked around and as soon as they spotted Clark they too began to clap.

Clark was embarrassed by all of this attention, but the applause continued until he actually took a bow. Then the patrolmen that had been clapping all came over and clapped him on the back congratulating him on subduing his attackers.

Finally Sgt. Tartaglia sat down and dialed Lt. Henderson. When he set the phone down he said, "Lt. Henderson will see the hero of 9<sup>th</sup> and Siegel. Third door on the left." As he finished speaking he started chuckling at Clark's embarrassment.

They moved down the hall and knocked on Henderson's door. They heard, "Come in!" Opening the door they entered and sat in the chairs in front of his desk.

Bill stood up and handed Clark a piece of paper and asked, "Can I have your autograph?"

Clark, exasperated, said, "Not you too."

Bill looked at him with just a hint of amusement and said,

"That's the statement you gave to the patrolman last night. I need you to sign it."

Clark, taken aback and somewhat embarrassed, said, "Oh, right, yeah, my statement. Sorry, I thought ..."

Bill started to chuckle, "I know what you thought! We all have heard the story. Truth to tell, we're all proud of you. There aren't very many men that could take on three or four thugs and not only walk away from the encounter but capture three of them in the bargain. All of that while knowing that neither Superman nor Superwoman could possibly help out because of the Kryptonite." Bill dropped the bantering tone and became serious as he continued, "This looks more like a contract hit than a mugging to me. You did say that the leader called you by name, didn't you?"

"Yeah, it sure looks like Luthor is serious about getting me out of the way. The word we have is that he wants Lois and he has decided that he has to go through me to get to her."

"I interviewed the thugs that attacked you. The only one that knew someone other than the leader, you know, the one with the gun, was the leader himself. He didn't even have a name, just a description, Englishman, stocky with a Vandyke beard."

Lois spoke up, "An individual fitting that description works for Lex Luthor. I met him when I went there to interview Luthor."

"It would make sense if Luthor was behind it. That's the only way the presence of the Kryptonite can be explained. By the way, what happened to the Kryptonite?"

Clark reached into his pocket and pulled out a piece of lead foil and displayed it to Bill, "I've started carrying around some lead foil, just in case. After subduing the 'muggers' I wrapped the Kryptonite up in a piece of lead foil and gave it to Superwoman. She threw it into space."

"Do you have a name for the Englishman?"

Lois replied, "Nigel St. John."

Bill wrote the name down and then said, "I don't know if that's enough to pull him in for questioning."

Clark said, "It might be worth it, if only to get a picture to show to the thug to get an ID."

Lois spoke up, "Bill, if you don't mind, we are going to lay low until the wedding. We don't want to take any more chances."

Bill replied, "I have your cell numbers if I need to get hold of you. Stay safe, I'm looking forward to seein' you two get hitched on Saturday."

They thanked Bill and left. Next stop was the Planet. As they stepped out of the elevator they spotted Perry out in the bullpen. Lois nodded her head in the direction of his office. Perry nodded his acknowledgement and they all headed in that direction. Once they were in the office and the doors closed, Lois wasted no time in addressing the issue. She said, "Chief, I guess you heard about last night."

Perry replied, "Yeah, I did. Frankly, I'm surprised to see you'all in here. Since you are here, Lois, I want your eyewitness story of the brawl. E-mail it to me. I may not print it, but, I want to read about it all the same. Way to go Clark."

Lois spoke up again, "As soon as we are settled I'll do that. We decided that we needed to come in and let you know what was happening. Luthor is fixated on me. For whatever reason he has decided that he wants me and if he has to have Clark eliminated to get to me then that is what he is going to do. This 'mugging' last night was really a contract hit. Fortunately, Clark knows Tae Kwan Do and was able to defend himself. Also fortunately, Superwoman happened by and dealt with the gun one of the thugs pulled. The wedding is Saturday and we are going into hiding until then. We'll meet you at the church."

"Okay, Darlin', whatever you say. I'll let Jimmy know."

This time Clark spoke up, "Actually, we'll talk to Jimmy. He's doing some research for us and I want to see how that's going. As soon as we've talked to him we'll be leaving."

“Okay Clark, we’ll be seeing the two of you on Saturday then.”

“See you then, Chief.”

They left his office and headed for Jimmy’s desk. When they got there Lois said, “Okay, Jimmy. What do you have for us?”

“Well, I’ve got a lot of the records you asked for, but there’s a whole lot more out there. Here’s what I have so far.” He handed Clark a large stack of printouts. “It’ll be up to you to try to decipher it all. I can’t make heads or tails of it all.”

As Clark took the data Lois said, “We are going to disappear for a few days. We’ll see you at the church.”

Jimmy said, “I can understand, especially after what happened last night. We all heard about it.”

With a smile on her face she said, “You’ll read about it in tomorrow’s edition. I can’t wait to type it up.”

They each did one final check of their e-mail before leaving. They each had an e-mail from Bobby setting up a meet for that evening. Lois put the printouts in her bag and they left.

They arrived at the rendezvous each bearing a bag. Clark had the main course and Lois had the sides, beverage and dessert.

A few minutes later Bobby showed up. He got right to the point, “Okay here’s the scoop. There’s going to be a shipment of gold bullion. It’s coming in to the port, transferred to a truck and then moved to the Philadelphia mint. A group working for Luthor plans to hijack the shipment en route. You might want to let Big Blue and his main squeeze know that the shipment will be traveling along State Route 125 out of Metropolis on Tuesday around noon. The bullion is coming in to the port of Metropolis that morning by container ship. Oh, and by the way, congrats on the nuptials this coming Saturday. You make a handsome couple.”

As they handed over his dinner, Lois said, “Thanks Bobby. Would you like to attend?”

“I’d love to but, I gotta work. I bet the reception will be a gas though. Shame I gotta miss it.”

After Bobby had left they headed back to the apartment. When they arrived they only stayed long enough to pack some clothes and take off for Smallville.

Once at the farm they took their bags up to Clark’s room and settled in before they did their planning. Clark started it off, “This should work out well. We are getting married on Saturday and we are leaving on our honeymoon. We can make sure we are seen in Hawaii on our honeymoon while Superwoman and Superman are preventing the shipment from being hijacked.”

Lois, with a very pensive expression said, “I just had a thought. What if they have Kryptonite like the last time? Maybe we shouldn’t be too close together. That way if one of us is hit with it, the other can do a rescue.”

“That’s an excellent point. We probably should practice that kind of caution whenever we are working on something together. I think that in a natural disaster we should be okay being close. It’ll just be when we have to deal with the criminal element that we’ll need to exercise that kind of caution. We wouldn’t want to both be caught in the same trap.”

Lois pulled out the printouts that Jimmy had provided and they started going through the information. Since they were both super they sped through the data in record time.

They both went through all of the data separately and then compared notes.

They found a number of divisions of LexCorp which had very cryptic names with money moving back and forth so many times that the trail became fuzzy.

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Saturday

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It was a lovely, although small wedding. Perry gave away the bride and then sat down with Alice, Lucy was Lois’ Maid of

Honor and Denise from Research was a bridesmaid. Jimmy was best man and Frank from Travel was a groom’s man.

Lois and Clark had brought Jonathan and Martha with them when they had returned to Metropolis. Lois’ mother was there to help her with the gown. The reason Perry was there to give her away was the fact that Lois’ father had been an Army Medical Corps doctor, rank of Colonel, in Viet Nam and had been killed a short time after Lucy was born.

Clark had told Lois that he wanted to go to Brazzaville and see Jean Luc Artois to purchase the wedding bands, but, with all that had been happening even they hadn’t been able to do that for all their superpowers. So the rings that they exchanged were simple gold bands. When it was time for the kiss, they both had to concentrate to make sure that they didn’t float.

Later in the evening the bride and groom left for their honeymoon. They had told everyone that they were going to Hawaii. They didn’t actually leave until the next day. They flew Jonathan and Martha home first and took their luggage with them. After spending a night in Smallville they flew to Hawaii and checked in to their hotel.

On Tuesday, before sunup in Hawaii, they flew back to Metropolis and picked up the shipment when it arrived in port.

They hovered together so high that they were within the cloud cover. It was supposed to be raining all day in the Metropolis area and they used the cloud cover to their advantage. With their enhanced vision the clouds were not a problem.

They watched as the bullion was off loaded. They saw the precautions that were being taken, armed guards, armored vehicle, and security convoy. When they moved out, Superman and Superwoman followed, hovering directly above it.

When the truck reached a remote stretch of SR125 they saw that the road was blocked by an overturned semi trailer. Their suspicions were immediately raised. The next thing that happened cinched it. From a dirt road on the side a truck pulled out behind the bullion vehicle, preventing it from backing out of the trap. They examined the immediate vicinity and saw an ambush had been set up with armed thugs scattered along the roadside. Clark pulled Lois to him and said, “I see at least one box that I can’t see through. It must be lead lined and probably contains Kryptonite. Here’s what I have in mind . . .”

They watched as the ambush was sprung. The thugs came out of their concealed locations on the side of the road and several exited the truck that had blocked the road behind. Superman swooped down and started to remove the weapons from the attackers. One of them standing toward the back pulled out a lead box. He said, “Stop right there, Superman. If you don’t it’ll be just too bad for you. Know what this is?”

“Yes, I see that you have a lead box. Is that supposed to frighten me?”

“Maybe not the box, but what’s in it you should.” He started to reach to open the box.

Suddenly he screamed and dropped the box as it turned red hot and started to melt. When it did it completely enclosed the chunk of Kryptonite in the soft flowing metal. As quickly as it had started to glow red, when Superman stepped over to it and blew on it with his super cold breath, it solidified and started to form frost on the outside.

Superwoman made her appearance and helped to finish disarming the thugs while Superman removed the overturned semi trailer. She turned the thugs over to the guard detachment for detention.

The commander of the security detachment came up to Superman just as Superwoman joined him and said, “I don’t know how to thank the two of you. Do you know who they are?”

“We believe that they are members of a gang that was hired for this job. The plan was to hijack the bullion, melt it down, recast it and resell it.”

“Well, thanks to you two, that won’t be happening.”

“Commander ...”

He was interrupted at this point, “I’m detective Lieutenant James.”

“Well, Lt. James, if you don’t mind terribly we will take that,” Superman pointed to the lead blob which encased the Kryptonite, “and dispose of it. I don’t want it to fall into the wrong hands again.”

Lt. James said, “Be my guest. I have no need of it.”

“Thank you, sir. We’ll be going now.” Superman picked up the lead blob and he and Superwoman took off. When they had traveled a short distance he projected a thought, /I’m going to go up into the ionosphere and launch this out of the system. Be back in a second./

She thought back, /I’ll go with you. I want to watch as you flex those muscles of yours./

When he looked at her he could see her wicked little grin and smiled in return and thought, /We can flex some muscles together when we get back to Hawaii./

As he watched he saw the color climb up her neck and into her cheeks and saw her breathing become a little ragged.

The thought she sent back to him carried along with it a lot of side channel emotions. Prominent among them were desire and joy and it hit him with an almost physical impact. /I’m looking forward to just that ... husband mine./

They spent a week in Hawaii for their honeymoon.

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A few days after reporting back in to work, Clark’s phone at the Planet started ringing. Picking it up he said, “Daily Planet, Clark Kent.”

Recognizing the voice on the other end, Clark got a grin on his face.

“Hi Kent, Bobby here. Got some information for you. You know that specialty pizza place, Elizabeth’s? Bring two deluxe pizzas on whole wheat crust to our previous meeting place, 6:30 this evening.”

As Clark hung-up the phone he turned to Lois and said, “That was Bobby. We are meeting him tonight and we have to bring two deluxe pizzas from Elizabeth’s on whole wheat crusts.”

Lois laughed and said, “He must be on a health food kick!”

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They were waiting on the bench when Bobby showed up. Sliding onto the bench next to Clark, he said, “I see you brought the pizzas. Okay, here’s the story. There is going to be a new string of fires in the Hobbs Bay area. Luthor wants to build a marina. Like I said, from what I hear they’ve hired some hi-tech firebugs to do the job. These guys can start fires without the use of accelerants so the fact that it is arson can’t be proved. They call themselves the Toasters. You might want to let Big Blue know what’s going down. Here’s the new info. Luthor is using an intermediary, the Metros. Big Blue is going to have to stop the Toasters and get them to rat on the Metros and then work up the chain, that is, if they will be willing to talk. They might be too afraid of him to talk.” Clark picked up the pizzas and handed them to Bobby. Bobby said, “Thanks. Oh, by the way, you make a lovely couple. Congratulations.”

Lois said, “Thanks, Bobby. We \*are\* happy.”

Bobby whistled as he walked away.

Once they were home, it was Clark’s turn to make dinner. He asked Lois to go into the living room and watch some TV while he worked because he wanted to surprise her.

When he finished cooking he took a couple of seconds to set the table, even putting up a couple of candles. Since he was about to serve the dinner he called her over and pulled out her chair for her as she sat. He lit the candles with two quick bursts of heat vision and then went into the kitchen to get the meal.

He had prepared a linguini with red sauce and meatballs with

sides of peas and carrots. He opened a bottle of Chianti and poured two glasses. He lifted his glass in a toast, “Happy Anniversary. We’ve been married a full month today.”

She gave a shy giggle and clinked her glass to his before taking a sip. They both enjoyed the meal and as they were finishing up Clark said, “Leave room for dessert.”

With an arched eyebrow she said, “What would that be, pray tell?”

He replied with a wicked grin, “It’s a surprise.” He disappeared into the kitchen and reappeared with a plate of cannoli.

Lois laughed hysterically and said, “After what Bill told us?”

Clark replied, “Well, you seemed to really enjoy them and they’re Italian so I figured that they’d go well with the pasta.”

Lois replied, “I did enjoy them, but, what about that fertility symbol thing?”

“Well, that’s just an old wives’ tale. You can’t put any stock in it.” After a minute he continued, “You know, tomorrow I have to meet Herb at the Alamo in San Antonio. I really want you there. What do you think about Mom and Dad?” He couldn’t get over how easily he had said that. In the time he had been here he had really come to think of them in those terms.

Lois suggested, “Why don’t we do this, I’ll fly to Smallville and when Herb shows up you bring him there.”

“Okay, that should work. I really think that we should all participate in this decision.” Lois moved over and sat in his lap and, bringing her arms up and around his neck, moved in for a kiss.

When she broke from the kiss she said, “No matter what he says, you’re mine and I’m not letting you go.”

“I don’t think we have anything to worry about. Herb was the one that suggested these missions.”

With an arched eyebrow and a wicked little grin she said, “Let’s clean up so that we can have the real dessert. Let’s see if there’s any validity to that old wives’ tale.”

He was stunned, “You mean that you’re willing to have children?”

In reply she picked up another one of the cannoli and sticking out her tongue, licked some of the filling out of the end. Keeping it on the end of her tongue, Lois slowly brought it into her mouth and sucked it in, closing her eyes in rapturous delight as she did so. Opening her eyes, she opened her lips wide and stuck the end of the cannolo in her mouth and sucked on it.

Mesmerized by her, Clark started breathing deeply and sweating.

She finished the cannoli and looking at him said, “After that meal and that delicious dessert, what can I say? With you, I’m willing. Let’s go, big boy.”

It took them all of five seconds to clean up and move to the bedroom.

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## Chapter 12 – Herb Shows Up

May 8, 1994 at the Alamo

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name – ALT2

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Clark was standing in front of the gates looking up at the Alamo thinking <In the movies it always looked so much bigger,> when Herb approached.

Herb, seeing that Clark was alone, started the conversation, “Truly, I was not expecting to find you alone this time, my boy. Can you tell me what happened? Did you succeed in this mission as you have in all of the others or did you fail? Are you and Lois Lane of this universe together? I must admit, this doesn’t correspond with what I know about this universe’s future

history.”

Clark had turned as he had heard Herb approach. He gave his question a few seconds consideration and started to walk away from the Alamo before answering, “Well, Herb, in a manner of speaking, yes, we are. Would you be willing to take a little trip? We’d like to have a meeting.”

“My, my, that would be unusual. Are you sure you want to meet with me?”

“Absolutely!”

Herb nodded his agreement. “Well, okay, if you insist. Where are we to meet?”

“At the Kent farm in Smallville.”

“That makes some sense. Shall we use the TaDT?”

Clark’s stroll had taken them to a secluded area where he spun into the Suit before he said, “That shouldn’t be necessary. I can fly us.” Before Herb had a chance to object Clark picked him up and took off. Herb hastily grabbed his derby and held it in place as they took off. The flight only took a few minutes and they landed in the Kent farm front yard. Clark spun out of the Suit as he led the way to the door.

When they entered Lois was there with the Kents. Herb looked around and noted the absence of another Clark. It didn’t take a Sherlock Holmes to observe all of these clues and come up with the correct deduction. Herb had been to this universe’s future and had discovered that a Lois and Clark were married and that Utopia had been achieved; however, it was impossible to determine just who the Clark had been. Here was the answer to that question. It had to be the Clark from 36, the Clark he had been working with for so long. Herb felt great satisfaction in the knowledge that once again, Clark had succeeded in his mission.

Herb had deduced all of this within just a few seconds of entering the home and seeing the Kent family which included Lois and only a single Clark. He also noted the obvious affection displayed between the two. The family unity was very apparent. It certainly appeared as though this mission had succeeded far beyond his wildest dreams. He had expected to eventually find a universe where Lois was alone but to have the added benefit of the elder Kents, now \*that\* was a bonus.

Pausing just inside the door Herb said, “Please excuse me for a moment, I have an errand to run. Back in a jiff.” He pulled out his TaDT and entered a code. A portal opened in front of him and he stepped through.

When Herb did this it took almost everyone by surprise. Clark, being used to this disappearing act of Herb’s was unruffled, but there was a collective gasp from Lois, Martha and Jonathan.

A few seconds later, just as Clark was about to start an explanation, another portal opened and Herb stepped back into the living room again.

Calmly, as if nothing unusual had occurred, Clark said, “Herb, please allow me to introduce, Jonathan and Martha Kent and of course you know Lois.” He chuckled, “Well, maybe not this Lois but Lois Lane in general.”

Herb said, “Mr. and Mrs. Kent, it is a distinct pleasure to meet you. Lois, my dear, you are as lovely as ever. Now that we’re all here shall we get down to the details?”

Clark was stunned. He asked, “What do you mean, Herb?”

Herb replied, “Clark, I’ve been to this universe’s future. I knew that Lois and Clark were married. I didn’t know until we arrived that it was you and Lois that were married. Now we need to discuss the details of how to handle your home universe.”

Lois stood up and moved over to Clark’s side, put her arm around his waist and asked, “You’re not going to try and take him away from me, are you?”

“Oh, my, my, my, no, my dear, I wouldn’t think of doing such a thing. No, no, my concern is for his home universe. I realize that Clark is now settled here and I am happy for the two of you.

No, we have a universe that is supposed to have a Clark Kent/Superman that if he stays here will not. I have a very unusual proposition to make.”

Martha spoke up, “Before we get too involved, would anyone like some lemonade?”

Herb said, “Why, yes, that would be delightful.”

Lois and Clark both agreed.

After lemonade had been served all around, Martha asked, “How do you propose to have Clark take care of his universe without leaving us?”

Herb sat his glass on the coffee table before he spoke. “What I propose is this, since we have the ability to move between the universes, that I give Lois and Clark the means of doing just that.”

Herb pulled a second TaDT from his pocket and handed it to Clark as he said, “Lois, please put your hand on the device as well as Clark.” She moved to comply. Herb brought out his device and hit a couple of buttons and the TaDT that they were holding came to life. Once this was done he continued, “That device can now only be operated by either or both of you. When I departed a bit ago, I returned to TTEMPO. Once I realized that it was actually you that was married to Lois and since I had already determined your future here, we constructed this device.”

Clark asked, “Just how long were you actually gone?”

Herb smiled and said, “The construction and programming of this device took five days.”

A look of awe and wonder blossomed on the features of the Kents as he said this. Martha said, “But, you were only gone a matter of seconds.”

Herb chuckled, “The wonders of time travel. Sometimes it can be confusing.” With a wry grin he continued, “Especially when you meet yourself coming and going. I’m sure you remember that Clark. Well now, this device has been locked on Clark’s home universe and this one. The time stamp is set to five minutes after we left his universe for his missions and the current time for this one. When the device is activated a portal will open between the two universes, but only these two for you two. The board decided that they only wanted trained agents moving randomly through the universes. When you pass through, you will be at the same place you left from, uh, that is the last place the device was activated. Let’s say that you activate it here today and move to the other universe. When you chose to return you will come back here, five minutes after you left and the same will pertain going in the other direction as well.”

Herb picked up his lemonade and took a sip before continuing, “I must say, that is excellent lemonade. Thank you, Mrs. Kent.”

Martha smiled and said, “Please, call us Jonathan and Martha.”

After taking another sip, Herb replied, “Thank you, Martha. That is truly excellent lemonade. Now, let’s get back to business. By providing you with the means of traversing the universes and setting the device to track the time you will be able to move back and forth between the two with no time lapse in the trips. The TaDT will do all of the work, it will track the time and increment appropriately. Now, we need to decide what story you will give for Lois Lane’s sudden reappearance in your universe.”

Lois and Clark both heaved very relieved sighs. They weren’t going to be separated. His arm had gone around her and he pulled her in tight.

Feeling the need to completely fill Herb in, Clark said, “Herb, there is something rather special about this Lois. The incident at the wishing well was somewhat different in this universe. The red Kryptonite did more than transfer Clark’s powers to Lois. It modified her physiology. Lois is fully Kryptonian. That has not been the case in any of the other universes. Elsewhere Lois has been Earth human until the Kryptonian aura made the genetic

changes. We are both super-powered and fully genetically compatible.”

Herb rubbed his hands together before he said, “My boy, since this Lois is already super powered, you will not need the Star Sapphire Kryptonite and the red Kryptonite that activates it. I would like to request that you give it to me. I can put it to a very good use. It will provide other Lois Lanes and other Earth human spouses with powers. Incidentally, we have located that same gem in other universes as well as the red Kryptonite that activates it so we might just have enough for a number of generations. All of the children will have the powers, but, the spouses of the children will need the pendants.”

Lois, Martha and Jonathan looked at each other, further bewildered by this discussion of different kinds of Kryptonite. Then they looked over at Clark, who appeared to understand all this and nodded in acceptance. Lois made a mental note to have Clark explain later.

Not apparently noticing the byplay, Herb continued talking to Clark, “You now have the means of moving from one universe to the other. You have successfully integrated yourself into this universe, but, how do you propose to explain Lois’ reappearance after a five year absence in the other universe?”

Jonathan spoke up for the first time, “I’ve heard of cases of amnesia that have lasted for years. If that isn’t adequate there is also the possibility that she was hospitalized for an illness for the five years.”

Clark said, “There’s a problem with that, though. Lois did reappear for a brief time in 1996. Everyone will remember that because she was there when I was revealed to be Superman, in fact she’s the one that helped me create my Superman persona. The staff at the Planet, in particular, will remember her. That would eliminate the five year hospitalization as a possibility.”

Martha spoke up, “I would have to agree with you on that. Besides, she looks too healthy for having been in the hospital for five years, Jonathan! I think that the amnesia ploy would be the best. What were the circumstances of her disappearance?”

Clark replied, “It was 1992 and we were in the jungles of the Congo investigating illegal guns being provided to the rebels by Lex Luthor. There is one aspect to it though; she was undercover as soon as she left the airport so no one knows that it was Lois Lane. I was undercover from the time I arrived, so no one knows that Clark Kent was even in the country, let alone that he teamed up with Lois. She did call the Planet in Metropolis and told Perry White that she had a partner but no names were given and I never really notified him of her passing. I did report her as missing. I left it a mystery because that was how it was when I hired on at the Planet. As Herb always says, ‘History must be maintained.’” And he started chuckling.

Chuckling at having his own words quoted back at himself, Herb replied, “Jolly good, yes, history must be maintained. When Tempus kidnapped Lois from Prime and dropped us both off in your universe we had no choice but to contact you and that required that she appear to have returned from the missing, however briefly. If I recall correctly, at that time we gave the story that she had suffered from amnesia. It should be fairly simple to explain her re-disappearance.”

Martha said, “Well, there you go! Somehow her partner disappeared; she was injured and lost her memory. She was found by some friendly people and nursed back to health and regained her memory but she relapsed. Now she’s completely cured.”

Clark turned and looked at Lois and asked, “What do you think? How’s your memory?”

Lois replied, “I think I may have some blanks and still not remember some people. We have another problem though. How are we going to handle Superwoman?”

“Wow, I hadn’t thought about that! We did really well together on that hijacking case. You watching my back when they

had the Kryptonite worked out perfectly. In my universe there is no Superwoman, but, everyone knows that I’m Superman. If we don’t announce that you are super, there could be people that will try to kidnap you to get to me.”

“We could save the fact that I’m super as a surprise. I could pretend to be normal until I’m called on to reveal what I can do.”

“The staff at the Planet will be expecting a ‘normal’ Lois. You do wear a mask as part of your super costume. That should continue to hide your identity. We could make this work! I’ll bring you ‘back from the Congo’ where you had been hospitalized. I have a doctor friend that can work with us to provide documents.”

After doing some more planning they decided to make a test trip. Lois and Clark, after receiving sufficient directions from Herb, activated the TaDT to open a portal between the universes and stepped through. They found themselves in the abandoned Kent homestead in – Alt 1.

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### Chapter 13 – Smallville – Lois and Lana Thursday, March 13, 1997

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Universal Locator Designation  
Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 036  
Local designation – Alt 1  
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A few seconds later another portal opened and Herb stepped through. He checked the display on his TaDT and confirmed the time and location. He said, “Well, my boy, here we are in your home universe. Might I suggest that since you still own the Kent farm that you use this as a base of operations.” Looking around, Herb muttered, “It might need to be cleaned up a bit and repairs done, but it is still your home.”

Clark looked at Lois and asked, “What do you think?”

Lois said, “I’ve always liked the time I’ve spent in this house, with the Kents. You still have your apartment in Metropolis, don’t you?”

“Yes, I do, but, I’ve been thinking, in this universe everyone knows that Clark Kent is Superman. I don’t need to live in commuting distance of the Planet. I could give up the apartment and we could live here. We can commute to the Planet from here just as easily as from Clinton Ave.”

Turning to Herb, Clark said, “Well Herb, it sure looks like the device works. I think that we will take some time to fix up the farm house and get it ready for occupancy and then return to the other universe. What do you say, Lois, want to spend the night here before we go back?”

Walking over to him and putting her arms around him she said, “As long as I’m with you, I don’t care where we are.”

Herb said, “Well, Clark, Lois, I think I’ll be heading back to the office. I’ll stop by occasionally and check on you. Ciao.”

Clark stepped over to Herb and taking his hand and shaking it said, “Herb, I really don’t know how to thank you.”

Lois also stepped up to him and planting a kiss on his cheek said, “That goes for me too. Having a super Clark is a dream come true. Our soul mates connection is every bit as strong as what I had with my old Clark. I couldn’t be happier.”

Herb blushed and replied, “I am very happy that these missions are now successfully completed. In the course of these missions you helped a number of other couples and found your soul mate. I may just look around until I find another Clark in similar circumstance and take him on similar missions. That will be something to consider. I think I’ll bring it to the board.” Herb pulled out his TaDT and programmed in a time and destination, a portal opened and he stepped through and was gone.

Clark turned to Lois and said, “Before we start, let’s get you back among the living. Let’s fly to Brazzaville and go see Dr.

M'benga or Dr. Bashir.”

“Sounds like fun. I haven't been in Brazzaville since the investigation. What time will we be getting there?”

Clark looked at where the sun was and said, “On second thought, it'll be the middle of the night in Brazzaville. Let's work on cleaning this place up then we can go.”

She said, “Sounds like a plan.”

“I'll go into town and pick up some cleaning supplies. While I'm gone you can decide what furniture you want. I'll be right back.” He took off and flew into town and purchased some supplies. In the process of getting reacquainted with the local merchants who had known him all his life, he created his back story for returning to the Kent farm. They didn't know whether to be happy or concerned about this until he told them that he would not be announcing to the world that he was moving back home.

While he was in town Lana spotted him coming out of the market just as she was coming out of Maisie's Café. When she saw what he was carrying she deduced that he was planning to clean up the Kent farmhouse and decided to drive out there.

When she drove up she noted the run down condition of the house and thought, <It's going to take a while to fix this place up. I wonder if he's getting it ready to sell?> Parking and getting out of the car she walked up to the porch. When she did she could hear him talking to someone. Her curiosity being aroused she stopped moving and just listened. Thinking that she recognized the other voice and she started fuming. \*She\* was back.

Stepping up to the door she knocked. When she did she heard a gasp and then, “Lana! I'll be right there.” There were some scuffling sounds just before Clark answered the door. “Lana, I wasn't expecting you. How have you been?”

Lana challenged, “Where is she? I know she's here, I heard her.”

Resigned, Clark said, “You might as well come out.”

Lois stepped into the room and Clark said, “Lana Lang I'd like you to meet Lois Lane-Kent.”

At this statement Lana's countenance fell. She said, “You got married!?!?!? How could you!?!?!?”

Clark riposted, “Lana, \*you\* broke our engagement!”

“I know I did, but, to \*her\*? How \*could\* you? She's the reason we broke up!”

Clark said, “No, Lana, she's not the reason. You broke the engagement because I went public with what I could do. Lana, after you broke the engagement, Lois left again, but, the damage was already done. I had gone public, which is exactly what you had objected to. The genie was already out of the bottle and there was no going back. Like I said, Lois left, but I knew, in my gut, that actually she was right. We've known for a long time that it would never work between us. You always wanted me to deny what and who I am. To stand by and allow evil things to happen when I could prevent them. That's not who I am and I could never live that way.”

“But Clark, we had an understanding! \*We\* were supposed to be married. Maybe we could have worked it out.”

“Lana, people change. I've changed. I decided that I had to find Lois again, so I went searching for her and finally I found her.”

Lana stepped up to Clark and started beating on his chest, emphasizing what she was saying, as if physical violence would change things. “Clark, I want things back the way they were. Send her back wherever she came from and come back to me.”

Clark grabbed her hands, more to prevent her from injuring herself than for any other reason, and spoke calmly to her. “I can't do that Lana. It never would have worked out with us. I just couldn't keep on denying what I am and what I can do. Lana, like I said, Lois and I are ... \*married\*. I'm sorry. We've been married for a little while now. We can't go back to the way things were. It's too late for us. You have to move on. I have.”

Lana collapsed in a heap at his feet crying hysterically.

Muttering over and over “Why, Clark, why? Why?”

Clark knelt down and helped her to her feet and assisted her into the one serviceable chair in the living room. He set her in the chair and tried to soothe her by stroking her hair and patting her back. After a time she seemed to settle down. “Why didn't you tell me beforehand? You could have called. It might have been better that way than just seeing you in town.”

“Look, Lana, for the life of me I don't know why you're acting like this. You broke off our engagement over a year ago. Why do you think I have to check in with you whenever I come to town?”

“It's not that. I ... I've been having second thoughts about it, about us, and I have been thinking that maybe ... maybe we could try again. But, then I get here to talk to you and she's here. She's the one that broke us up, don't you realize that? How could you do that to me?” Lana broke down and started to weep.

Kneeling down in front of her Clark took her hands in his, and speaking like he would to a distraught child said, “Lana, we had problems with our relationship right from day one. Then when I finally told you what I could do you insisted that I hide it. You didn't want me to do anything to help anyone. You wanted me to hide out here in Smallville and pretend that I was a ‘normal’ man. Lana, that's not me. It's not something I can do. I have these powers for a reason and I feel an obligation to use them for the good of humanity. I can't just sit on the sidelines and watch the world pass by. When I played football in high school, the time I hated the most was when I had to sit on the bench and watch. I \*need\* to participate. You would have benched me and we both would have been miserable. More accurately it would have made me miserable and I in turn would have made you miserable. The only real togetherness we would have had would have been our common misery and that is no way to live.”

Lana had been openly weeping the entire time he had been talking. She sniffed a couple of times. Clark handed his hanky to her. She dabbed at her eyes and wiped her nose and said “Maybe I could have learned to put up with it.”

“Lana, you and I both know that isn't the case. Your fear both for me and I think actually your fear of me would have prevented that. I know what you're going to say, you don't fear me, but, really, I've seen it in your eyes. It was too strong for you to hide completely. Even with all that, I still trusted you with my secret. Now that I've been exposed it really doesn't matter, but the question is, could you have put up with the notoriety of being married to Superman? I'm sincerely sorry that this happened this way. I never meant it to. You had broken off our engagement. I found Lois again a few months ago and fell in love. I was going to give you a call and tell you but, well, here you are. Lana, it's this way, Lois accepts me for who and what I am. I'd like it very much if we could at least remain friends and I'd sincerely like you to be a friend to Lois.”

“Clark, I still love you. How can I get past that?”

“I don't know, Lana. I can only hope that you can change that love into like. I still like you, Lana. You were my first real girlfriend and the first person I trusted with my secret. We were engaged to be married, for heaven's sake! That must say something for how I feel about you.”

“I guess so, but we were planning a future together. What am I going to do now? I've been at loose ends ever since we broke up. I was starting to think that we could get back together.” A fresh set of sobs started.

“Lana, you're going to have to find some ‘normal’ guy that can make you happy. What about Pete Ross? He's liked you for years. He just hasn't said anything because he was my best friend. Frankly, I'm surprised he hasn't said anything before now. I'm sure he knows that you broke off our engagement. My guess would be that maybe he has been thinking like you, that we might

get back together. Now that Lois and I are married, that won't happen. I'm sure that when Pete finds out that we're married he'll jump on the chance to go out with you."

"Pete and I have always been friends. Actually, I was wondering why he didn't ask me out. You really think that's why?"

"I'd almost stake my life on it."

"There could be another reason as well. The last time I talked to him he told me that he had an application in for a new job. Maybe he has been holding off because he's waiting to hear back on it. We were just going to start getting this place back in shape because we are going to use it as a get-away location. That's why I was in town. I was buying some cleaning supplies. It won't take us long to get the place in shape. Tell you what, why don't we do this, Lois and I will invite you and Pete to dinner. Separately, not as a couple, and see if Pete says anything."

"Clark, are you sure? You'd do that for me?"

"Lana, I'd do just about anything I could for you, you know that."

She got a kind of watery smile on her face as she replied, "Yeah, I guess you would at that."

"All right then, it's settled. Lois and I'll be inviting you and Pete to dinner. Let's say Friday night at 7:30. How's that?"

Her spirits appeared to be picking up as she replied, "That'll be fine."

Lois had been standing off on the side as Clark had been handling Lana. She stepped forward now and extended her hand to Lana. Clark stepped aside and said "Lana, I'd like you to meet Lois Lane-Kent, my wife."

Lana took Lois' hand and slowly shook it. Lois said "Lana, I'm sure Clark is right and everything will work out. You can count on me for anything you need to help you."

Lana thought about this offer before she replied, "Lois all I really need is for you to make him happy. That's all I really ever wanted for him."

Lois looking over at Clark said "He is and I plan to keep him that way. Now we need to get you to the same state, happy. Could you come over and help prepare the meal on Friday? I'm a pretty decent cook, but, it'll give you an opportunity to show Pete just what a good cook you are. The way to a man's heart is through his stomach, you know."

Lana was really seeing Lois for the first time and seeing her as possibly a friend. She nodded and said, "Sure, I can do that as long as you're sure."

Laughing, Lois responded "Trust me, I'd appreciate the help."

"Well, okay then. I'll come over a couple of hours in advance."

"Just let me know what you want to prepare and Clark will pick everything up."

"Okay, I'll call you tomorrow with the list."

"I'll look forward to your call." Lois said.

Lana looked back and forth between Clark and Lois. She also noted his very obvious affection for Lois and hers for him. He was giving Lois a look that he had never bestowed on her. Lana was realizing the correctness of this decision and was starting to accept it. Reaching out she took Clark's hand. Totally unexpectedly she reached out with her other hand and took Lois' hand and brought their hands together. "I'm happy that you found someone that can make you happy. I'm sorry it wasn't me, but, you're right. We probably would have been miserable together. I'll probably be happier with Pete. It's worth a try anyhow. I'll call you tomorrow. Will you have called Pete by then?"

Clark laughed "Count on it. One way or another, he'll be here. I think that all I'll need to tell him is that you're going to be here and he'll show up with bells on."

Lana laughed at the picture that engendered in her mind and

said "Normal clothes would be preferable."

All three laughed together.

Lois put an arm around Lana's shoulder and directed her into the bathroom as she said, "I think some repairs are needed. Let's go into the bathroom. Do you have any mascara in your bag?"

Lana put her arm around Lois and said, "Thanks, I guess I really do need to do the repairs. I probably look like a witch."

"We'll have you presentable in no time." They moved into the bathroom.

After sharing some time together during the repairs and some 'girl talk' wherein Lana told Lois some anecdotes about Clark, Lana was presentable enough to go back into town. She was headed home so that she could plan the menu for Friday.

Through the judicious use of their super speed they had the house presentable by mid afternoon. By the end of the day they had furnished the entire house. One of the benefits of living in a small community was the availability of service people on short notice. Another was the notoriety of being Superman so they had power restored before the end of the day.

Once the inside was finished, Clark took it upon himself to repaint the exterior while Lois finished up inside and made the house a home.

That night they went to the Talon and caught the latest James Bond Flick – 'Tomorrow Never Dies'.

Friday night couldn't have gone better.

Pete, seeing the obvious green light that Clark was giving him, asked Lana, "'Tomorrow Never Dies' is playing at the Talon, would you like to go see it tomorrow night?"

Lana replied, "Why, Pete Ross, are you asking me out on a date?"

Pete replied, "Yeah, I guess I am. Do you want to go out with me?" He had a hopeful expression on his face.

Lois chimed in, "You'll enjoy it Lana. Clark and I went the other night. One of the leads looks a lot like me, would you believe? Unfortunately she dies. Oh, well."

Lana laughed, "I'm just wondering what took Pete so long to ask. Pete, you knew that I broke my engagement to Clark over a year ago."

"I wasn't sure how Clark would take it or if you guys would get back together and I have this job application in that I haven't heard back on yet."

Lana laughed again and said, "No need to excuse yourself, Pete. I'm just glad you finally asked. Can I get a large tub of popcorn that we can share?"

With a relieved tone in his voice Pete said, "Anything you want. I'll even get you a giant soda pop if you want."

In a bantering tone she replied, "Only if it's diet. I have to watch my figure you know."

That set the tone for the rest of the evening and everyone had a good time. It looked like things would work themselves out.

Early the next morning Lois and Clark flew to Brazzaville.

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## Chapter 14 – Back from the Dead

March 15, 1997

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Universal Locator Designation

Local designation – Alt 1

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On Saturday, early in the morning, at 4 AM, Clark and Lois took off and flew to Brazzaville. They made a brief stop at Clark's apartment in Metropolis to pick up Lois' ID from her luggage, which Clark had brought back with him from the Congo.

After landing on the outskirts of the city they spun into civilian clothes. Lois added a hat with a veil so that she wouldn't be easily recognized. They got a cab and asked to be taken to the

hospital. When they got there Clark asked to see Doctor M'benga. The receptionist paged him. When he arrived in the lobby he recognized Clark immediately and walked over to him to shake his hand. Lois had faded into the background. Even though she had, Dr. M'benga took notice of her and gave her a quizzical look.

Clark greeted him, "Doctor M'benga, it has been some time since I saw you last. Is there somewhere that we can go to speak in private?"

"Of course, my friend. This way." He led them to an examination room and closed the door after they had entered. He then asked, "What can I do for you?"

Clark began, "Doctor, if you recall I was here on an undercover assignment when that terrible incident occurred. Do you recognize me for who I am now?"

"Why yes, I do. At the time I had no way to know that you were Superman. It has only been since you revealed yourself that I became aware of just who you really were."

"I had my reasons, Doctor. At that time it was imperative that I remain unknown as Superman. The unfortunate incident that occurred then happened because I could not afford to reveal myself at that time. It now happens that I need my partner back. You know that I would not make any request which would compromise your ethics or break the law; however, I am going to ask you to bend them slightly. I have a somewhat unusual request to make. I would like you to alter your records. I need you to remove the death certificate for Mrs. King and create a false record stating that she has been under your care first for a coma and then, on an out-patient basis, for amnesia."

Doctor M'benga said, "But, that would presume that Mrs. King did not, in fact, die."

Clark called Lois over and said, "Doctor, this is Mrs. King." Lois removed her hat and veil.

Doctor M'benga was shocked when he saw Lois. He asked, "How can this be? I \*saw\* her die!"

"Doctor, I realize that it is rather confusing. In actuality this is another woman and yet she is the same woman, however, that is not what is important here. Let's just say that we need to complete our assignment and that your help is needed in order for us to do that. We need to establish a motive for Mrs. King's disappearance for the period of the last five years. I am making this request as Superman but if need be I can ask Mayor D'Arnet to make the request. This is a matter of highest importance."

Doctor M'benga was overcoming his surprise. He said, "Well, Superman, I understand. This is \*highly\* unusual, but I will do as you ask. How soon do you need these records to be completed?"

Clark replied, "At your earliest convenience. It is \*extremely\* important."

"I will begin working on them immediately. I should have them complete within ... three days. It will take that long to generate five years of reports."

"Doctor M'benga you have my eternal gratitude. What do you need from us?"

"A set of fingerprints might be necessary."

"I don't think that will actually be needed. As I said, this is actually the same woman so they will be identical."

Doctor M'benga was blown away by this statement. He blurted out, "But, how could that be? No two people have identical fingerprints."

Clark spoke up, "Trust me, Doctor, you do not need a new set of prints. Hers will match. At the time we were here we were under the names of Linda King and Charles King. You now know that my name is Clark Kent. Please allow me to introduce Lois Lane; however, your records should be in the name of Linda King. You're going to be seeing her real name in the Daily Planet along with mine."

They could see that Doctor M'benga was bowing to the inevitable. He said, "I will prepare the records as you requested."

"Thank you, Doctor M'benga. That will be a tremendous help. We'll check back in a few days, if that will be okay with you."

"That will be fine; I'll have the packet ready for you to pick up."

Clark thanked the doctor and they exited after Lois put her hat and veil back on. Clark then decided to stop by and visit Jacques. He had an idea that he wanted to follow up on. He decided that he needed to talk some things over with Lois so he suggested, "Why don't we go get some lunch and we can plan our day."

"That's a wonderful idea. I haven't spent any time in Brazzaville since that investigation. Where shall we go?"

"I'd like to take you to Le Jardin for lunch. It was one of my favorite places."

Lois said, "Sounds good to me. I've never been there before. Let's give it a try."

As they got in the car Lois removed her large hat and veil with a sigh of relief. As they drove up to the restaurant, Lois exclaimed, "Why, this is charming!"

After they had ordered he said, "Well, what do you think? Does it live up to the buildup I gave it?"

She replied, "I liked it the instant we drove up. There's just something about it. The ambiance is very nice." She paused a few seconds before she asked, "Did she like it as well?"

Clark replied, "Yes, it was one of our favorite places. I didn't want to influence your decision by mentioning her. I'm glad \*you\* like it." Smiling as he looked around he agreed with her, "Yes, the ambiance is nice, isn't it." Then he changed the topic of conversation. "Okay, we have a few things I want to do while we are here, aside from that visit we just had with Dr. M'benga. I want to take you to Artois' Jewelers so that we can purchase our bands and then we should go to see Jacques D'Arnet and be married. After that, if you don't mind, I'd like to visit her grave."

Lois could tell that this was important to him so she said, "I think it would be more than appropriate. You were so supportive of us when we lost Clark, I'd like to be there for you."

\*Her\* Clark had given Lois her engagement ring, but now the newly married couple were going to pick out the wedding bands to replace the plain bands they had exchanged in their wedding ceremony. So their next stop was to go to see M. Artois.

After a very pleasant meal they strolled hand in hand the short distance to Artois' Jewelers.

Before heading out on this trip, they had removed the wedding rings from this Lois' original universe. Lois continued to wear only the engagement ring at this time. Clark had told Lois the story of his time in Brazzaville and the part that M. Artois had played.

As they entered the shop M. Artois came out from behind the counter and embraced Clark, "Charlot, mon ami, eet 'as been a while seence you 'ave been in zee shop. You know some time ago zumone zat look-ed ust lak vous came by zee shop. 'e mus 'ave been your tween. Well, what can I do pour vous today?"

"Jean Luc, we'd like to see your selection of wedding bands again. Unfortunately we have lost the ones we purchased the last time."

Jean Luc clicked his tongue with a "tsk" sound and said, "Zat ees a shame." The jeweler pulled out a tray of his most expensive wedding bands and placed it on the counter. Clark called Lois over and asked, "What do you think, shall we simply purchase the same bands as previously?" Pointing to an ornately scrolled ring set he said, "I still like this one."

Lois said, "I'm not sure. Let's look them over and decide." She looked them over carefully as a typical woman would. She looked up at M. Artois and said, "May I try a few on?"

M. Artois replied, “Mais oui, but of course. Anysang for mon ami Charlot and ‘ees lovely wife.”

Lois as Linda accepted his praise graciously and examined the rings offered. She touched several of the rings with a delicate finger tip.

M. Artois smiled at Charlie who looked back at him and read the unspoken, “Ah, all women are alike” look in this eyes. He said, “‘ust lak zee las time.”

Charlie nodded back and shrugged slightly as if to say, “What can you do with women except love their little quirks?”

Lois actually saw several that she liked and was having a hard time deciding. She tried on one she really liked but it was too large for her fourth finger, but knowing that could be fixed she put it on a finger that it did fit. Then she picked another one and put it on her left index finger and then held her hand out under the light to compare the two.

Wiggling her fingers, she turned to Clark and using the name that M. Artois was using asked, “What do you think of these, Charlot?”

Clark couldn’t help but suck in a breath at this little byplay. Her use of the name brought home the fact that Jean Luc apparently didn’t recognize him as Superman. He said, “I’m sure I’ll like whatever you like, my dear.” Unintentionally he sounded like a nervous groom. Even though they had been married now for over a month he still couldn’t get over it.

She said, “Put the one you like on your finger and we’ll compare,” Lois suggested.

Clark complied. He was dumbfounded because the scene was playing itself out exactly as it had with the other Lois. It was almost as if he had given her a script to follow. Even though there were differences, apparently the similarities were more than skin deep. All he could do was go with the flow. Putting on the one he liked, he was amazed to find it fit his fourth left finger perfectly. He suddenly had trouble controlling the shaking of his hand.

On impulse, Lois gave him some mercy. “Oh, that looks good on you. Give it to me.”

Puzzled, Clark slid the ring off and gave it to her.

Lois slipped his ring on her third finger between the other two and made a show of comparing the three rings. “Yes, you’re right. This is perfect for me too.” She wondered if this was the same ring that the other Lois had chosen. It really didn’t matter if it was or not, she really did think it was the perfect ring for her.

Not too surprised by the selection, Charlie turned back to M. Artois, “We’ll take this set, again. Do you still have it in her size?”

“I believe zo please to allow me to get zem out of zee back. ‘ow do you want zem inscrib-ed? No sharge, of course.”

Looking over at Lois with a questioning look she replied with a nod. “Mine will be LL to CK. Hers will be CK to LL. Merci bien!”

M. Artois then asked, “Is there a date you would like on it too?”

“Let’s put today’s date. That way if we find the other rings, we’ll be able to tell them apart.”

The jeweler nodded and turned to the back room.

The rings were ready in record time. Clark paid for them and they were on their way.

Before starting this trip Clark had checked and found that his friend Jacques D’Arnet was still mayor. It was to be Jacques’ final term, but he was still extremely popular with the people because of the reforms he had pushed through. They proceeded to the government building and asked to see the Mayor. They were sent up to his office without delay. When they presented themselves to the secretary they gave the names of Charles and Linda King. As soon as the secretary heard those names she immediately recognized them and she buzzed the mayor to announce them. Mayor D’Arnet came out of his office to

welcome them and escorted them back inside.

Once they were inside and the door had been closed Clark got down to business. “M. D’Arnet ...”

The mayor interrupted him and said, “Mon ami, to you I am always Jacques.”

“Merci Jacques,” He turned to indicate Lois, “of course you remember Linda.”

“‘ow could I forget, zee wife and co-savior of my family. ‘ow are you, my dear?” He reached for her hand and kissed the back of it.

Lois, blushing with this attention, replied, “I’m just fine, thank you.”

Turning back to Clark, Jacques said, “Zince you were wiss us you have bean proclaim-ed a celebrity.”

“I’m terribly sorry, Jacques, that we had to deceive you at that time, but we were undercover on a story. It’s standard procedure in investigations of that nature. We are here to rectify that, if we may. Please allow me to introduce my partner. Her real name is Lois Lane and we have a request to make of you.”

“Anysang for zee saviors of my family. Name it.”

“We’d like it if you would marry us. We couldn’t think of anyone we’d rather perform the ceremony.”

“Eet would bee my pleasure to perform zee weeding ceremony for my good friends. We weel need a witness.”

“We would ask if Madam D’Arnet could be the witness.”

“I’m sure that she would be disappointed eef she were not included. I will call her.” He walked over, picked up his phone and dialed a number. When it was answered he spoke, “Madeleine, vous weel nevair guess ‘oo ees een my office. ... Charles et Linda ... Oui .. Zay are asking zat you come to my office to zee zem, immédiatement. Oui, immédiatement. Veuillez expédier. C’est l’occasion de la célébration. Je suis de se marier avec eux et vous êtes témoin. Bon.”

(Tr: Come to my office immediately. Yes, immediately, please hurry. This is an occasion for celebration. I am to marry them and you are to witness. Good.)

He hung up the phone and turned to Lois and Clark and said, “She weel be leaving ze ‘ouse in just a few minutes. I weel get the proper papers and we can prepare zem while we wait.” He depressed a key on his intercom and spoke to his secretary asking that she get the papers together and bring them to him. A few minutes later she brought them in.

About ten minutes later Madam D’Arnet arrived. As soon as she walked in she threw her arms around Lois and kissed her on both cheeks and said, “Eet ees zo good to zee vous again.”

Clark had briefed Lois on who they would be seeing and how she should react. Lois said, “Madeleine, c’est si bon de vous revoir. Je suis heureux que vous pourraient se joindre à nous pour cette l’occasion.”

(tr: Madeleine, it is so good to see you again. I am glad that you could join us for this occasion.)

Taken by surprise by her use of the French language because previously Charlot had needed to translate for her, Madeleine replied, in French now, “Linda, vous avez appris à parler la langue française. C’est la griffe!”

(tr: Linda, you have learned to speak the French language. That is wonderful!)

Clark sent her a thought, /I didn’t know you spoke French. The other Lois didn’t./

She sent back, /You never asked. I was in an exchange program. I had a choice of Ireland or France. Since I had studied French in high school, the choice was obvious. I guess that’s another difference. Mind if I build you up some?/

She blushed when she received his return thought, /Vive la différence! She replied to Madeleine, “J’ai eu un bon professeur,” as she looked at Clark with adoring eyes.

(tr: I had a good teacher.)

Since everyone now spoke French the rest of the conversation was conducted in that language.

Clark asked, "Have you been able to make use of the Ubuntu?"

Jacques replied, "Yes, we have and we thank you for the use of it. It has afforded us the opportunity to get away to relax when needed."

Clark had neglected to tell Lois about the Ubuntu so this was something of a surprise, but she was careful not to reveal it. Clark continued, "If you don't have any plans for it for the next couple of days, we'd like to use it for a honeymoon."

Jacques replied, "Of course my friend. I am sure you will enjoy being back aboard. That final refit you requested has been accomplished. The port side cabin has had a new larger bunk installed."

Clark replied, "Thank you, Jacques. We will try to get over more often for visits after this."

Madeleine replied, "We look forward to seeing you more often." She turned to Lois and asked, "How are you going to handle having Superman for your husband?"

Lois quickly shot Clark a thought, /How shall we handle this?/

Clark instantly replied, /We can trust them. Let's show them. I'll introduce it./

Clark replied, "I don't think that she will have any trouble along that line. She is a special lady. Give me a second to change." He spun into the Suit. Then he said, "Just to give you an idea about how special she is ..." He held out his hand palm up toward Lois indicating that they should watch. Lois spun into her Suit.

Madeleine and Jacques both gasped. Clark said, "Please allow me to introduce Superwoman. I guess you can see that she won't have any problems being the wife of Superman. She has not announced her presence as yet and she may not for a while. You are the first we have told and we would ask you to keep it confidential."

Jacques replied, "You can count on our discretion. Shall we proceed with the ceremony?"

Clark nodded to Lois and they both spin changed into their street clothes. Clark said, "Please do. I think we are ready now."

As soon as Jacques finished the ceremony and the rings had been exchanged they filled out the paperwork, thanked Madeleine and Jacques and left for their 'honeymoon'.

As they exited the government building they flagged down a taxi and Clark asked to be taken to the Golf Club. The trip was a pleasant one because in the five years since he had been in the city on the gunrunning investigation a lot of work had been done on city improvements, a testament to Jacques' term in office.

When they arrived they strolled hand in hand over to the rapids overlook. Clark glanced at the tree that he and Lois had always sat under when on their picnics. As he was standing there reminiscing Lois pulled away and walked over and stood staring at the rapids. Clark finally noting her absence looked around and saw where she was. A flash of memory of when the other Lois had stood there intruded. He walked over and stood behind her. He wrapped his arms around her waist and she leaned back into his embrace.

In an awed hush she said, "I simply love this view. The movement and play of the water. The sheer power displayed ... it's captivating."

With emotion evident in his voice, Clark said, "You know, there are a lot of similarities between the two of you. She loved this view also. We used to come here on picnics and she would stand here for long minutes watching the water in the rapids." He turned her around and pulled her in to a kiss. When he broke the kiss he took her hand and led her across the parking lot and to a grassy patch just off the Golf Club grounds. As they walked he

explained, "It was because of her love of that view that I purchased this small piece of ground to use as a private cemetery."

Looking towards the river Lois saw a fence with a little gate. They were walking in that direction so she decided that it must be their destination. When they got closer Lois could see what appeared to be flowers strewn over the apparent grave. She asked, "Where did the flowers come from?"

"Those are from me."

With a quizzical expression, the question half formed, she asked, "How ..."

"Before I left I set up a trust with a florist to have a single rose delivered each day. It looks like they allow them to accumulate for a month before they remove the old flowers and start a new batch."

"You loved her very much, I can see that."

"I love you every bit as much, if not more. It may seem silly, but, I'd like you to meet her." Clark opened the gate and led Lois inside the fence.

Clark remembered his feeling of devastation when he last sat here and the twins had to rescue him from his own grief. He knelt down and said, "Lois, I still miss you, but, from what Herb has told me I know that in another universe, we are still together. Now, in this universe, I've found you, but, not exactly you. I've found my new Lois. I can only hope that you are happy for me." He reached out and took Lois' hand in his before he continued, "I know how much you liked this view of the rapids, but, I think I'm going to be moving you soon."

He looked at Lois and asked, "What do you think about moving her to the other universe and burying her next to Clark?"

She gave his hand a squeeze and said, "I think that would be fitting. We can check with your mom and dad. In fact having them together should give final closure. Let's do it."

They triggered the TaDT and stepped through the portal it created.

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190

Common name – Alt2

%%%

The portal returned them to the living room of the farm house where they found Martha in the kitchen. Calling Jonathan in from the barn, the four of them sat around the kitchen table.

Clark said, "We have just returned from the other universe. We were in Brazzaville and we visited Lois' grave. While there we thought that it would be fitting if we brought her back here and buried her with Clark. What do you think? Would you be willing to have her here, next to Clark?"

Martha looked at Jonathan and at his nod said, "We think that would be very fitting. Why don't you go get her and bring her back here?"

Clark said, "Thank you. I think she'd like that. I'll be back shortly." He moved outside and triggered the TaDT. Five minutes later the portal opened and they stepped through with Lois' chamber. They all moved to the copse and Clark dug a grave beside Clark's. Again a simple graveside ceremony was conducted and the chamber with Lois was covered.

Lois walked over and putting an arm around his waist gave him a hug of support. Clark said, "Let them rest together as we are together now."

Lois and the Kents all said, "Amen," and they returned to the farm house.

Clark said, "We need to get back, we still have a lot to do. I guess we'll see you guys in about five minutes."

Clark pulled out the TaDT and activated the portal. Hand in hand Clark and Lois stepped through.

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Universal Locator Designation

Local designation – Alt 1

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Back in Brazzaville they headed for the marina. Stopping at a market on the way they bought some groceries. When they got to the marina Clark led Lois to the Ubuntu and they went aboard.

He stood at the wheel and rested a hand on it with a very pensive expression and said to Lois, “You know, I bought this vessel so that she and I could follow the arms up the river. She and I had some good times on this boat. Now we need to make it ours.” With a note of determination in his voice he finished, “We can make some memories of our own on it. Ready to start?”

Lois replied, “You’re going to have to teach me. I know literally nothing about boating.”

Clark winked at her. “She said the same thing, but she caught on quickly. I’m sure you will too. Okay, let’s start with the basics. Do you know about Port and Starboard?”

“That would be left and right when facing the bow.”

With a smile he said, “See, you know more than you let on! Okay, we’ll save the formal lessons until we are out on the river. Let’s cast off and get under way.”

They did just that and shortly were out of sight of Brazzaville they found a quiet section of the river. Clark hove to and put the anchor out. He asked, “Feel like a swim?”

Giggling, Lois responded, “I didn’t bring a suit!”

Smiling very broadly, Clark replied, “That’s okay. Neither did I.”

Lois floated up a hundred feet and spun around in a circle checking the horizon. Seeing no one else anywhere nearby, she floated back down on deck and spun out of her clothes. After admiring this view, Clark did the same and they both dove into the water.

They met underwater and started kissing and just stayed there for a while since they each could hold their breath for about twenty minutes. When they finally came to the surface Lois shouted, “Race you to shore and back. Last one back cooks,” as she took off at superspeed.

He kept up with her, but just barely. She was every bit as fast as he was and she was able to maintain her lead. When they got back to the boat he continued to chase her and she allowed him to until she caught him and, laughing all the while, he floated them back onboard. He led her into the cabin and into the accommodations. Picking her up, he laid her on the bunk. Lying down next to her he started another kiss while he fondled her breasts.

Lois softly said, “You already know how sensitive they are. If you keep that up you’re going to have to do more than that because that isn’t going to be enough.” Her hips began a little dance of their own volition.

As Clark continued to fondle her breasts he said, “I’m counting on it.” That started a period of marital intimacy. When they were finished Lois simply let out a very contented sigh and sleepily said, “I think I just want to lay here with my naked husband by my side and take a nap. That was \*wonderful\*!” She reached up and put her hand over his and encouraged him to continue fondling her breasts even as she said this.

Eventually his hand stilled and they both drifted off to sleep.

They spent two days honeymooning on the Ubuntu before returning to Brazzaville. They stopped by Jacques’ office and picked up a copy of their marriage certificate and thanked him. Then they went to the hospital and Doctor M’benga had the records they had requested ready. They thanked him and took copies of those as well. Once they had all of these they found a secluded area to spin change into their uniforms and flew back to Smallville.

It was time to return to Metropolis.

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## Chapter 15 – Back to Work

Monday, March 17, 1997

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Universal Locator Designation

Local designation – Alt 1

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On Monday Clark and Lois went in to the Planet. When they arrived at the Planet as they were exiting the elevator, Clark saw Mr. Olsen out in the bullpen. He had Lois by the hand as he led her down the ramp and over to him. He approached Mr. Olsen and said, “Mr. Olsen, I believe that you will remember Lois Lane. She was here with us briefly a few years ago.”

The look on his face was unreadable as Mr. Olsen looked at Clark and Lois and said, “Can we go into my office?” Without waiting for any acknowledgement he turned on his heel and headed for his office.

They followed him and as they entered behind him, he said to Clark, “Please close the door after you.”

Once the door was closed he sat behind his desk and addressed them. Anger was evident in his voice as he said, “Yes, Clark, I remember Lois Lane. I also remember that I offered her, her old job back. I seem to recall also that she accepted and asked to be partnered with you so that she could get ‘up to speed’. Furthermore, I recall that that didn’t last very long and she disappeared again, without any notice I might add.”

Clark put up his hands defensively and said, “Please don’t jump to conclusions and hear me out. Her disappearance can be easily explained. If you recall, we were told that she had been sick, suffering from amnesia. She hadn’t completely recovered and she had a relapse. I’ve been spending all of my spare time looking for her and I finally found her. She is completely recovered now. I will vouch for her and ask that you give her, her old job back and partner her with me, on a permanent basis.”

Mr. Olsen was skeptical. Looking at Lois he said, “Once burned, twice cautious. I don’t plan on being burned again. What kind of guarantee can you give me that you won’t relapse again and leave me high and dry?”

Clark answered for her, “The best guarantee there is.” He held up her left hand with his and displayed their rings before saying, “We’re married.”

To say the very least, Mr. Olsen was floored. He almost stuttered as he said, “Well, congratulations! Why didn’t you say that in the first place?”

Clark replied, “With all due respect sir, you didn’t give me a chance.”

Mr. Olsen, properly chagrined, turned to Lois and asked, “Sorry. Okay, how soon can you start?”

Lois replied, “There’s no time like the present. Can I have the desk next to Clark?”

This fit in with everything that Perry White had told him about Lois Lane. Take no prisoners and jump right into whatever she was doing. Mr. Olsen chuckled as he replied, “That will be fine. By the way, have the two of you given enough thought to this? I mean, the notoriety, the possibility that someone could try to hurt Superman by hurting you?”

Clark and Lois both smiled at each other before Clark answered, “Rest assured that we’ve considered every angle. We are going to be moving out of my apartment and commuting to work from a remote location. I inherited my parents’ farm in Smallville, Kansas and we will be living there. If you need us you can call one of our cell phones, that way anyone trying to find us will have to work to find us. Aside from that, Lois has an extra edge, she happens to be a Brown Belt in Tae Kwan Do. She can take care of herself.”

“Well, it sure sounds like you’ve covered all of the bases. Get out of here and get to work. Welcome back, Lois. Is it Lois Lane

or Lois Kent?”

“We hadn’t really decided on that.” She looked at Clark for his approval. He nodded and she continued, “I think it’ll be Lois Lane-Kent. That way, professionally, I can still be Lois Lane. I’ll use Lois Lane-Kent on my employment papers.”

Mr. Olsen said, “I’ll notify personnel and have them contact you. IT will get you set up with computer access.”

“Thank you Mr. Olsen. I, we won’t let you down.” Lois and Clark both stood and exited his office. They went to Clark’s desk and she took the chair next to it as they talked. She said, “So far, so good. We made it over that hurdle. Okay, what were you working on before you left on your missions?”

The memory of where exactly things had stood when he left suddenly hit him. She could tell by the look on his face that there was a potential problem. She asked, “Okay, what is it? What did you leave hanging, or should I say, who did you leave hanging?”

A look of deep mortification took over his features. He asked, “Remember I told you that I was in a relationship with Mayson before I left? I did tell her that when I returned that I would probably have Lois with me. What do you think? Should I give her a call?”

Lois asked, “What was the investigation that you were on at the time and when was it?”

Clark frowned in thought before he said, “I’ve been gone on these missions so long it seems like it was two years ago, but, really, it was last week. This time traveling can be confusing.”

Lois said, “Okay, so it was last week that Mayson told you that she loves you.”

“Ouch. Yeah, it was last week.”

“Does she know about time travel?”

“Yes. I told her about the original Lois from Prime convincing me to be Superman. I told her I was going off on these missions and that time travel would be involved. I even warned her there was a possibility that I could be lost in time. She offered to go with me so that she didn’t lose me. This isn’t going to be pretty.”

“Okay, I think we are both going to have to go see her. We will explain to her that while you were away on your missions you were gone for almost two years. Long enough for you to find me and for us to fall in love and get married even though for her it has only been less than a week.”

Clark snapped his fingers and said, “I just had a thought. On one of my missions I was able to save Mayson’s life when she was supposed to be killed by a car bomb. In order to distract her from her pursuit of that Clark Kent I matched her up with a DEA Agent by the name of Daniel Scardino. I wonder if there is a Scardino in this universe.” He turned to his computer and did a search against that name. He clicked on entry after entry until he found one that looked like the one he was looking for. He smiled broadly and said, “Bingo! Found him. He’s an FBI agent in this universe. The case we were working on dealt with organized crime, drugs, prostitution and the like with money laundering. That could possibly fall under Treasury and therefore the FBI. Let me give the Bureau a call and see if Agent Scardino is available.” Clark checked the number and dialed. When the phone was answered he asked, “Is Agent Scardino assigned to this office?”

The receptionist said, “Hold please.” After waiting a few seconds she came back on the line and said, “Transferring.”

He heard a few clicks and then the phone was picked up, “FBI, Daniel Scardino, how may I help you?”

Clark spoke up, “Agent Scardino, this is Clark Kent, I’ve been working with Mayson Drake in the DA’s office on a case which might just interest you. Could we meet?”

You could hear the surprise in his voice as Scardino asked, “Did you say, Clark Kent, as in Superman?”

Chuckling, Clark said, “Yes, as in Superman. I’ve been

helping the police and working with the DA’s office on this case. It involves money laundering from drug sales and other crimes. Would the Bureau be interested in this investigation?”

Daniel replied, “The bureau is interested in anything dealing with money. Where do you want to meet?”

Clark suggested, “Why don’t you come to the Daily Planet? We can meet in our conference room.”

Scardino said, “I have some paperwork to complete. Let’s say, in an hour.”

Clark replied, “One hour, that will be fine. We’ll see you then.”

Scardino was curious, “Who will be there, the ADA and you?”

Clark replied, “No, just my partner and me.”

Scardino said, “Partner, I didn’t know you had a partner. I always thought you worked alone. All I’ve ever seen in the Planet is a solo byline.”

Clark replied, “We were just teamed up today.”

Scardino said, “To be teamed up with you, that person must be something special.”

Clark replied with a wink at Lois, knowing she could hear both sides of the conversation, “You don’t know the half of it.”

Scardino replied, “I’ll see you in an hour,” and hung up the phone.

An hour later Scardino showed up. As soon as he exited the elevator, Clark recognized him and standing up signaled to him. Lois saw the motion and joined Clark as he led the way to the conference room.

After they were inside and the door closed Clark performed the introductions, “Daniel Scardino, my partner, Lois Lane.”

Daniel was stunned and couldn’t stop staring at Lois as he said, “Pleased to meet you. I see what you mean, she is something special.” Speaking to Lois he said, “You know, you have the most magnificent eyes,” in a wistful tone.

Lois blushed prettily and said, “Thank you. You’re too kind.”

Scardino, defensively said, “No, I mean every word of it.”

Clark asked, “Can we get down to business here?”

Properly chastened Scardino said, “Yeah, down to business. What do you have?”

Clark started, “I’ve been working with ADA Mayson Drake on this case. So far we have a chain of dry cleaning laundries which are acting as clearing houses for monies collected from drug sales, prostitution and probably other crimes as well. It’s part of the old Lex Luthor network. If you don’t mind, I’d like to call in ADA Drake so that she can fill you in on all of the details.”

Scardino replied, “Could we do that tomorrow? I basically wanted this to be a meet and greet. I have another appointment to get to. Shall we meet here or at the DA’s office?”

Clark replied, “Let’s meet here. I’ll set up a time with ADA Drake and call your office with a time.”

Scardino said, “I have another meeting in a little while. I just have time for lunch.” He turned to Lois and said, “What say we ditch this guy and go out to lunch?”

Holding up her left hand and looking happily at her wedding ring she smiled. She displayed the ring to Scardino before she replied, “I don’t think my husband would like that.”

Scardino replied, in a bantering tone, “He’ll never know. I won’t say anything.”

Continuing to joust with him, Lois replied, “Oh, but he already knows that you asked me out, and that you want me to ditch him.”

Scardino paled. He looked at Clark and said in an incredulous tone, “You’re married to your partner?”

With a deadpan expression Clark said, “No one else.”

Deflated, Scardino as headed for the door he said, “Fine, just let me know. My calendar is open tomorrow.”

After he was out the door Lois walked over to Clark and put

her arms around his neck and gave him a quick kiss before she said, teasingly, “Should I have taken him up on his offer? I think he had a thing for me.”

He replied, “I’m just glad that we’re already married. He was a problem in the Lois and Clark relationships in any number of universes. I was able to pair him off with Mayson on one of my missions though. We’ll have to wait and see. Okay, we have one piece of the puzzle in place. Now we need to see about the next piece.” He moved over to the conference room phone and placed a call to Mayson’s office. He put it on speaker after he dialed.

When Mayson answered the tone in her voice was such that it was obvious she was down in the dumps. One could hear that her world had literally collapsed and she was dispirited. “District Attorney’s Office, Assistant Drake, how may I help you?”

Clark, almost hesitantly said, “Hello Mayson, it’s Clark.”

The change in tone in her voice was dramatic. Immediately she brightened and her whole demeanor changed. She almost shouted for joy, “Clark! Where are you? When did you get back? How long were you away? When can I see you? I’ve missed you even if you \*were\* only gone over the weekend.”

Clark was cautious as he replied, “Uh, Mayson, I am at the Planet and I’ve been gone for almost two years. A lot can happen in that amount of time. As for when you can see me, that’s what I’m calling about. I just had a meeting with an FBI Agent about the case we’ve been working on. Since it deals with monetary transactions I thought that the Treasury Department should get involved. What time are you available for a meeting tomorrow?”

She was picking up from his tone how guarded he was being. She clearly remembered what he had told her before he left and started adding two plus two and not liking the answer she was getting to with that extremely simple math problem. That dispirited tone was reentering her voice as she said, “Two years?!?! I guess a lot can change in that amount of time. People can change.” Deciding to confront her fears she said, “I’m free between ten and two. Will I be meeting Lois as well as the FBI Agent?”

Clark was actually relieved when he heard this question. He said, “Yes, Mayson, you will be. I’m sorry, but, you knew that was a possibility when I left.”

Her worst fears being confirmed the dispirited tone was back in her voice as Mayson said, “Yeah, I knew, but knowing it could happen and having it actually happen are two different things.” She thought for a few seconds and then continued, “Clark, just what are the Kryptonian customs regarding marriage? Could she and I both be ...”

Clark interrupted her, “No! uh, no Mayson, no, Kryptonians are monogamous.”

Lois spoke up for the first time and said, “Sorry Mayson, even if they weren’t, I don’t want to share. Clark and I were just meant to be. We can’t get past that. At this point we are planning to have a life together. I would like to be friends though, that is, of course, if you’ll let me.”

Mayson replied, “I don’t know. I don’t know if I can do that.”

Clark spoke up, “Mayson, please, I’m sorry it worked out this way for you. I’d like to help. Give me a chance. Please come for the meeting tomorrow.”

She replied, “Okay, I’ll be there. What time?”

Clark replied, “Ten o’clock.”

Mayson replied, “Okay, ten o’clock it is. Where?”

“Here at the Planet.”

“Okay, Planet, ten o’clock. Got it. I guess I’ll be seeing you then.” She hung up.

Clark let out a long breath, “Well, that actually went better than I had expected.”

Surprised, Lois said, “It did??? I thought it went horribly! I have to say, I do feel sorry for her. We’ve been together now for several months and I know just how addictive you are.” She

reached over and took his hand in hers. “She was with you for a lot longer time. She’s going to need time to go through the withdrawal symptoms. How can we make it easier on her?”

“Ahhhh, that’s where Scardino comes in. You see, as I said, I managed to get them together in another universe. The problem is that the big change didn’t happen until he saved her life. From that point on she was his. I don’t know if we’re going to be able to set something like that up here.”

Shocked she asked, “You set that up?”

He was very defensive as he said, “No. by no means. It just happened. I was off dealing with another rescue. I just don’t see how something like that could happen on this investigation.”

“Whew, that’s a relief. I was hoping you wouldn’t do something like that. I would have to think I had misjudged you if you could.”

“Trust me, if I had been anywhere nearby, it wouldn’t have gotten to that point.”

“Okay, where are we on this investigation? Bring me up to speed.”

“Lex Luthor was the main crime boss here in Metropolis. He was killed in late 1992 but segments of his operation are still around. Immediately after his death several groups tried to take over and consolidate control without success. Recently a new organization has moved in. I think it’s Inter-Gang. They were dealing with them in several of the other universes. It’s the same here. The problem is that in this universe they apparently aren’t using Cost-Mart as the front for the organization. It looks like it’s a chain of dry cleaners so I don’t know where to start looking. The other thing is that Bill Church is dead in this universe so it’s someone else heading up the operation, possibly his son, Bill junior.”

Lois asked, “What operations are active?”

“We’ve identified drugs and prostitution so far, but I suspect that robbery and car theft will be linked in as well.”

Lois thought about it for a minute and then said, “What about getting someone on the inside?”

“I thought about that, but I’m too well known. They’d recognize me too easily.”

“What if we disguised you?”

“I guess we could try that. The problem is ... where to start.”

“How about at the beginning? We could pretend to be dealers moving into the territory and see just what response we get.”

“That might just work. We can discuss it with Mayson and Scardino tomorrow morning.”

A sly grin made its appearance as she suggested, “You know we could go either one of two ways. You said drugs and prostitution. I could be a working girl and you could be my pimp.”

His reply was without hesitation, “No way is my wife going to pretend to be a hooker!”

She tried to calm him down, “Wait, now hold on, look at me. Aren’t I attractive enough?”

He cautiously replied, “Well, that goes without saying. You’re the most beautiful woman I know.”

Lois continued to try and press her small advantage, “Is there any man on this planet, present company excluded of course, that could make me do anything I don’t want to do?”

His resolve was dissolving slowly, “Well, no, I guess not since you are super powered.”

She kept pressing, “Right, I’m just as super as you so there is no way anyone other than you can make me do anything I don’t want to do. That being the case, I’m as safe as if I was constantly in your arms, which is right where I want to be. Now, here’s my thought. We may be able to kill a couple of birds with a single stone. If Mayson would be willing to go along with it, she could join me on the street. Scardino could team up with you. I can protect her and you can protect him. If we get into a situation, as

long as it isn't something too dangerous, you could let Daniel handle it. That might bring him close to Mayson. What do you think about that?"

He was weakening and she could tell as he replied, "I still don't like it and maybe Mayson wouldn't go along with it. She hasn't even met Scardino yet."

"Let's give it some more thought, okay?"

Reluctantly he gave in, "Okay. We'll give it some more thought." They exited the conference room and headed for their desks.

IT had been by and had left a note with her username and temporary password for her computer access so she logged in and changed the password and checked her e-mail, finding only the welcome message, which was all that she had expected.

Just then they both heard a news report on a nearby radio about a bank robbery in progress. They both got up and headed for the stairwell. Once inside they both spin changed into their uniforms and Clark stopped and placed a hand on her arm stopping her. He said, "Where do you think you're going, dressed like that?"

She looked down at herself and realized that through force of habit she had changed into her uniform. Realizing her mistake she spin changed back again into her business suit. Lightly she said, "This is going to take some getting used to."

Laughing with her he said, "There's no telling how soon we will announce your presence, but, let's keep you a secret for as long as we can, okay?"

Still chuckling she replied, "It's gonna be just like old times with you carrying me! Okay, let's go." As they exited the roof door she hopped up in his arms and with a look of pure joy on her face enjoyed the ride to the scene of the crime.

Clark set her down just behind the police cordon before entering the bank. A minute later the doors opened and the bank employees walked out, followed by the robbers, followed by the bank guard who had his gun on the robbers. The police moved in and put the bracelets on the robbers and read them their rights. Lois projected a thought, /What about a getaway vehicle and driver?/

The policeman saw Superman start as if he had been hit by a bat and then saw him start to look around. He said to the nearest policeman, "Wait right here for a minute. There's one more."

He flew off in pursuit of a vehicle that had just taken off from the curb near the bank entrance. He stopped the vehicle and extracted the driver. He picked him up and flew him back to the policeman he had spoken to. "Here's the getaway car driver."

The officer pulled out his cuffs and as he was putting them on the driver read him his rights.

Clark projected a thought, /Thanks! I almost blew that one./

Lois returned the thought, /Anytime, husband mine./

He replied, /Just for that, I'm gonna let you write this up for the Planet. Your first byline./

/Thank you Clark. That's sweet of you. Won't Mr. Olsen be surprised? First day on the job and all./

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## Chapter 16 – Lucy

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Universal Locator Designation

Local designation – Alt 1

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The officer standing next to Superman was surprised when the latter suddenly, for no apparent reason, started chuckling, verging on laughter. With a wary eye he watched as Superman walked over to the police cordon and singled out a very attractive brunette. She was apparently a reporter, as evidenced by her notepad and pencil. Superman gave her a brief interview and then he flew off. The cop watched her as she made her way through

the throng of reporters who started to mob her asking why Superman had given her an interview.

As the cop watched, he saw one of the 'older' hands within the reporter ranks apparently recognize her and heard him shout out, "You're Lois Lane, aren't you?"

He saw the petite woman stop and turn to the individual that had shouted her name as she replied, "Why yes, so nice of you to remember me!"

The reporter retorted, "I have good reason to remember you. You've beaten me out on more stories than I can count! I was happy when my competition disappeared. When did you get back and where were you?"

She replied archly, "I guess you'll have to read about it in the Daily Planet." She chuckled as she turned away and made her way out of the crowd. The cop lost sight of her and returned his attention to the bank robber he had in hand.

Lois checked to make sure she hadn't been followed and ducked into an alley where she met Clark. He picked her up and flew them both back to the Planet.

As soon as she sat down she brought up her computer and started her word processor. She quickly typed up the article on the bank robbery and e-mailed it to Clark to look over. Then she acted on the idea she had been given by the other reporter. She typed up a report on her return to the Planet and sent that to him as well.

Clark proofread both and forwarded them on to Mr. Olsen. A few minutes later Mr. Olsen came out of his office and walked over to Lois' desk and said, "Wow, you sure start with a bang, don't you. I like having an article about Clark written by someone else for a change. Good job. The article about your return to the Planet, that was something I hadn't expected. What gave you the idea for that?"

*Superman Foils Bank Robbery*

*By: Lois Lane*

*Superman foiled the attempted robbery of the Second National Bank today. As many stood by and simply looked on, The Man of Steel swooped in and rounded up the crooks. As a mark of his respect for the law, once he disarmed the robbers he turned them over to the bank guard for the arrest and simply assisted as the guard in turn handed them over to the MPD (Story continues on 2A)*

*Lois Lane Returns*

*By: Lois Lane*

*The former star reporter of the Daily Planet who had been listed as missing and presumed dead for a number of years has now been found and has returned to the staff of the Planet. Being injured on an investigation in the Congo some years ago she suffered amnesia as a result. She was recently located by Superman who assisted in the recovery of her memories. (Story continues 3A)*

She replied, "While I was at the scene of the bank robbery one of the other reporters recognized me and started asking a lot of questions. I thought that it might be a good idea to answer them for everyone all at once."

Mr. Olsen had a smile on his face as he replied, "\*Initiative\*, I like it. I like the way you think. It may not be page one, at least not above the fold, but we will get it in there somewhere." He walked away with a satisfied smile.

Watching this scene Clark couldn't help but also have a smile on his face at Mr. Olsen's reaction. He couldn't wait until Lois revealed just what she could do. Smiling to himself he projected a thought to Lois, /What say we get out of here and grab a bite to eat?/

She nodded, locked her computer, grabbed her bag and stood up just as he reached her. She turned toward the elevator and he placed his hand at the small of her back as he escorted her up the ramp. He pushed the button and they waited patiently for the car

to arrive. When it did they stepped inside and pushed the button for the lobby. When the doors closed, she dropped her bag and threw herself in his arms and started kissing him. She pulled back and said, breathlessly, "I've been waiting to do that for hours. How are we going to do this? To be so near each other all the time and not able to really \*be\* together? It's like slow torture!"

Clark pressed his lips to the side of her neck in a kiss before he said, "We'll just have to think about it as foreplay."

Lois said, "Okay, but if we do that, fair warning, as soon as I get you home I'm going to rip your clothes off of you and ravish you as soon as we walk in the door."

Clark ran his finger from her throat to her cleavage and said, "We'll have to take turns on the ravishing thing."

She blushed prettily at his comment. She asked, "Where do you want to go for lunch?"

"There's this little Italian place I know, Travaglini's. They have the best ... what am I saying?" He started to shake his head as he continued, "You know all about Travaglini's. We bought the lasagna for Bobby from there in the other universe." He started to laugh, "I can see where this is going to be more than a little bit confusing."

Lois said, "Yeah, I know. We're going to have to work on each of us getting 'up to speed' on both universes. I'm sure there will be a lot of similarities, but there will probably be differences too."

Clark said, "Yeah, I can think of one major one right off. Here there are no Kent seniors. I'm missing them already and it's been less than a week."

"Well, we'll be seeing them in a few days and it should be only a few minutes after we left so they won't have missed us at all."

He was very serious as he said, "Do you think that this is really going to work, I mean this hop scotching back and forth between the universes?"

Lois, also dropping the bantering tone that had been prevalent in the bulk of the conversation said, "Well, so far we are handling it. It can only get better as we get used to it. What concerns me is here we are spending a week here before we go back and when we get there virtually no time will have passed, but we are a week older. Our aging process will appear to accelerate."

Just then the elevator reached the lobby, so they continued the conversation without speaking. Clark projected his thoughts, /In one of the universes I've been in the local Clark had worked with a Dr. Bernard Klein at STAR Labs. Dr. Klein determined that a Kryptonians aging process is not that of a normal human. According to him our aging process stabilizes and slows. He isn't exactly sure just how long we will live, but it should be several human lifetimes./

She replied in the same fashion, /We have a Dr. Klein in the other universe too. The other Clark and I went to him when the transfer occurred. To the best of my knowledge no studies like that were ever conducted on Clark. I know that none were done on me. Wow, I wonder just how long we'll be together. Is there a Dr. Klein in this universe?/

/I don't know, I've never looked for him. Why don't we do just that this afternoon?/

/Let's eat first, I'm not exactly starved, but I am looking forward to some good pasta and the company of a certain handsome gentleman./

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That afternoon they went to STAR Labs and enquired about a Dr. Bernard Klein. Clark was recognized and because of this the receptionist called him down immediately.

When Dr. Klein arrived in the lobby, he came over to Clark and said, "My, my, Superman, what can I do for you?"

Clark spoke up and asked, "Dr. Klein, you come highly recommended to us by a friend. Could we have a conversation in

your office?"

Dr. Klein got a very pleased expression at this and said, "Of course! This way." He turned and led the way through a labyrinth of corridors finally reaching his lab/office. Once inside he closed the door and moved around behind his desk. He asked, "What can I do for Superman and ???"

"Oh, I'm sorry, Dr. Klein, please allow me to introduce you to Lois Lane."

Dr. Klein said, "I'm very pleased to meet you. Now, what can I do for you, Superman?"

Clark replied, "Well, first thing is, please call me Clark. You see Clark is who I am, Superman is what I can do."

Dr. Klein said, "I would be more than happy to. Please proceed, Clark."

Smiling, Clark continued, "Dr. Klein, we are going to be telling you some things which will need to be held in strictest confidence. Can you do that for us?"

He replied, "Of course you can. Trust me, my lips are sealed."

Clark released a relieved sigh as he proceeded, "Dr. Klein, are you aware of the existence of parallel dimensions or universes?"

He replied, "There has been speculation about the existence of alternate dimensions for years. It is a favorite topic of some Science Fiction writers, so, yes, I'm familiar with some of the concepts."

Clark continued, "Dr. Klein, we have the means of crossing that barrier. In fact, Lois is from a parallel universe. You see, the Lois Lane of this universe died some years ago in the Congo on an investigation. This Lois happens to be Kryptonian. What we were wondering was ... do you have any tests you can think of which will tell us just how long we might live?"

This revelation was startling. To look at her, Dr. Klein never would have thought Lois was anything other than Earth human, but then looking at Clark he thought, the same could be said of him. Mulling this over, Dr. Klein developed a very thoughtful expression. He leaned back in his chair, and steepling his fingers, he looked ceiling-ward, obviously in deep thought. Finally coming out of his reverie, he leaned forward and looked at the couple across the desk from him. Finally he said, "It would take a number of genetic samples collected over a rather long period of time. We would have to measure the telomeres and determine just how rapidly they are shortening. The longer the period of time between the samples the more accurate the determination will be."

Clark asked, "Then we wouldn't know for at least several years how long we could expect to live."

Bernie replied, "That is correct, but it is the only definitive way. We could go by apparent aging. Do you look 20 or 30? In ten years repeat that process. I would suggest that you simply live your life and take things as they come."

Clark said, "I guess that's what we'll have to do then. In the future, if we are in need of technical assistance, can we call on you for help?"

Bernie replied, "You can call on me whenever you want and I will do whatever I can to help out. It'll be a pleasure."

Thanking him, they left and returned to the Planet.

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The next day they were at their desks when Lois' phone rang. Lifting the receiver she said, "Daily Planet, Lois Lane, how can I help you?"

Out of the earpiece came a squeal, not an electronic squeal, a human voice squeal followed by, "Lois?????"

Recognizing the voice Lois said, "Lucy! How are you, Sis?"

The reply she received caught her off guard for a few seconds, "How am I??? How are you? I'm not the one that's been missing for five years! I'm not the one that's had amnesia! When

can I see you?”

Suddenly it dawned on Lois, this was the other universe! This Lucy wasn't the same one that was Maid of Honor in her wedding party! She sent a thought to Clark, /Clark, this is Lucy on the phone. How do I handle this?/

He thought back, /She has been reclusive ever since you disappeared. She hasn't even dated. She really went into a tailspin. You will need to build a relationship with her. Ask her to come east. Last time I saw her she was in California. Tell her that I found you and brought you back and that I'll come get her to bring her east./

All of this mental communication took place at the speed of thought so there was no discernible lapse in the conversation as Lois replied, “Lucy, it has been a long time. I really don't remember much of it. It was Superman that found me and brought me back. I'd like to get together. Superman could come pick you up, if you'd like him to. I'm partnered with him now here at the Planet.”

“That would be wonderful. I haven't seen him for a couple of years, since he started looking for you. Tell him that I haven't moved and that I'll expect him anytime after five Pacific.”

“Tell you what, Sis, I'll have him bring me there instead. We have a lot of things to discuss.”

“Wow, okay Sis, I'll look for both of you around five then.”

“Okay, Luce, we'll see you then.” Lois hung up the phone.

Lois got up from her desk and walked over to Clark's and perched on the corner. She leaned in and said, “Thanks. I almost blew it. I forgot about the different universe thing. She just sounded so much like my kid sister.”

Clark said, “Lois, she is your kid sister, in this universe. I think that this is where the amnesia can help us. I'm thinking that now that we are going to be associated, we may want to get her close to us so that we can protect her. What do you think about trying to get her to relocate to Metropolis or at least Smallville?”

Lois said, “I'm not sure which would be best. We are going to be living at the farm but we'll be here most days. Let's talk it over with her tonight.”

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### Chapter 17– Lois and Mayson go Undercover(s)

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Universal Locator Designation

Local designation – Alt 1

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At ten a.m. Daniel Scardino showed up for the meeting. He was followed a few minutes later by Mayson Drake. They all went into the conference room and introductions were made.

Lois could see the hurt in Mayson's eyes as she looked at Clark and also something bordering on hatred when she looked at Lois. Clark asked Mayson to fill Scardino in on the investigation which she did, barely looking at him in the process. She also called him ‘Special Agent Scardino’ no matter how many times he said to her, “Call me Daniel.”

Clark and Lois looked at each other, realizing that did not bode well for their plan. Lois attempted to calm the atmosphere by addressing Mayson. “Ms. Drake, may I call you Mayson?”

As she replied, Mayson's tone was that of someone doing something that they really didn't want to do, “Sure, go ahead. You might as well. You won.”

Lois said, “Mayson, this wasn't ever a contest. I really would like to be friends. If we can't be, can we at least work together? We have the same goals, after all.”

Mayson replied, “Okay, we can work together. I don't know about the friend thing. Right now it hurts too much.”

Daniel was taking in this conversation and most of it was over his head. He could feel the undercurrents and wasn't really sure what it was all about.

“I hope we can team up at least for this investigation. Okay, here is what I proposed to Clark. We know that there are definitely two groups working, drugs and prostitution. It would be hard to horn in on the drug trade so what I propose is that we try to get in on the prostitution angle. Mayson, you and I would be working girls and Dan and Clark would be our ‘handlers.’ What do you think?”

Mayson looked at Lois like she thought she had lost what was left of her mind and said, “Are you crazy? What made you even think of such a thing?” Suddenly, the metaphorical claws came out. “Is that something you've done in the past? I mean, while you were away, to make a living?”

Lois knew what she was implying and decided not to rise to the bait. Instead she said, “If you mean going undercover to get a story, then yes, I've done this kind of thing before. I'll feel a lot safer now than I did then because of who will be working the gig with me. Previously, most of my undercover investigations were done solo.”

Scardino was eyeing the two women skeptically and feeling like wallpaper. He looked over at Clark to see how he was taking all of this. What he saw was concern. Clearly there was a history here. He had to be right. They both wanted Superman. He had no idea what had happened, but, whatever it had been, Mayson had been the one to get the short end of the stick. Suddenly a memory hit him. A few months ago, Mayson had been outed as the woman that Superman had been dating. He recalled that as soon as that had happened she had moved into a gated community and had been assigned extra security. Now, suddenly, Superman was married to another woman. That had to be it. The puzzle pieces all fell into place at once. That put an entirely new light on this.

Here was a woman that Superman had as much as thrown under the bus. Scardino started feeling sorry for Mayson. He gave her another very intense look. He could see why Superman had been attracted to her, she was a looker. He started looking at this investigation in a new light. Initially he hadn't liked the idea, thinking it would be too dangerous for a rookie. But, personally, he thought the idea of playing the part of a pimp for an attractive woman like Mayson wasn't too bad of an idea. He had certainly had \*worse\* undercover assignments and he felt that he should be able to keep her safe.

Mayson, seeming surprised that Lois hadn't taken her obvious insult personally, started to calm down and actually looked at the FBI Agent. He was an attractive and physically fit man, but his taste in loud Hawaiian shirt knock-offs was execrable. One thing Mayson knew well was clothing. On the other hand, he could easily pass for a pimp. Just a little more bling was needed.

Then Mayson focused on the job and the goal and actually started to feel sorry for what she had said to Lois. Turning back to Lois she said, “I'm sorry about that comment. I just don't know what got into me.”

Replying with relief, Lois said, “I can understand. I forgive you. Let's try to get along, okay?”

“Okay. Truce.” Mayson stuck out her hand and Lois took it and shook it.

Lois said, “Okay, now, about going undercover. As an Assistant DA you don't get much chance to do this kind of investigating, do you?”

Mayson replied, “No, we don't. We usually rely on the police to do the investigating.”

Lois tried to encourage her as she said, “I think that once you try it, you'll want to get your hands dirty more often. Believe it or not, it can be fun. Tell you what. Why don't you talk it over with Daniel? Clark and I are planning to do this. It'll be more fun with a partner.”

Mayson was actually starting to feel guilty about her previous comment and allowed that guilt to cause her to give an answer

that she would not normally have given. “Okay, what have I got to lose? How do we go about this?”

Clark turned to Daniel and said, “You’ve probably been on undercover assignments before, haven’t you?”

Scardino answered with the confidence of experience, “Yeah, more than a few.”

Since this was Lois’ idea, Clark let her run with it.

“Let’s all sit down at the table and get comfortable.” They all took seats at the conference table with Daniel sitting next to Mayson across the table from Lois and Clark. Once they were all seated, Lois said, “Okay, Mayson, you and I will have to get disguised appropriately. Whatever you wear needs to be short and flashy. Fluff your hair out, make it garish. Nothing like how you would do it for the office. Guys cruising the streets aren’t looking for a lawyer; they’re looking for a good time. Now, we really aren’t going to go anywhere with anyone other than the guys here. We just want to be noticed so that the regular working girls make a stink about us cutting in on their territory. When the word gets to the right people, we’ll be approached either with a proposition or a threat. That’s when we know we are getting somewhere.”

Lois continued, emphasizing her points. “To make it look good we’ll have to change locations occasionally and have the guys pick us up like they were johns that chose us in preference to the regular girls. We’ll need to talk to the regular girls, talk it up, how we’re making money hand over fist and our handlers are letting us keep a greater percentage than they get. Cause some unrest and dissatisfaction within the ranks. Really get them stirred up. Remember, talk street, not office. Why don’t we start tomorrow? Pick out what you’re going to wear tonight. Oh, and really lay it on heavy with the makeup. It’s part of the disguise.”

“Now, Daniel, for you, a cheap flashy suit as the pimp, lots of bling and maybe a diamond earring. Regular clothes when you pick Mayson up. Clark will be doing the same thing with me. Let’s meet here at the Planet at 7:30 tomorrow night, in costume. We’ll start at 8PM.”

“Clark and I will be talking all of the details over, the backstory, you know our history together. Maybe the two of you should get together and discuss just how you are going to handle your side.”

Daniel looked at Mayson and said, “Are you hungry? I know this little Italian place, Travaglini’s. They have the best lasagna in the city.”

Mayson laughed, “Yes, I know it well. Okay, let’s go.” She even winked at Clark, knowing he was in on the joke. Clearly she was feeling better.

Since Lois didn’t know the story, Clark sent a thought, /That’s a good sign. Mayson’s cousin actually owns Travaglini’s. This might just work. If Tony’s there Daniel’s in for a surprise./

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It was almost seven PM when they took off from the farm and headed west for their visit with Lucy. They landed in Torrey Pines a few minutes before five PM Pacific. Lois had enjoyed the ride because it gave her a chance to sneak in a few kisses and tease Clark while he was essentially defenseless. When they landed they were both laughing hysterically, only managing to calm down as the door was answered by Lucy. As soon as she opened the door and spotted Lois, Lucy threw herself at her sister, wrapped her arms around her and started crying. With a little urging from Superman they moved inside. Lois was wearing a polo shirt and jeans and when they stepped inside, to the amazement of Lucy, Clark spun into his casual clothes, a tight black t-shirt which was almost as tight as his spandex and just as revealing and jeans.

Lucy had never witnessed this transformation. She hadn’t even been visited by Clark for a couple of years and each time he had visited he had been in his uniform the entire time. It really

hadn’t been a social visit. Seeing him change like that was ... spectacular. Her jaw hung open for a few seconds and she blurted out, “Wow!”

Once they were inside Clark guided them to the couch and saw to it that they were settled. Over the course of the afternoon they had discussed how to handle this situation and decided to use the amnesia story to cover the gaps and not reveal the fact that this was not really her sister. Therefore after a few minutes when Lucy started calming down, Lois said, “It’s so good to see you, Sis. It’s been so long. Luce, you’re going to have some patience with me. I’ve had amnesia and there are still big gaps in my memory. Tell me about yourself, what you’ve been doing, how the rest of the family is, where they are, what they’ve been doing, everything. Superman’s told me some things, but, there’s a lot he doesn’t know.”

Over the course of the next two hours Lucy brought Lois up to speed on the family. Lois actually cried when Lucy told her that about a year earlier their mother had died from alcohol poisoning. Ellen hadn’t been able to handle the loss of her eldest daughter and had drunk herself to death. Their father was there in California and trying scheme after scheme in an attempt to score the big deal and make a lot of money. Both of these revelations hit Lois very hard. In her own universe her mother had been a rock, steady and stable, as a single mother after the death of her husband in Viet Nam, starting out as a floor nurse and working her way up the ladder to Director of Nursing for MetGen.

Lois was shocked to think that she might just see her father, the father that she had never known! She asked Lucy, “How can I see Daddy?”

Lucy said, “I’ll give him a call and see if he can come over.”

Lois was beside herself with joy, to have her father back, a father who had died when she was five years old, a father she only had dim memories of. It was a dream come true. There were a few things that she and Clark were going to have to talk over when they were back in Smallville. Now she fully appreciated how Clark had felt when he found Martha and Jonathan in her universe.

Finally the conversation got around to Lois and Superman and their relationship. Lois gave her the story that she and Clark had decided on. “Well, you see Luce, it’s this way. Clark actually found me a few months ago. He helped me recover my memory. While we’ve been together these months we fell in love. We were married in Brazzaville so Superman is your brother-in-law.”

At that revelation Lucy let out a squeal and threw her arms around Clark’s neck and gave him a kiss on the cheek. She was crying as she said, “Wow, not only do I get my sister back, but now I’ve got a brother-in-law! Welcome to the family!”

Clark said, “Thanks, Lucy, I appreciate it. Now, that brings us to a problem. Since you are now my sister-in-law we have to take steps to protect you. You could find yourself being a pawn in the hands of someone trying to get to me or your sister. We’d like to suggest a move for you. How would you like to move back to Metropolis?”

Lucy asked, “What about my job here?”

Clark asked, “What is your line of work?”

“I work in IT. I’m part of a network administration team for a large firm.”

Clark thought for a few seconds, “Unless I’m greatly mistaken the Planet has an opening in the IT department. I might be able to get you that position. You could live with us until you secure a place of your own. We’ll help with the rental because we’d like you to live in a gated community for the added security.”

Musingly Lucy thought, <Back to Metropolis huh? That might be okay. What if he’s there? Oh well, he’s probably married by now so it won’t matter.> Out loud she said, “Okay, I guess that would work out. I’d need to give my two weeks notice

once I have the offer.”

Lois said, “Sounds good, Luce, we’ll get the spare room ready for you.”

Clark added, “I’ll get the ball rolling on the job. Do you have a current resume?”

“I’ll e-mail it to you.”

“That’ll work. I’ll look for it.”

Just about that time Sam Lane arrived. When he rang the bell Lucy said, “That must be Daddy.” She got up and went to the door to let him in. Lois was apprehensive of this meeting and in her nervous state stood and faced the door.

Lucy opened the door and as soon as Sam saw Lois he held out his arms and said, “Lois, how’s my oldest daughter? Where have you been? We’ve missed you.”

Lois was rooted to the spot, unable to move a muscle. At the sight of him Lois flashed back to pictures she had seen of her father in uniform as a military doctor. This older version still had the same features she remembered from the photographs. She had only been five when the notification had come that he had been in the aid station working when it had been overrun by Viet Cong and everyone killed. When she was finally able to move she approached him slowly and was in tears as she put her arms around his neck and buried her face in his shoulder as she said, “Daddy?”

Sam was surprised by this response but put his arms around her and comforted her. “Yes, it’s me, Princess.”

Hearing this endearment she burst into a fresh flood of tears. When Lois finally settled down she stepped back and said, “Daddy, I’ve had amnesia so there’s a lot I don’t remember. I guess we’ll have to make some new memories. There’s something that you need to know,” she reached out her hand and Clark stepped over and took it, “Clark and I are married.”

Sam Lane gave a start and asked, “You’re married to Superman?!?!? Is that the best thing to do? Are you going to be safe?”

Trying to reassure him she said, “I’m as safe as a babe in arms. There’s absolutely nothing that’s going to happen to me. We need to start getting together.” Lois quickly shot a thought to Clark, /Can we have a Bar-B-Q this weekend? Please?/

The return thought contained a lot of side channel amusement, /How could I say no to my lovely, sexy wife./

There was almost no break as she finished up, “How about we have a Bar-B-Q this Saturday? Clark will pick both of you up. We’ll call with the time later.”

Sam replied, “Sounds like fun. Okay, Saturday it is.”

Clark said, “It’s getting late. We’re a couple of time zones away. We’ll call about Saturday. It’s good to see you again, Sam, Lucy.”

Lois gave each of them a hug and a kiss and said goodbye as they exited.

On the flight back to Smallville Lois was bubbling over with joy. She couldn’t stop kissing Clark and wouldn’t even if she had needed to, she was so happy. She was going to be able to have a relationship with the father she had never known. This opened up a world of possibilities that she would have to discuss with Clark later.

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The next evening at 7:30 Mayson and Daniel showed up at the Planet. Mayson was wearing a trench coat over her costume until they were in the conference room with the blinds pulled. When she took it off she was dressed in a skirt so short that it just barely covered her panties. The top she had paired it with was scooped so low that the upper slope of both breasts were completely in view. If it had been any lower her areolas would be showing. The stiletto heels showed off her long legs to advantage. Her makeup was blatant and her hair teased out. No one would possibly recognize her as Mayson Drake, ADA.

When Lois removed her trench coat she had on a very short black leather skirt which she had paired with a red vest like top which buttoned at the waist forming a ‘V’ as it came down from the sides of her neck revealing the inner slope of her breasts, her chest and abdomen all the way down to her bellybutton. The fishnet hose and stiletto heels showed off her long luscious legs nicely. Her hair was also frizzed out and she was made up in a punk style.

Lois walked over to Mayson and gave her a hug. She said, “You look wonderful! Absolutely perfect.” Turning to Dan she said, “What do you think? Will she pass?”

Daniel hadn’t been able to take his eyes off Mayson the entire time and in a distracted tone said, “Yeahhhh,” with feeling.

Lois looked back at Mayson and said, “I think Daniel likes what he sees. If you’re that effective on him you’ll do just fine on the street. Just keep in mind, the only ones we go anywhere with are these two. If anyone else tries anything just give a shout. One or the other of them will come to the rescue. Okay, let’s go do this thing.”

They went down and got into two cars. Since Lois was also super powered they didn’t need a car so they had gotten a car from the Planet car pool for this assignment. Mayson and Dan left in his car. They drove into the Hobbs Bay area and spotted a group of women at 31st and Bayview. Unnoticed, they cruised past and let the girls out. Clark and Dan gave them some time to mingle with the other girls while they changed. Eventually Clark drove up to the curb and stopped. As soon as he did one of the girls separated from the pack and approached his car. She leaned in and placed her hands on the door, putting herself in a position to display her charms. She asked, “Can I help you, big boy?”

Clark replied, “I don’t know, maybe. I’ll have to try and think of something you can help me with.” Playing the part he winked slowly before he looked past her and started looking over the other girls.

Trying to reclaim his attention she replied, “Oh, I can help with a lot of things. You just name it.”

He looked her up and down before saying, “Actually, I’m kinda picky on who helps me. I was kinda in the mood for a brunette tonight. Maybe some other time.”

The girl was a red head and as she stood up she got a sour expression and said, “Not good enough for you huh?”

He repeated, “Tsk, tsk, why the attitude? Maybe some other time, or not.” He made a pretense of looking over all of the girls before saying to Lois. “You look like my type. How’s \*your\* attitude?”

She said, “My attitude is just fine. Anything you want is fine with me.”

“Climb in then.”

Lois strolled over to the car with an exaggerated rolling of her hips. She leaned in as the other girl had except she put her head inside the car and claimed his lips in a kiss. The kiss lasted a long time and when she broke it he repeated, “Get in.”

Loud enough for the other girls to hear she said, “You haven’t even asked what it’ll cost you.”

His reply was also loud enough for the other girls to hear, “It doesn’t matter. All that I care about is that it’s you.”

She reached in and stroked the side of his face, trailing her hand down his neck and the full length of his arm as she started to move around to the passenger seat.

As Lolo was making the turn around the hood she turned to Mayson and said, “See you later Mae. I hope you get a high roller too.” She giggled as she got into the passenger side of the car. Clark drove off and they joined Scardino. They got out of the car and compared notes. Lois said, “Okay, Mayson is going to put out the story that we’re from out of town but where we come from we’re high priced call girls, not normally street girls. You need to give her some time to put that story out there before you

go to pick her up. Clark, why don't you go upstairs and keep an eye on her?" Clark spun into his snooping clothes in preference to his Suit and took off to hover over the corner so that he could keep an eye on Mayson.

After about five minutes he flew back and landed. He said, "Okay, Dan, you're on. While I was overhead I saw another car drive up and the guy wanted Mayson. She turned him down but I don't know how many times she's going to be able to do that and maintain credibility."

Dan got into his car looking for all the world like Mr. Businessman and drove off. He returned ten minutes later with Mayson beside him.

They got out of the car and Mayson was flushed with excitement. She said, "After you left with Clark the other girls started quizzing me. I gave them our prepared story. They are fit to be tied that we're taking their trade away from them. If we go back to the same corner the boys will have to dress differently and drive something else. I'm sure that at least the girls that first approached them would recognize them."

Lois spoke up, "If we go back to that same corner it won't be until tomorrow night. We may take this theater troupe on the road, what do you think? Gives a new meaning to 'Guys and Dolls' don't you think?"

Daniel finally spoke up, "I think that next time, I should pick up Mayson first. Clark can keep an eye on Lois and keep her safe from a distance. I want to have Mayson here beside me. That way I know that she's safe."

Mayson gave Daniel a look that said, 'thank you'. Neither Lois nor Clark missed the exchange.

Lois sent a thought, /Well, did you see that? I think your plan is working. She is exuding sex appeal and I'm sure Daniel sees it. He's starting to feel really protective of her./

For nearly a week the foursome followed the plan.

On the third night there was an incident. When they strolled up to the other girls one of them moved in behind Lois. Lois felt the point of a knife in her back and heard, "All right bitch. Let's go into the alley and you and me have a discussion."

Lois swept around and knocked the knife away with her arm. She grabbed her assailant's knife hand in a vice like grip and squeezed until the girl dropped the knife. Lois gave her a small push which made her stagger back a few paces while Lois calmly bent down and picked up the knife. She took the knife in hand and said, "You know, people can get hurt with these things." And then she threw it so that it flipped once and buried itself in a telephone pole ten feet away. She warned the girl, "Be sure you're up to completing what you start. Next time I might not go so easy on you."

A few nights later, when Mae and Lolo were walking up to the corner the other girls spotted them and pointed them out to a stranger. As they walked up the strange woman approached them and said, "Hi, my name is Constance. Mitzie would like to have a talk with the two of you."

Lois spoke up, "Just who is Mitzie? Are we supposed to know her and be impressed by the name?"

Constance replied, "You should be, all of these girls work for Mitzie. She also has a house. Word has gotten to us that you worked in a house in Frisco. Mitzie wants to make you an offer. Get you off the street and into better quarters, something more to your liking. You'll also be able to charge more."

"Listen, Dearie, we don't need to charge more. The johns pay dearly already for our services and we make sure that they get their money's worth. That's why they come back so often."

Constance replied, "I know, I've heard. You are both very selective and have a group of regulars that keep you really busy. But we can offer amenities in the house that you can't get on the street."

Just then Daniel pulled up to the curb. Lois spotted him and

said, "Mae, Loverboy is here. You better go take care of him. I'll talk to Constance. I'll fill ya in later."

Mayson went over and got into Dan's car and they drove off. Lois watched them go and then turned her attention back to Constance. Lois asked, "Okay, what can you offer that we can't already supply? As she was saying this she was running her hands down her sides smoothing her dress down.

Constance was impressed in spite of herself. She was used to dealing with high class call girls but this woman and her partner were something else indeed. She said, "We have our own wine cellar and kitchen so you can offer drinks and munchies. We have changing rooms and a relaxing lounge where you can meet your customers."

Lois asked, "What's the percentage?"

Constance replied, "The house keeps 65 percent. You get 35. Depending on how much you are bringing in, the percentage can be renegotiated."

"You're gonna have to do better than that. I keep fifty percent this way and I don't have the overhead."

Constance said, "Let's say those are starting percentages and we want you to start immediately."

"Why should we even accept your offer, let alone start immediately?"

"Because you're hurting our trade and we don't want it to continue. If you don't accept our offer you're going to have to find another city to work in, if you know what I mean."

"I'll have to talk it over with Mae. We'll let you know tomorrow."

"I'll be here to get your answer tomorrow night." Constance turned and walked away. She climbed into a Lexus and drove away.

A few minutes later, Clark picked Lois up and took her to meet Daniel and Mayson. As soon as they had parked Lois jumped out of the car and grabbed Mayson and hugged her. Mayson was somewhat stunned by this action but brought her arms up and reciprocated.

Lois was enthusiastic as she said, "We did it! We did it! That woman represented the local Madam. We've been cutting in on their trade and we have been invited to join the girls in the house. If we turn down the offer we have to leave town. We did it! We convinced them."

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## Chapter 18 – In the House

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Universal Locator Designation

Local designation – Alt 1

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Clark said, "Let's all go back to the Planet."

Mayson spoke up, "Let's go to my place instead." With no further objections they loaded into their cars and headed for Mayson's.

Once inside they had a council of war. Clark asked, "Okay, Mayson, what do we need to get to nail this coffin shut?"

Mayson replied, "Now that we're being invited in and will be on the inside we won't need a warrant. Our eyewitness testimony will be adequate. It would be better to have four witnesses than two. You guys could come in as johns."

Lois said, "We need to find out just who's behind it all. I don't think it's the Madam. She has to have a backer. Someone with influence to keep the police off. I told Constance that we'd give her an answer tomorrow night. I don't know if we'd be taken to the house immediately or not but we need to be prepared for just that. According to the story we've put out there, we are experienced call girls so she'll probably expect us to start as soon as we walk in the door, which means that the guys are going to need to be among the first clients to arrive. I'm sure that we will

be expected to go with the first john that selects us.”

Daniel moved over and put an arm around Mayson before he spoke up, “I don’t know if I like this. What if somebody gets there before us? I don’t want Mayson having to go with someone expecting to have sex with her.”

Lois noted the possessiveness and protectiveness being displayed. She said, “Mayson, what do you think?”

Before answering, Mayson looked at Daniel. She said, “Just make sure you’re the one that gets there first. I don’t know how many I could turn down and maintain my credibility.”

Lois said, “Okay, it looks like Mayson is in for the long haul. Here’s what we should do. They probably charge by the hour but they may have an all night package. We have some funds, so that the guys can purchase our services for the entire night. As long as we time it right, there won’t be any problem. Just remember who Clark is and what he can do. Okay, we’re going to get out of here. We’re going to do some planning, I suggest you guys do the same.”

As Lois and Clark were leaving Lois noticed that Daniel had not removed his arm from its position around Mayson’s waist.

On the way out to the car Lois said, “I think that Daniel’s becoming interested in Mayson and I don’t think that she minds his interest in the slightest.”

Clark replied, “I think you’re right. He’s becoming very protective of her. That’s a good sign.”

They climbed into the car and took it back to the Planet parking garage. Locking up, they spun into their uniforms and took off for the farm.

The next evening, as usual, they met with Dan and Mayson at the Planet before going out. Both girls, as had been their habit, were wearing trench coats over their outfits so that there wouldn’t be any office talk. When the guys dropped them off they left the coats with them, and then the women strolled to the corner where they were to meet Constance.

As soon as they walked up Constance approached them and asked, “What is your decision?”

Lois looked at Mayson. Mayson nodded and Lois answered, “We’re in. When do we start?”

Constance gave a relieved sigh and said, “Climb in; I’ll take you to the house right now.” She led the way to her Lexus.

Lois sent a thought, /Constance is taking us to the house right now. You and Dan need to be there as soon as we get there./

She received his return thought, /I’ll get Dan in costume. He’ll have to use the one we brought for him since he didn’t think to provide one of his own. We’ll be there as a couple of high rollers, perhaps politicians./

When Constance parked they were in an underground garage for a high rise building. She led them to the elevator and pushed the button for 86, which was the floor for the penthouse. The elevator opened into a lobby of sorts with a single double door across from the bank of elevators. The elevator from the garage was only one of several.

Constance crossed to the doors and opened them. When she did Lois heard a soft chime go off in another room with her superhearing. Looking toward the sound, she x-rayed through to an office, a very lavishly appointed office at that. There was most definitely money here.

As Constance was closing the door, Mitzie came out of the office off to one side. She addressed Lois and Mayson, “Welcome to my house, ladies. I run a high class establishment. My girls are expected to perform and satisfy. You do that and we’ll get along just fine.” She gave their apparel a critical examination and then continued, “What you are wearing might be okay for the streets, but not here in the house. Constance will take you to the wardrobe room where she will help you to pick out suitable attire. She will then assign you your rooms. I would expect our clients to start arriving in an hour or so. When summoned for the parade

you will come back here to this lobby.” She swept her arm around the room indicating the comfortable chairs and couches, “You will be able to relax and be comfortable while you receive your customers. There may be occasions, when a special customer is involved that your room will change. You will use the presidential suite for those customers. Constance will show you that room later. Be aware that when you are in that room we want as much verbal communication as you can generate and try to keep as much activity as possible on the bed itself.”

Lois was thinking, <There is an obvious reason for that. They must be recording the activity. Blackmail later?> She sent a thought, /Clark, they have a special room that is probably set up to record. They could use the recording later for blackmail. I want to get a look at that room but it’ll only happen if you are someone important enough that they think it would be worthwhile./

The return thought was, /How about I pretend to be a politician? How about Representative Charlie King from Kansas. Think that would work?/

/That should pique their interest. We are headed to wardrobe to change. What do you want to see me in?/

She flushed as she received his return thought which carried a lot of side channel emotions, /How about your birthday suit? Of course that would be in private. In the house, how about you wear a black teddy. I’d like to see your legs./

She thought back, /I’ll see what I can do to please my husband./

Clark returned the thought, /I’m going to change my disguise. Add some gray to the wig, a little padding to the suit, maybe a mustache. I’ll be there shortly./

In wardrobe Lois found a black teddy in her size and matched it with black stiletto pumps and a gauzy sheer black shawl. She combed most of the frizz out of her hair while still leaving it fluffy and looked at herself in the mirror. She thought, <I think Clark will like me in this. This does show off my assets,> and she got a very self satisfied smile on her face and with a sexy sway to her hips she proceeded to her room to see just what was there.

Mayson, when she had gotten to wardrobe, had been separated from Lois. Constance had worked with her and had picked out a red bustier trimmed with black lace and a pair of satiny panties of the same color with thigh high nylon hose held up with garters, over-the-elbow lacy gloves and red stilettos. She also combed out Mayson’s hair somewhat to remove some of the frizz but left it full and softly flowing around her face. Mayson looked at herself in the mirror and was amazed at how sexy she looked. She knew that she was an attractive woman, but this woman in the mirror was something else.

Mayson wondered how Daniel would react to her when he arrived. It occurred to her as something of an afterthought, why had she thought first about Daniel and not Clark. When they had started this and she had started dressing for this part she had done so with an eye toward luring Clark away from Lois. Subtly, so subtly she hadn’t really noticed until now, her focus had shifted. Now she was dressing for Daniel. She started thinking about how Daniel was being attentive to and protective of her and she decided that she liked the attention. Now that she was finished dressing she went to look at her room and to wait there until summoned.

As Clark and Daniel arrived there was one other ‘customer’ in the elevator with them. All three entered the lobby of the house at the same time. Constance approached and asked, “Who do we have visiting us tonight?”

Clark asked in a voice brimming with authority, “Can we be assured of discretion?”

Constance instantly became excited. This individual was well dressed. He had dark hair, graying at the temples and a build holding a little extra weight which would go along with his apparent age. There had to be a reason for his question about

discretion. Cautiously she said, "Of course. Discretion is the rule of this house. What goes on here stays here."

Clark replied, "Okay then, I'm Representative King from Kansas and this is Daniel, my assistant. We've been in meetings all day and were looking for some companionship for the evening."

Constance reached into her pocket and pushed a button. Clark heard a chime go off in an adjacent office.

A few seconds later, Mitzie came out into the lounge to greet her visitors. Constance said, "Gentlemen, this is Mitzie, she's your host for this evening."

Dan said, "I was hoping for someone younger."

Constance laughed and said, "You misunderstand. Mitzie is the one who runs this establishment. You'll be meeting the girls shortly. Mitzie will go over the rules."

Dan let out a relieved sigh before he said to Mitzie, "That's a relief, not that you're not attractive, but, well, you know what I mean."

Mitzie smiled at him and said, "I know, young man, I know. The rules are simple; we have an hourly rate. SM is extra and if the girl gets hurt that also is extra. Constance, call in the girls please."

Constance walked to a door and pushed a button next to it. A few seconds later the girls started filing in.

When they had all come in and taken seats on the chairs and lounges in enticing poses the guy that had ridden up in the elevator with them said to Mitzie, "I like the one in the red bustier. How much for her?"

Dan was quick to jump in and say, "I want her too."

Constance turned to Mayson and said, "Well, Mae, it looks like you have your choice. Which one will it be?"

Mayson stood and swayed her way over to Dan and said, "I like his looks."

The other guy said, "Wait a minute, I saw her first!"

Dan replied, "The lady made her choice. She chose me."

The other guy laughed and said, "Lady? What lady. I don't see any ladies here, just whores."

Too quickly for the other guy to respond, Dan took a step toward him and slugged him. It was a solid KO right on the button. The guy was out before he hit the floor. Constance and Mitzie were shocked and appalled. Mitzie shouted, "Why did you do that?!?!?"

Unruffled, Dan replied, "He insulted this lady. I wasn't going to put up with that."

Mitzie turned to Mae and said, "You had better take him to your room before this guy wakes up." She turned to Dan and said, "Mae's fee just went up."

Dan replied, "I don't care. Schedule her as occupied for the entire night." He turned to Clark and said, "See you in the morning, Congressman."

As Dan and Mayson left the lounge Clark made a pretense of looking all of the girls over finally setting his eyes on Lois he said to Mitzie, "I would like the company of this young lady, please."

Mitzie was congratulating herself on her perspicacity on bringing these two women into the house. Their first night and not only are they both booked for the whole night but one is a high value target. Not to mention the fact that one of them had two Johns fighting over her. She turned to Constance and said, "Constance, the presidential suite for the congressman and Lolo."

Constance turned to Clark and Lois and said, "This way please." She led the way to the Presidential Suite. At the door as she was about to leave she asked, "What form of libations and food would you like?"

Clark looked at Lois and said by way of question, "Red wine? Cheese and crackers?"

Constance nodded and said, "I'll have them sent right up."

Closing the door she left.

Meanwhile, Daniel and 'Mae' entered their room. As soon as the door was closed Mayson threw herself into Daniel's arms and said, "Thank you. I was worried."

Daniel replied, "I wasn't about to let anyone else take you out of there. We're partners, after all."

Shyly, Mayson asked, "Is that all it is? We're partners? I've seen the way you've been looking at me. Do you like what you see?" She did a slow pirouette for him. "You know, Clark and I used to date. Now that he's married ..."

Daniel couldn't hide his feelings all that well as the emotions he was feeling flitted through his mind and were reflected in his eyes. He said, "Yeah, I knew that. I can see why he was attracted to you. You are *very* beautiful and sexy."

She reached up and started to unbutton the bustier. He watched and she opened button after button and as it slowly opened it revealed the creamy flesh of her bosom and abdomen. When she had opened the last button a column of flesh reaching from her neck to the top of the satin like panties was visible.

Dan's breathing had become irregular as he had watched this activity. In a husky tone he said, "We've been together on this for a while but, you don't have to do that. We're only playing a part."

With a sly grin she replied, "Is that what we're doing, playing a part? Okay, if we're playing a part, you're paying for a night of pleasure. I want you to get your money's worth. Besides you fought for me. You defended my honor."

He reminded her, "Look, you're not really working here!"

Mayson's reply took him by surprise, "I know, but I want to do this." She grasped the bustier where it was open and started pulling it open wider. Within a few seconds she was standing there naked to the waist. She moved over and pushed his jacket off his shoulders and then started on his tie. When she had him partially undressed, she moved into his arms. Her breasts pressed into his naked chest.

Once she was in his arms he threw caution to the winds. He sighed, "Oh Mayson," and pulled her into a kiss the likes of which she had only experienced once before, with Superman. She melted in his arms. When they broke the kiss she started fighting his belt. She couldn't get his clothes off him quickly enough.

They fell onto the bed lips locked together. Mayson squirmed around until she was under him. This started a period of intimacy.

Meanwhile in the Presidential Suite, Representative King and Lolo surveyed the room while they waited for the wine and food. They found two video cameras as well as listening devices. Sure evidence that they, or rather Congressman King was being set up for blackmail. Clark sent a thought, /We can't afford to let the video cameras continue to function. When I take off the suit the padding will come off with it and my true physique will be seen. They are on opposite sides of the room. If we were to kiss we could use our heat vision over each other's shoulders to put them both out of commission. That is, of course, unless you want a memento of this time together./

Lois thought back, /I don't think so. I display myself to my husband and no one else./

Clark sent back, /I don't want anyone else looking at my wife naked either. You're mine to look at and no one else's. I'm old fashioned that way./

/Let's kiss so we can do this, I don't know how much longer I can wait./

His reply was, /Let's wait until the wine and cheese have been delivered./

Her reply was terse, /All right, but not a minute more./

As soon as the wine and cheese were delivered they went into a clinch and each directed a well placed narrow beam of heat vision at a video cam. They made very small holes in the wall, next to the lens aperture and through the case. Then they fused a couple of wires, disabling the cameras.

In another room a technician was sitting in front of a bank of monitors. He was watching the high-profile subject with one of the girls as they went into a clinch and he was watching the hottest kissing session he had ever seen when all of a sudden the monitor he was watching went blank. He had a brief impression of a red flare just before it went dark. "Now how the hell did that happen?" <I checked those cameras earlier this evening to make sure they were ready for tonight. That shouldn't have happened! Oh well. At least we have the other camera. We should still get some usable footage from it. We'll need it if we want to have any leverage with him.> Just then the second screen went dark. "What the ... That can't happen! They can't both go out like that! Something's going on and I don't like it." He picked up a phone and dialed an extension. "Mitzie, Greg. We've got a problem."

Within a minute of getting the call Mitzie was in Greg's room and he was showing her what he had been able to record from the presidential suite. On both tapes she could see Lolo and the congressman go into a clinch and start kissing. She muttered to herself, "She really goes all out for the customer. If I didn't know better, I'd say that they've been lovers for a while. Very convincing and good technique." Just before the tape went blank there was a red flare which Greg could not account for. Mitzie looked at Greg and asked "What can we do? This is a high profile target. We have to get something."

"We still have the audio feeds. You might be able to use that?"

"It's not as effective as having a video tape of the target in a 'compromising' position, naked in bed with a prostitute. Leslie isn't going to be happy, but, I guess it'll have to do."

Unknown to Mitzie and Greg, Lois and Clark had followed the wires from the video cameras back to the room where Greg was monitoring the feeds. They saw him call Mitzie and tuned in with their superhearing when Mitzie joined Greg. They were startled when Mitzie said what she did, Lois sent a thought, /Leslie? Who's Leslie? I thought you said that it was the old Luthor network and that Inter-Gang under Bill Church Jr. that was actually pulling the strings./

He replied, /No, I said that we thought that was the way things stood. We are going to have to re-evaluate the situation./

/We need to find out who Leslie is. Is it a first name or a last name?/

Just then over the speakers Mitzie and Greg heard the clinking of glasses and a rustling as the food was being consumed. After a while they could hear the sounds of kissing and moans and groans. Then a female voice said "You look awfully uncomfortable in that suit. Wouldn't you be more comfortable removing your jacket and loosening your tie? ... There now, isn't that better? ... Now let's undo your shirt a little. ... My, what a strong neck. " Sounds of more kissing. "I like kissing your neck." There was female giggling and then they heard, "Your beard tickles. Do you like it when I kiss your neck?"

"How could I help it with someone like you?"

Things seemed to be progressing satisfactorily so they muted the speakers and allowed the tape to run. Mitzie said, "I'm expecting more customers. Make sure that we don't have any more equipment failures." With that comment, she left.

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## Chapter 19 – Mr. Olsen

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Universal Locator Designation

Local designation – Alt 1

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Their evening in the brothel had netted them all the information that they had needed. Based upon their eyewitness testimony, Mayson would be able to get a search warrant and the police could raid the brothel. Since Clark had told Mayson about

the secret room and the recording equipment they would be able to gather the evidence needed to prove that the brothel owners were blackmailing officials. Some important heads would probably roll as a result of the disclosure, but that was a small price to pay since it would remove the influence peddling.

The Monday after visiting the brothe,l Lois received Lucy's résumé in her inbox and printed it out. She and Clark took it to personnel and submitted it for the open IT position. The recruiter said that she would be contacting Lucy to follow-up on the application. They were told that since they were the ones recommending her that she would receive preferential consideration for hire. They thanked her and left.

On Thursday Lois had a call from Lucy, "Daily Planet, Lois Lane."

"Lois, Lucy."

"Hi Sis, how is it going?"

"Well, I guess you could say that it's going well! I just got off the phone with the recruiter for the Planet. I was offered the job. I start in two weeks."

"That's wonderful, Sis. Weekend after next have your things packed, and we'll move you. Welcome to the Planet!"

Clark had overheard the conversation and moved over to Lois' desk so that his voice would be picked up by the phone as he said, "That's good news, Lucy. Welcome aboard."

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When the time came for the actual move, Lucy was surprised to find that they were staying in Smallville but was very happy with the room they had prepared for her. When she asked about getting to work Lois told her that Clark would be flying them back and forth unless and until she found a place with adequate security in Metropolis.

The Monday that she was scheduled to start work, Clark flew Lucy in and disappeared for a few seconds, just long enough to go to the roof and back since Lois had flown under her own power.

Lois escorted Lucy downstairs to personnel to get her processed in. Lois made her promise to come up to the newsroom at lunchtime so that they could all go out together.

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As it was approaching lunchtime, Mr. Olsen was at Lois' desk discussing a story idea when Lois heard the elevator ding and looking saw Lucy exit. She saw Lucy look around and finally spot Lois.

What happened next took Lois completely by surprise. Lucy, when she spotted Lois, stopped dead in her tracks and a look of total surprise and shock overtook her features. She groped behind herself to find a firm surface to grab hold of to keep from falling. Lois was about to rush to her side when she heard Mr. Olsen shout, "Lucy!" as he hurried up the ramp to her side. Lois was frozen to her seat by the scene that unfolded.

Lois, the stunned observer, watched as Mr. Olsen reached her sister's side and reached out to support her. The look of total surprise was still on Lucy's face as she asked, "James? What are you doing here?"

Clark had reached Lois' side as they heard this. He was equally surprised as he said to Lois, "James? She knows him?"

They watched together as the scene unfolded.

Mr. Olsen laughed as he answered, "What am I doing here? I own the place."

Lucy gasped out, "\*You\* \*own\* the \*Planet\*?"

Mr. Olsen said, "Yeah, I bought it a couple years ago."

So he asked, "What are you doing here?"

"I just started working here, today."

"You're \*working\* here?"

"Yeah, my sister got me a job here in IT."

"Your sister? Who's that?"

"Lois Lane."

Mr. Olsen almost literally smacked his head as he said, “Why didn’t I realize? The name similarity!” He turned to look at Lois as he asked, “Your sister?”

Lois nodded.

Mr. Olsen took Lucy’s hand and led her down the ramp and over beside Lois’ desk before he started to explain. “Lucy and I dated, well, it was more than that. I wanted to get serious but ...” His expression became very thoughtful as he continued, “but her sister was missing and she just stopped wanting any kind of relationship. She drew back from me and into herself.”

He turned to Lucy and asked, “Lois Lane is your sister, the one that was missing?”

Lucy nodded.

He said, “She’s back now.”

Lucy nodded again.

He asked, “Are you happy to see her?”

Lucy nodded again.

He asked, “Are you happy to see me?”

This time Lucy didn’t nod. She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

When she pulled back he looked around and said, “If you keep that up, I’m going to have to fire you.”

She became scared and it showed on her face. With a chuckle, he continued, “I don’t want to be charged with sexual harassment which I could be since I’m the boss and you’re an employee!”

Lucy started to laugh and then she kissed him again.

Lois spoke up, “Lucy came up so that we could go to lunch. Would you care to join us?”

Mr. Olsen replied, “Would you mind terribly if I stole her from your party?” He looked at Lucy and said, “We’ve got a lot to catch up on.”

Lucy looked at Lois, “Is that okay with you, Sis?”

Lois said, “You two go ahead. We’ll catch up with you later.”

Mr. Olsen and Lucy left, hand-in-hand. The last thing Lois saw was the smile on Lucy’s face as the elevator doors closed.

Lois turned to Clark and said, “Wow, I never expected that.”

Clark was thoughtful as he said, “It sort of makes sense. They are both into computers. He came here from California. They must have met out there.”

Lois said, “I wonder if anything will come of it.”

Clark laughed and said, “To quote a friend of ours, ‘Only time will tell.’” Lois joined him in his laughter.

After lunch they noticed that Lucy spent the afternoon in Mr. Olsen’s office. When it came to quitting time Lois went over to his office and knocked on the door. He signed her to come in so she entered his office. She looked at Lucy and asked, “Ready to go, Sis?”

Lucy looked at Mr. Olsen and said, “Until I get a place of my own, I’m living with Sis and Clark. They’re worried about my safety.”

Mr. Olsen said, “I can understand and I agree completely. I guess, if I need to get hold of you I can call Clark. Lois, could you call Clark in, please?”

Lois went over to the door and called Clark. When he joined them Mr. Olsen said, “When you come to work tomorrow, please bring a change of clothes with you. I want to take you all out to dinner and dancing.” He looked at Lucy as he continued, “I want to renew an old acquaintance.”

Lois said, “I’m sure that can be arranged. Do you want to do that, Luce?”

Lucy looked at Lois with a plea in her eyes as she said, “As long as it won’t be too much trouble for you and Clark, then yes, very much.”

One day, after several weeks of Lucy and Mr. Olsen dating, he called Lois and Clark into his office again. As they entered he asked Clark to close the door. Lois and Clark sat on the sofa.

Mr. Olsen said, “I told you that Lucy and I had been serious before you went missing. She’s a big part of the reason I came east. It was to get away from all the places that reminded me of her and what we had had. Now that she’s here and we are back together, it’s, well, it’s great. I wanted to ask you since you’re closest to her aside from your dad. Do you think I’d have a prayer if I asked her to marry me?”

With a smile on her face Lois said, “I’m not the one to ask, Lucy is, but, I don’t think you’ll have too much trouble convincing her to say yes.”

“If she does say yes, then you’ll be my sister-in-law”

“Yeah, kinda weird, working for your brother-in-law.”

“Well, that’s another issue I wanted to talk to you about. In view of this I’ve been approached with an offer to buy out the paper.”

Clark asked, “Oh, who wants to buy the paper?”

James replied, “A guy by the name of Leslie Luckabee. He came out of nowhere with the offer. He’s from Australia.”

As soon as they heard the name, both Lois and Clark blurted out, “LESLIE!”

James was startled, hesitantly he said, “Yeah, Leslie Luckabee. Is there a problem?”

Clark said, “This investigation we’re working on, we got a break. A few of weeks ago we went undercover into the local brothel. While we were in there we heard that the person that was over the Madam was named Leslie. It’s possible that we finally got a name for the person behind all of the rackets here in Metropolis. That name is Leslie. Possibly, Leslie Luckabee. We only have the one name right now.”

James said, “It might not be the same one.”

Lois said, “You’re right, it might not be, but, can we take the chance that it isn’t?”

Clark said, “I think that until we determine just who Leslie is we can’t take the chance. Just who is Leslie Luckabee anyhow? Has anyone done a background check on him? If there hasn’t been, we need to do one. The name similarity can hardly be a coincidence.”

Back at the farm house that night after Lucy went to bed Lois and Clark were in the living room. Clark said, “I don’t know about you, but I feel like I need a break from this and to see my folks. Shall we go back for a while?”

Lois moved into his arms and replied, “I’m kinda missing the Kents too. We’ll be back here five minutes after we leave. Let’s go.”

Clark pulled out the TaDT and it turned on as he handled it. He punched the appropriate keys, a portal opened in front of them and they stepped through.

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## Chapter 20 – Back Home

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name ALT2

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They stepped through the portal into the living room of the Kent farmhouse. They heard Martha and Jonathan in the kitchen and walked over and through the door. Clark asked, “Well, how long have we been gone?”

Martha looked at the clock on the wall and said, “I’d say about five minutes. How long were you in the other universe?”

With a chuckle Lois replied, “Whew, a while. What a time! I met Lana Lang, the other Lana Lang. Boy, was she ever pushy!” Turning to Clark she said, “I can see why you didn’t marry her.”

Clark laughed and explained to Jonathan and Martha, “It was actually the other way around. When I decided to go public she broke the engagement. She was afraid that the government would haul me away to study me. Well, it sure looks like the device that

Herb gave us works. I think that once we start we will need to set a regular schedule for moving back and forth. We should probably make weekly trips. Here a week, there a week. What do you think?"

Thinking ahead, Lois said, "I agree, that way if there are 'physical' changes it won't be like a flip animation book."

Martha asked, "Are you two thinking ..."

Jonathan looked puzzled at the byplay. Martha looked at him in exasperation and gently clarified, "The patter of little feet, Jonathan! Grandchildren!"

Lois said, "Let's just say that we are open to the possibility."

Martha threw her arms around Lois and gave her a hug and a kiss as she started crying. Lois returned the hug. Jonathan broke out in a big smile and winked at his new son. Clark blushed, and then smiled too.

Lois turned to Clark and asked, "We have to be at work tomorrow, shall we spend the night here or Metropolis?"

His reply was somewhat tongue in cheek as he said, "Well, as long as Mom and Dad promise not to throw us out on our ears, why don't we stay here tonight and spend some time with them. After all, that is why we decided to come back."

Martha gave him a swat on the arm and said, "You keep that up and I just might. Now, get outta here and let me get lunch on. I think your dad needs some help with some fence. Lois, Honey, you can help me."

Laughing, Jonathan said, "Well, Clark, you heard the boss, let's go work on some fence," as he put an arm across Clark's shoulders and headed for the door.

Lois and Martha both laughed as they disappeared out the door.

That evening they all had fun playing a cutthroat game of Scrabble which Lois won, spending time together.

The next day they arrived at their apartment early and dressed for work. They were anxious to get cracking on the Luthor investigation.

As they were finishing up Clark said, "I'm beginning to think that this apartment is too small for us. Shall we look for a bigger place?"

Lois said, "You might be right. This place was fine for me when I was single, but there're two of us now."

He replied, "In a few of the other universes, the other couples are living at 348 Hyperion Ave. It is a two story brownstone. One of the nice things about it is that there is already a secret compartment that the uniforms can be stored in."

"Let's go check in with Perry and call a realtor. If it's available we can go look at it this evening."

"Sounds good." They both finished up and left for work.

First stop when they arrived at the Planet was Jimmy's desk. He saw them approaching and said, "Hi Guys ! How was the honeymoon? Hey, while you were away Superman and Superwoman busted up a heist of some gold bullion."

"Hi Jimmy, yeah, we read about it in Hawaii. Did they ever find out who was behind it?"

"No, not yet. All they got were low level operators mostly muscle for hire. The leader was the only one that knew anyone other than the leader and all he had was a description, a stout Englishman with a Vandyke."

Lois looked at Clark and said, "Sure sounds like Nigel and it would be just like Luthor to work through intermediaries so that his hands stay clean. Let's go into the conference room and talk, you too, Jimmy."

They all went into the conference room. Lois said, "Jimmy, how much have you got for us on that assignment?"

Jimmy asked, "I've been thinking about that. If I leave it in digital format you can do cross-checks using computer software rather than looking at columns of numbers on paper."

Clark said, "That sounds like a good idea."

Jimmy said, "I'll burn the data to a CD for you. I'll have it in a few minutes." Jimmy got up and returned to his desk.

Lois turned to Clark and asked, "Do you think that Luthor will give up, now that we're married?"

He replied, "There's one way to find out. We could snoop some more tonight. Do you want Chinese or Italian?"

She said, "We had Chinese the last time. Let's have Italian tonight." Her tone became one of a teasing nature as she continued, "My husband really knows how to treat a girl. A romantic dinner under the stars."

His tone was the same as he replied, "The romance comes later, when we get home."

She replied, "I'm looking forward to it. Let's go call a realtor and see about that house you like so much. Maybe we can look at it before we go on our stakeout."

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Lois liked 348 Hyperion every bit as much as Clark and they made an offer. The realtor told them that they would hear back in a few days if their offer had been accepted.

They returned to the apartment and changed into their snooping clothes. As they were doing this Lois grabbed a mini-recorder. Seeing this Clark said, "You know, that's a very good idea. If we can record Luthor's plans we could take the tape to Henderson. He might just be able to use it. We aren't going to be able to use that from the roof though." He snapped his fingers and said, "You know, in the equipment closet of my Planet we have some wireless microphones. Is there anything like that here?"

"Sure, we have all kinds of surveillance equipment for stakeouts. Recorders, wireless mics, cameras, even infra-red film for the cameras."

Clark asked, "What about video cameras?"

Lois asked, "What do you have in mind?"

"Let's treat this like any other surveillance and do it right. It's fine for us to listen in, but, if we want evidence, it has to be recorded. Let's stop by the Planet on our way and pick up what we need."

With a pout Lois asked, "What will this do to our plans for Italian?"

With a grin he replied, "We'll still do it, it just won't be take-out."

They stopped at the Planet and raided the equipment closet. They had two duffle bags of equipment when they left. They flew to the top of LexTower and sorted out the equipment, set it up and tested it. When the sun had gone down sufficiently so that they wouldn't be seen Lois flew down and attached a wireless mic with a suction cup appliance to an upper corner of a window in Lex's office. She hovered head down above the window so that all that could be seen from inside was a hand and that only briefly.

When she returned to Clark she said, "As I was placing the mic I could feel pain and I was starting to weaken. He must have Kryptonite in his office somewhere."

He replied, "We'll have to watch out for that in the future. If Bill invites us to help with the raid, we'll have to be busy with something else."

Eight o'clock that night found them on the roof of LexTower listening in as Lex was meeting with Nigel. Clark took a video camera and floated down and out over the street, far enough away from the window that he wouldn't be illuminated by the lights from the office. He zoomed in with the camera so that he had a close shot, almost as good as being in the room itself. The wireless mic was broadcasting on a particular frequency and the camera and the tape recorder were both set to pick up the same signal.

*[Voice 1 – Luthor] "Nigel, there have been two tries now to eliminate Kent and both have failed. Your bomber tried to make it*

look like an accidental gas explosion and then there was the mugging. I want Lane, no, I must have Lane. She must be mine. No other woman will do. I don't care how you do it, I want Kent eliminated. I don't care if you use a sniper; just get him out of my way."

(Voice 2 – St. John) "Sir, a sniper? That would cause all kinds of investigations. We need to make it look like the death was an accident if at all possible."

(Voice 1 – Luthor) "I'm getting tired of half measures. Look, your bomber was captured. The muggers, all but one was caught. They can all identify you, if they haven't already. For your own safety you need to succeed this time."

(Voice 2 – St. John) "I could possibly arrange a hit-and-run..."

(Voice 1 – Luthor) interrupting said, "Nothing that places Lane in danger. I think a sniper. Take him out surgically. See to it."

(Voice 2 – St. John) "Yes, Sir, if you insist."

(Voice 1 – Luthor) "Send in Mrs. Cox on your way out."

A short time later Mrs. Cox entered. Luthor addressed her.

(Voice 1 – Luthor) "I need to see Mitzie and Izzie. Arrange meetings with them for tomorrow night. Set them up for oh, ten and ten thirty."

(Voice 3 – Mrs. Cox) "Which do you want to see first?"

(Voice 1 – Luthor) "Set it up for Izzie Banks first. Constance can watch the house while Mitzie is here."

(Voice 3 – Mrs. Cox) "I'll set them up, Lex."

(Voice 1 – Luthor) "I know you will. I can always count on you. Call André and have dinner for two sent up. You'll join me, of course."

(Voice 3 – Mrs. Cox) "What about Lois Lane? I thought she was the only woman that would satisfy you."

(Voice 1 – Luthor) "So far, she has been unattainable."

(Voice 3 – Mrs. Cox) "How are you going to possess her even if you kill Kent?"

(Voice 1 – Luthor) "Ah, my dear, I will win her with my charm, my money and power. No woman can resist that combination."

(Voice 3 – Mrs. Cox) "What if she suspects that you were the one that had Kent killed?"

(Voice 1 – Luthor) "How would she find that out?"

(Voice 3 – Mrs. Cox) "What if the police get a line on Nigel? He could spill the beans."

(Voice 1 – Luthor) "Yes, he might, but only if he is alive to spill said beans. I have grown tired of his attitude. Once he has accomplished his task he will have outlived his usefulness. MI5 has an interest in our dear Nigel; however, if I turn him over to them he can still talk too much. I'll use a more permanent solution and then our dead Nigel won't be talking to anyone anymore."

(Voice 3 – Mrs. Cox) "Can I do it Lex? You haven't allowed me to express myself for ever so long. I always enjoyed my work when I was with the CIA. I still get a thrill when I hear the phrase 'with extreme prejudice.' It actually turns me on."

(Voice 1 – Luthor) "Patience my sweet, patience. I may give you your chance ... later. Right now I need him and I need you to set up those meetings for me."

(Voice 3 – Mrs. Cox) "Right away Lex.]

Realizing that they had all that they were going to get tonight since Lois had already been exposed to the Kryptonite, Clark flew up and recovered the microphone flying a fast as he could so that he kept his exposure to a minimum. They packed up the equipment and headed home. After securing the equipment they changed and took off from the back window, destination – Rome for their Italian dinner.

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The next morning they went to see Henderson. A soon as Sgt.

Tartaglia saw them he sent them on back. They knocked on his door and heard, "Come!"

Clark opened the door and ushered Lois in.

As soon as he saw who it was, Bill started smiling and said, "Welcome back! That was a lovely wedding. Let me see the rings. I didn't get a good look at them at the wedding."

They held out their hands and Bill examined the rings before he said, "Very nice. Distinctive. Were they designed just for you?"

Looking at Lois and having a conspiratorial air Clark replied, "We picked them up in a little shop run by a Frenchman that I know."

Bill said, "Well, I don't kid myself thinking that this is a social visit. What do you have for me?"

Lois started it, "Bill, you know how close we are to Superman and Superwoman. Well, they are taking these attacks on us personally. Especially since there's Kryptonite involved, that's tantamount to an attack on them. We borrowed some surveillance equipment from the Planet and provided it to them and they did a little super surveillance for us."

Clark pulled out a mini-recorder and hit play. Bill heard:

[(Voice 1 – Luthor) "Nigel, there have been two tries now to eliminate Kent and both have failed. Your bomber tried to make it look like an accidental gas explosion and then there was the mugging. I want Lane, no, I must have Lane. She must be mine. No other woman will do. I don't care how you do it, I want Kent eliminated. I don't care if you use a sniper; just get him out of my way."

(Voice 2 – St. John) "Sir, a sniper? That would cause all kinds of investigations. We need to make it look like the death was an accident if at all possible."

(Voice 1 – Luthor) "I'm getting tired of half measures. Look, your bomber was captured. The muggers, all but one was caught. They can all identify you, if they haven't already. For your own safety you need to succeed this time."

(Voice 2 – St. John) "I could possibly arrange a hit-and-run..."

(Voice 1 – Luthor) interrupting said, "Nothing that places Lane in danger. I think a sniper. Take him out surgically. See to it."

(Voice 2 – St. John) "Yes, Sir, if you insist.]"

"Oh, that's good," Bill said, "If only we had this on video.

This is good, but they could claim that it is a voice impersonator."

Clark said, "We have video as well."

Bill practically jumped out of his chair. "Why didn't you say that first?"

Clark put his hand on Bill's arm and patting it indicated that he should sit. "We got more than that. The thing is, we want to get the whole package and bring it in all at once. If we do it piecemeal he might be able to skate on the smaller charges. Here, listen to this," He hit the play button again.

[(Voice 3 – Mrs. Cox) "What if the police get a line on Nigel? He could spill the beans."

(Voice 1 – Luthor) "Yes, he might, but only if he is alive to spill said beans. I have grown tired of his attitude. Once he has accomplished his task he will have outlived his usefulness. MI5 has an interest in our dear Nigel however; if I turn him over to them he can still talk too much. I'll need a more permanent solution and then our dead Nigel won't be talking to anyone anymore."

(Voice 3 – Mrs. Cox) "Can I do it Lex? You haven't allowed me to express myself for ever so long. I always enjoyed my work when I was with the CIA. I still get a thrill when I hear the phrase 'with extreme prejudice.' It actually turns me on."

(Voice 1 – Luthor) "Patience my sweet, patience. I may give you your chance ... later. Right now I need him and I need you to set up those meetings for me.]"

When the tape finished Lois said, “If we can get Nigel into custody it could do several things, 1) he isn’t running around contracting with a sniper, 2) if we play this tape for him he may turn on Luthor and give us all of the low down on him, 3) in the event that isn’t enough we can threaten to call in MI5. One or the other of these things should work.”

Giving in, Bill said, “Okay, we’ll play it your way. With Superman and Superwoman helping to get evidence like this we can’t miss. Is there any more?”

“He set up a couple of meetings for tonight. Someone called Izzie Banks and someone else called Mitzie. Those names ring any bells?”

Bill let out a snort and then said, “I’ve heard of Mitzie but I’ve never had the pleasure of visiting her establishment professionally or otherwise. She’s the Madam of the most exclusive bordello in the city. Muggervin can give you the details. He heads up Vice.” Bill picked up his phone and dialed an extension. When it was answered he said, “Muggervin, got a couple of minutes? Yeah, my office. Couple of people for you to talk to. Okay.” He hung the receiver up and said, “Muggervin will be here in a minute.”

While they waited Clark advanced the tape to the section of interest. When Muggervin entered Bill performed the introductions and Muggervin said, “What do you have for me?”

Lois replied, “With a little super assistance from a couple of friends of ours we got a recording of some conversations in a particular office. One deals with some people you may be familiar with. Clark?”

“All set.” He hit the play button.

*[(Voice 1 – Luthor) “I need to see Mitzie and Izzie. Arrange meetings with them for tomorrow night. Set them up for oh, ten and ten thirty.”*

*(Voice 3 – Mrs. Cox) “Which do you want to see first?”*

*(Voice 1 – Luthor) “Set it up for Izzie Banks first. Constance can watch the house while Mitzie is here.”*

*(Voice 3 – Mrs. Cox) “I’ll set them up, Lex.”]*

Muggervin was beside himself. He asked, “Is that who I think it is? Lex Luthor, and he’s summoning Mitzie to a meeting? I always suspected that she had powerful friends. I’ve never been able to get a warrant for a raid. With his money he must have half the judges on the bench in his back pocket. I wish I could listen in on that meeting.”

Clark said, “We’ll have a recording for you tomorrow. We want to gather as much evidence linking him to criminal activities as we can so that when we go for an indictment it will be an open and shut case.”

Muggervin asked, “What do you get out of it?”

Lois answered, “Aside from personal satisfaction, a front page headline and maybe a Pulitzer nomination.”

Chuckling, Bill said, “You don’t set your sights high, do you?”

Laughing, Clark replied, “If you don’t shoot for the big Kahuna, you’ll never hit it.” Becoming more serious, Clark asked, “What do you want to do about Nigel?”

Bill replied, “I think we have at least enough to bring him as a material witness.”

Clark said, “If you can get a warrant issued we can ask Superman or Superwoman to pick him up and deliver him to you. They can probably find him when your people couldn’t.”

“Let me make a call.” Bill picked up his phone and dialed a number. When it was answered he said, “Hello, who am I speaking with please? Ah, Ms. Drake, I need to get a warrant issued.” Hearing this name Lois and Clark exchanged looks. Bill continued, “Person. Material witness. Recording. Nigel St. John. Pick up for interrogation. I’ll be right over.”

Clark and Lois looked at each other at Mayson’s name. Lois thought, /The universes work alike, don’t they? At least here you

haven’t developed a relationship with her./

Clark thought back, /It’s our good fortune they do, honey. It’s a good thing we’re married already. Remember, she’s been a problem, not just in my universe, but others as well./

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## Chapter 21 – Lois! Look Before You Leap

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name ALT2

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Bill turned to Lois and Clark and said, “There shouldn’t be any problem. Go on back to your office. When I have the warrant in hand, I’ll give you a call and you can pass the word to Superman.”

As Lois stood to go she said, “We’ll wait for your call and pass the info, then we’ll contact you tomorrow after we have the tapes from tonight’s meetings.”

At two p.m. Clark had a call, “Daily Planet, Clark Kent.”

“Clark, Bill Henderson. I got the warrant. Please get word to Superman and Superwoman that I would appreciate it if they could bring him in to me for questioning. After they bring him in I could use that video tape. I’d like to provide some entertainment for my guest, in between questions, if you know what I mean.”

Laughing Clark said, “You’ve got it Bill. We’ll pass on the request.” As he hung up Clark gave the flying hand signal to Lois and they both headed for the stairwell. They supersped to the roof and emerged from the door in uniform. They stopped at that point to confer.

“Where are we most likely to find him? If he’s not at LexTower he could be out looking for a sharpshooter.”

“We know who we are dealing with. I wouldn’t put it past him to be carrying Kryptonite. We can’t be too close together. Let’s take opposite sides of the building and start looking for him there.”

They both flew off and each took station on their side of LexTower and started scanning.

Clark received a thought, /Spotted him. Two floors below Lex’s office. Looks like he’s alone. I’m gonna go get him./ She was flying at the office window even as she was sending the thought. Too late she received his reply, /Wait! We don’t know if he has Kryptonite or not!/

Nigel had his back to the window and therefore didn’t see Superwoman approaching. As she neared the window however she started feeling pain and it increased the closer she got. By the time she was five feet away she was in agony and losing control of her flight power and starting to fall out of the sky. She started to scream from the pain and fear. Clark came around the building and gave the 98<sup>th</sup> floor a wide berth since that was where Nigel was. He spotted Lois falling past the 75<sup>th</sup> floor and shot off in pursuit. He caught her as she was passing the 70<sup>th</sup> floor and cradled her in his arms. She was unconscious so he flew her back to the apartment and laid her on their bed. He removed her mask and got a cold compress to swab her brow.

After a few minutes she came to and asked, “What happened? Ohhh, I ache. Yeah, right, Kryptonite. I should have been more careful. That’s going to be a problem. We aren’t going to be able to get near him.”

Clark said, “Let’s not jump to any hasty conclusions. He may not carry it on him. It could be in his office. Think back, when you had dinner with Luthor, were you near Nigel and did he have Kryptonite on his person then?”

“I don’t know. That dinner was before Clark’s powers were transferred to me. I wouldn’t have felt anything.”

Clark said, “Your exposure was rather brief so you should recover your powers quickly. Why don’t we do this, I’ll fly us up to about 25000 feet so that we are above the clouds and in direct

sunlight. That should help regenerate your powers.”

She started to pout and said, “You mean I don’t get a chance to lay out on the beach with you like we did after you dealt with that ring?”

He laughed as he said, “My exposure that time was a lot longer and a lot closer, if you recall. I’ll give you a rain check on the lying out on the beach thing. Besides, we need to get Nigel.” He thought for a second and then said, “Maybe we should go to the Congo and see if we can buy the Ubuntu in this universe.”

“Not that I don’t like the Congo, but, let’s find something closer, perhaps on the Chesapeake Bay.”

“Sounds like a plan. We can start looking. Right now I need to get you into the sun. Let’s go, Love.” After she had put her mask back on he lifted her in his arms and flew out through the back window and up.

As soon as she felt the sun on her exposed skin she started feeling better. It was only about ten minutes later that she said, “I think I’m back. Let me try to fly.” He extended his arms and she floated out of them and then reversing course came back into his arms and kissed him. She said, “Thanks for being there. It wouldn’t have been very pretty if I had fallen all the way to the sidewalk.”

“We’ll always be there for each other. That’s what marriage is all about. I love you Lois.”

“Yes, that’s what marriage is all about. You’re right. I love you.”

“Okay, Nigel has Kryptonite, probably just in his office. We need to wait for him to leave that office in order to get to him. This looks like a surveillance job. We just have to stand back and watch. He can’t stay in that office 24x7. As soon as he leaves it we can grab him.”

“I’ve sure learned my lesson. From now on I’m going to go slow and check before jumping in.”

“Okay, let’s go back and start watching him.” They both flew back down and took station on the roof of a building across from Nigel’s office and used their enhanced vision to watch.

While Lois watched his movements, Clark gave the office a minute exam. Finally he said, “There it is. It’s on the corner of his desk. Do you see that little statuette?”

“Yeah.”

“It’s been plated with chrome but underneath it’s pure Kryptonite. If you had gotten in through that window I wouldn’t have been able to get in there to rescue you. He would have had us both.”

“We’re going to have to make sure we give his office a wide berth in the future. We need to be careful, he may also carry some on his person when he is out and about. I never want to feel that kind of pain again. After feeling that I don’t know how you were able to stand up to it the way you did with that ring.”

Looking her in the eyes he said, “I did that for you. I couldn’t allow that ring to be used against you. I had to deal with it so that you’d be safe.”

Feeling that verbal communication would be unable to convey everything she was feeling she switched to telepathy. When she did she packed all of the love she felt for him into the side channel communication as she thought at him, /I love you more than I could ever express verbally. You were willing to sacrifice yourself for me. I can’t wait to finish this so that I can show you just how much I love you./ She continued verbally, “I’m glad you taught me how to communicate that way because words were inadequate.”

He leaned in and gave her a kiss which lasted a couple of minutes and took her breath away, “That’s another form of non-verbal communication. I hope it conveyed what I’m feeling.”

Breathlessly she replied, “And how! We have a date later, husband mine.”

It was only a few minutes later that they saw Nigel leave his

office. She said, “He’s on the move!” They tracked him through the corridors and into the elevator. A few minutes later they saw him enter Luthor’s office and speak with Luthor briefly and depart. They followed him again. This time when he got into the elevator he took it to the ground floor. They watched as he crossed the lobby. As he was about to exit through the front doors Clark thought, /I’ll go pick him up. You hang back, just in case he has Kryptonite on him. I’ll try to get close without him even knowing I’m there./

As Lois watched Clark took off and took a path which passed an apartment building. As he passed it, he grabbed some laundry which was hanging on a fire-escape rail and spun into it. Landing at the side of the building and ran around front.

Lois saw Nigel just as he was about to walk out the doors. Then she saw Clark, in disguise, approach him. He didn’t appear to be experiencing any discomfort as he walked up to Nigel and grabbed his arm. She saw Nigel wince at the pain created by Clark’s firm grip. Nigel had to know that it was Superman because she saw him reach into his pocket. She x-rayed it and saw what he couldn’t. She sent a thought, /Watch out! He’s reaching for Kryptonite with his other hand!//

Clark grabbed his other hand and restrained him, preventing him from reaching the Kryptonite. He said, “Now, let’s not be too hasty. Before you know it, you’re going to be thanking me. Let’s take a walk. Lt. Henderson over in Precinct Twelve wants to show you a movie after which he wants to have a talk with you. It could work to our mutual benefit.”

Superwoman landed next to Nigel and extracted the lead lined box from Nigel’s pocket. She used her heat vision to seal the kryptonite up in the lead and then gave it a heave, straight up, launching it into space.

Superwoman assumed custody of Nigel so that Superman could remove and return his disguise. They continued walking toward the Twelfth Precinct. When Superman returned he picked up Nigel and took off. Superwoman, instead of following, took off on another errand.

After landing at the Twelfth Precinct, Superman conducted Nigel to Henderson’s office. He knocked and heard, “Come!” He opened the door and pushed Nigel down into one of the chairs before saying, “Lois Lane and Clark Kent asked if we could bring this individual to you.”

Nigel blustered and almost shouted, “What’s the meaning of this? I know my rights! You can’t haul me in here without a warrant!”

Bill picked up a piece of paper and said, “Right here.” He read from the warrant, “Warrant for one Nigel St. John. British citizen here in the country illegally. Wanted by MI5 for questioning.”

As each point was enumerated, Nigel’s countenance fell. When he heard MI5 he actually started to panic. These people knew too much.

Bill finished up with, “Wanted by the MPD as a material witness.”

Nigel blurted out, “Material witness? What do you mean?” Just then there was a knock on the door. Bill called, “Come.”

The door opened and in stepped Superwoman. She had a videotape in hand. She handed the tape to Bill. Bill said, “Thanks, Superwoman.” He turned to Nigel and said, “You may find this hard to believe but Superman here and Superwoman may have just saved your miserable life.”

Nigel, with look of disbelief on his face said, “I find that hard to believe.”

Bill replied, “Oh, you can believe it all right. Let’s have a little show and tell, shall we?”

Bill turned on the TV he had set up behind his desk. Once it was warmed up he put in the tape Superwoman had just given him. He played the entire tape.

When they reached the discussion between Luthor and Mrs. Cox, Nigel blanched. He said, “That lousy, two timing, back stabbing ... What do you want to know?”

Bill said, “First, have you contracted the hit on Kent?”

Nigel replied, “No, I was stalling. I didn’t think that was the best way to go. Too many questions generated by that kind of hit. Kent’s safe.”

Bill continued, “Okay, we’re going to want everything you can give us on Luthor and his activities. We want to know where the bodies are buried.”

Nigel saw an opportunity to bargain, “If I cooperate, what do I get?”

Bill asked, “What do you want?”

“I want immunity from prosecution, no deportation and the witness protection program.”

“It’s up to the DA to make those kinds of deals but I’ll put in a good word for you, if you cooperate fully. Let’s go down the hall to Interrogation 3 so that we can make a recording.”

As Nigel stood up he turned to Superman and Superwoman and said, “I never would have believed I’d be saying this, but, thanks. Oh, and by the way. Steer clear of my office and Lex’s. Within the last couple of days we each got Kryptonite statuettes. If you go near them, well, you know what will happen.”

Superman said, “Thanks for the warning. We’ll keep it in mind.”

After Henderson and St. John went down the hall Superman and Superwoman left. Shortly after that Lois and Clark appeared in front of Sgt. Tartaglia. Lois said, “Hi Gino. Is Bill handy?”

Gino replied, “I think he’s questioning someone. You want I should call him?”

“Yeah, Gino, Please do. We forwarded his message to Superman and wanted to see how that all turned out.”

Gino rang Henderson’s office and there was no answer. He called over a patrolman and asked, “Roberts, would you be so kind as to go find Lt. Henderson and inform him that he has some very important visitors waiting?”

Roberts replied, “You got it, Gino. I’ll find him and let him know.” Roberts disappeared down the hall.

A few minutes later Henderson came into the lobby and signaled for Lois and Clark to join him. They accompanied him down the hall. As they were walking he filled them in, “Superman and Superwoman brought in St. John. He’s willing to cut a deal. ADA Drake is on her way over to see what can be worked out.”

Bill’s statement hit Clark like a ton of bricks. The thought, <Mayson! Here we go again.> Then he shot a thought to Lois, /What kind of relationship did Clark have with Mayson here in this universe?/

Lois replied, /We never met her./

Clark sent back, /Thank heaven for small favors. Thank you for marrying me. That should remove at least this possible problem. It’s bad enough that we had to deal with her in the other universe./

When they arrived outside of Interrogation 3, Bill stopped and said, “Everything said in this room is being recorded. See what you can find out.” He opened the door and they, all three, entered.

Bill addressed Nigel, “I think you already know Ms. Lane and Mr. Kent.”

Nigel answered, “Yes, I do. As far as my relationship with Lex Luthor, the two of you have been a thorn in my side. In view of what I just found out, and I understand I have you to thank for it, I’m glad you were. Thank you for warning me.”

Lois asked, “Why was he going after Clark? What was his motivation?”

“It all goes back to the White Orchid Ball. From that night on he has been obsessed with you, Ms. Lane. He will do anything to

possess you. It happened suddenly, for no apparent reason almost like a post hypnotic suggestion suddenly kicked in. From that night on all he could think about was having you. He saw Kent as an obstacle to that end and decided to take him out of the picture. Initially he wanted to make it look like an accident. When the bomb failed he tried the mugging. After that didn’t work he wanted me to hire a sniper.” He saw the look of shock and horror on Clark’s face and quickly added, “I hadn’t done that. I was stalling because I didn’t feel that was subtle enough and would generate too much police investigation. If I disappear though, he may take matters into his own hands and contract the hit himself. He is desperate to possess Ms. Lane.”

There was a knock on the door. Bill answered it and Mayson walked in. Bill performed the introductions.

Mayson really gave Clark an appreciative eye after Lois was introduced as his partner.

Lois, seeing this, thought that early intervention was going to be important, so she corrected Bill’s introduction, “Mayson, actually Bill’s introduction was incorrect but it is easy to excuse since it was so recent, you see, Clark and I are more than reporting partners, we are life partners as well. We were recently married.” She held out her ring hand as evidence.

Mayson’s countenance immediately fell. As, apparently in all universes, she had had an immediate attraction to Clark. This was a distinct disappointment. She turned to Bill and asked, “Okay, Lt. Henderson, what do we have?”

Bill introduced St. John, “ADA Drake, this is Nigel St. John. He is in the employ of one Lex Luthor. He has a story to tell. In order for him to give us his story though, he has asked for certain guarantees.”

She asked, “Such as?”

Nigel spoke up, “Quite simple, actually, immunity from prosecution, no deportation and the witness protection program.”

Mayson was shocked, “That’s quite a bit. Your information needs to be such that it will make it worth our while to give that level of guarantees.”

Nigel said, “As Lt. Henderson so quaintly put it, I know where all of the bodies are buried, those for which Lex Luthor is responsible. I know a lot besides that. You have heard rumors of ‘The Boss’ haven’t you? The central figure behind all of the major rackets here in Metropolis. Lex Luthor is ‘The Boss’. I can tell you where his secret books are and all of his hidden bank accounts.”

Mayson said, “Lt. Henderson, will that be adequate? Exactly what do you need from him?”

Bill replied, “All of it. What rackets does he run, well actually who runs each of the rackets and what can we use to bring each one of them in? How does he handle the money he takes in from these various enterprises?”

Nigel replied, “I can give you a list of all of his secrets. As far as the money goes, he has so many corporations and dummy corporations to move monies back and forth between that it’s ridiculously easy to confuse the money trail. He does, however, keep a detailed set of ‘secret’ books. Those he keeps in a small vault in his office. You will need to be extremely careful though. That vault has an intrusion prevention system which at any unauthorized access will incinerate the books. It would take Superman to get the door open and get to the books before they were like Burnt Toast. The problem you have is that Superman can’t enter his office because of the Kryptonite. You’ll have to deal with that first.”

Bill turned to Mayson and said, “At this point I’d say that it looks like he’s cooperating.”

Mayson said, “Tentatively, I’ll authorize all of your conditions, but, If Lt. Henderson tells me you’re holding back or giving false info, all bets are off.”

Nigel replied, “You don’t have to worry, I’m very

motivated.”

Bill chuckled as he said to Mayson, “He’s telling the truth on that one at least. Luthor is planning on silencing him. The only thing keeping him alive is cooperating with us.”

Mayson replied, “All right, I’ll go back to my office and get the ball rolling on his guarantees. When you are satisfied that you have everything, let me know and we’ll go the next step. When the case is finally closed we will execute the final step.”

Mayson turned to Lois and Clark and asked, “How did the two of you get involved in this?”

Lois answered, “Luthor was after me and tried to kill Clark twice. We asked Superman and Superwoman to help out.”

At the mention of the superheroes Mayson got an angry expression and an irritated tone in her voice as she said, “Those vigilantes! Why did they have to get involved?”

Lois continued to be the one to interact with Mayson. She replied, “They were able to do some super surveillance which got the low down on Luthor’s plans against Nigel here. That’s why he’s being so cooperative.”

Turning to Henderson she asked, “Did you have a court order authorizing wire tapping or however it was done?”

Bill answered, “No, we didn’t. In this particular case it wasn’t needed. The evidence obtained will never go to court. It was for an audience of one.” He pointed to Nigel.

Mayson, mollified, said, “Okay, I’ll start the paperwork. Keep me posted.”

Bill said, “I’ll be asking for a number of warrants shortly, both Material Witness for people and search warrants for documents.”

Mayson said, “I’ll grab a couple of assistants to help with the paperwork.”

Nigel chimed in, “Be careful who you choose. Luthor has people in your office on his payroll.”

Mayson stared at him, “I’ll need names.”

Hesitantly he said, “That could take me some time to remember.”

Mayson, refusing to joust with him said, “The longer it takes you to remember, the longer it takes me to get the necessary paperwork done. I may just have to pick someone and hope they aren’t on your list when I finally get it. Of course, if they are then Luthor will probably have been informed and will have destroyed all this evidence you have promised us and we’ll just have to release you.”

Nigel started to panic again and said, hastily, “That’ll be the first list I give the good Lieutenant, rest assured.”

Mayson looked at Bill and said, “Call me as soon as he gives you that list.”

Bill chuckled as he said, “You got it. I like your style.”

Mayson nodded and exited the Interrogation room.

Lois said, “Bill, once you get the warrants you are after, let us know. We will contact Superman and Superwoman and let them know that you have some more pick-ups for them. It would be extremely satisfying for us to see them pruning the branches off of Luthor’s tree of crime.”

Bill replied, “As soon as I have the first one I’ll call, count on it and, thanks for the help.”

Clark spoke up for almost the first time, “Don’t mention it Bill. We are always happy to help the MPD, you know that. All we ask for is an exclusive.”

Bill barked out a laugh, “I should have expected nothing less! You’ve got it. It’s your story.”

Taking Lois’ hand they exited the interrogation room and headed for the Planet to await the call.

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## Chapter 22 – Building the Case

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name ALT2

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As soon as they walked in Perry grabbed them and they went into his office. He asked, “Okay, what’s the story? Who is it that’s after Clark?”

Lois said, “Well Perry, it is this way. Lex Luthor is behind it. Bill Henderson has his chief lieutenant in custody and he’s starting to spill the beans. We expect that the case against Lex Luthor will break wide open in just a few hours. We are going to start writing it up now and fill in the blanks and flesh it out once that happens. The story is ours as a Planet exclusive and it’s a big one. You may want to set it up as a special with a double printing. How about this for the headline, “Lex Luthor, Metropolis Rackets Boss Revealed.” How does that sound?”

Perry was stunned. He said, “You told me that this story was going to be big but I didn’t know it was going to be this big. This is huge! All right, do the preliminary work. As soon as you have the whole package, let me know.”

Lois laughed, “You’ll be the first one we tell, won’t we, Clark?”

“You bet. The very first.”

Perry had a huge grin on his lips as he rubbed his hands together and said, “I can’t wait. Why haven’t you brought me anything on Superman’s return? He’s been seen around here for a couple of weeks now.”

“Well, Chief, Superman and Superwoman have kinda been working in the background since he’s been back. They are the ones that brought in Luthor’s lieutenant, but we can’t print anything about that because it would warn Luthor.”

“Okay, well, what are the two of you doing sitting there? Get back to work, this is still a newspaper and I still need copy to fill the pages.”

Lois said, “We’ll do what we can, Chief,” as they got up and left his office.

A little while later Clark’s phone rang. He picked it up and said, “Daily Planet, Clark Kent.”

He heard, “Clark, Bill. Okay, we got the first few. Can you get hold of Superman or Superwoman for me and let them know I have a couple of warrants for material witnesses that I need some help in executing?”

He replied, “Sure thing Bill, I’ll see what I can do.” He hung up the phone and looked over at Lois. She had heard the entire conversation so she nodded and got up from her desk. Together they headed for the stairwell. Seconds later, Superwoman and Superman appeared in Bill’s office.

Bill came directly to the point, “We have warrants for several people. Since they are wanted for questioning and not for crimes, anyone can bring them in.” He handed Superman a typed list which had names and addresses as well as pictures. He continued, “The first one is Izzie Banks, he runs the protection racket for Luthor. The next one is Frank Baxter, he’s the muscle that Luthor usually uses to eliminate problems. I’m surprised that he didn’t use him against you. Last is Mitzie Daphne, she’s the madam of the local house and runs all of the prostitution efforts here in town. By bringing in these three we hope to add to the case we are building.”

Superman handed the sheet to Superwoman to look over and said, “We’ll see what we can do for you, Lieutenant.”

They exited the building and took off, landing on the top of the Daily Planet building. Lois asked, “Who do you want to go for first?”

“Let’s see if we can find Izzie Banks. He lives in an apartment building in the Hobbs Bay area.”

She said, “He must be doing well, the apartments in that area aren’t cheap.”

He said, “I think we are going to need to be disguised, and,

considering who he is and who he works for, we need to separate.”

“Okay, maybe a messenger service uniform. I think I still have one in my closet. I used it before.”

“That should work. I can wait down the hall from his door.”

They lifted off and headed home entering through the back door. Lois got her outfit out and put it on. It consisted of a gray uniform shirt and pants with a ball cap emblazoned with ‘Speedy Messenger’. She grabbed a manila envelope and wrote Izzie’s name on it. She did a little pirouette and asked, “How do I look?”

With a little snicker he said, “I can’t resist a woman in uniform.”

She laughed and said, “I bet you like my other uniform better.”

Giving her a leer he said, “Unquestionably.”

She said, “Down boy, time for that later. Let’s go catch us a fish.”

He laughed and said, “Later it is. Okay, let’s go.” To make it look better, Lois hopped up in Superman’s arms and he carried her to the vicinity of Izzie’s apartment.

When they entered, Superman moved down the hall a ways while Lois knocked on Izzie’s door.

Izzie looked out the security lens and seeing a woman in a uniform with a ball cap asked, “Who is it?”

Lois said, “Speedy Messenger Service. Delivery for Izzie Banks.”

Izzie unlocked his door and opened it. As soon as he did Superman appeared beside Lois and as he grabbed Izzie he said, “Izzie Banks, the police want to have a discussion with you. They sent me here to bring you in.”

Izzie started to splutter and said, “You got no right to do dis. Where’s your warrant? I got rights!”

Superman said, “You’ve got nothing. I’m not arresting you. Lieutenant Henderson just wants to have a little chat.”

Superman turned to Lois and said, “Ms. Lane, thanks for your help.”

She turned to him and said, “Any time Superman. I’m always happy to help.” She turned away and moved down the hall to the elevator. After she hit the button she turned and looked back. She x-rayed Izzie and saw an object in his pocket and sent a thought, /Watch out! He has a lead lined box in his pocket./

Superman grabbed his other arm just as he was starting to reach into his pocket. He called, “Lois, could you give me a hand?”

She feigned surprise, pointing at herself and said, “Me?”

He said, “Yes, just another minute of your time.”

She walked back down the hall. When she got there he said, “If you would be so kind as to check his pockets for me. He wouldn’t be the first of Luthor’s minions to have Kryptonite on his person.”

“Sure Superman. Anything to help.” She reached into his pocket and pulled out a little lead box. She asked, “Is this what you were looking for?”

He replied, “Sure is. If you could take care of it until I come for it for disposal, I’d appreciate it.”

Lois stuck it in her pocket and said, “Anything you want, Superman. I’ll look forward to seeing you later.”

He said, “Maybe I’ll stop by and visit you and Clark later, if that would be okay.”

Lois said, “Bring Superwoman with you and we can have dinner together.”

He replied, “I’ll check with her and get back to you. Right now I have to get Izzie here down to Headquarters.”

Lois left again, this time going down in the elevator and out of the building. She headed for the Twelfth Precinct.

She arrived a few minutes after Superman brought in Izzie. Lois was still in her disguise but Sgt. Tartaglia recognized her

anyhow. He waved her on back. She moved down the hall and knocked on Henderson’s door. She heard, “Come in,” and opened the door. Superman was there with Henderson.

Henderson asked, “Lois, have you changed jobs?”

Lois looked at her attire laughed and said, “No, Bill, Superman needed a hand getting to Izzie. He asked me to be a decoy.” Turning to Superman she said, “By the way, here’s that Kryptonite you took off of him.” She handed him the little lead box.

He said, “Thanks Lois. I appreciated the help.”

She asked, “Is there anything else I can do for you?”

He said, “I have a couple more to bring in. If I need you, I’ll call. Thanks again.”

Lois said, “I’ll look for a call.” She sent, /This all should help with the secret identities. Who’s next on the list?/

/I was thinking of Mitzie Daphne./

/The Madam? How were you planning to handle it?/

/I don’t have a clue yet./

/I’ve got an idea. Meet me at home./

/What we did in the other universe would take too long./

/I was thinking of a more direct approach./

/Okay. I’ll meet you at home./

All of this communication had taken place at the speed of thought so there was very little break in his conversation with Henderson. Superman said, “Well, Lieutenant, that’s the second one. I was thinking about going after Mitzie next. As soon as I have her, I’ll bring her in.”

Bill said, “Your help has been invaluable in this. My people couldn’t have moved so quickly. Thanks.”

Superman said, “Don’t mention it. Let’s just get this done.” He turned and exited the office.

When he arrived at the house he found Lois dressed in a very short skirt which, even though it was short, was still slit up the left thigh to just below the hip, fishnet stockings, stiletto heels and a skin tight knit top which showed off her assets. She had donned a red wig and some makeup.

All Clark could do is stand there and stare. He said, “Wow, you know, I’ve never really been attracted to redheads, but I could make an exception in your case.”

She swayed over to him and moved into his arms. She initiated a kiss which held a world of promise. When she broke the kiss she stepped back and asked, “Do you think that Mitzie would hire me?”

“I sure would.”

“Okay, let’s go”

“I’ll bring her out. I want you to fly me there. I kinda like it when you flew me a while ago. It was just like old times.”

“I liked it too. Let’s go, Sweetheart.”

They exited and he flew her to the vicinity of the brothel and set her down.

He flew up to the roof so that he could keep an eye on things while Lois entered the lobby and moved to the elevator. While she rode up in the elevator she stuck a piece of gum in her mouth and started chewing. When she exited the elevator she crossed to the lounge and entered. When she did a gong went off in an office alerting Constance to the fact that they had a visitor.

Constance came out of her office and was surprised to see a woman. She asked, “May I help you?”

Lois using a not so bright vernacular said as she popped the gum, “Yeah sweetie, you may help me. Are you the boss here?”

Constance asked, “Do you mean the Madam?”

Lois said, “Yeah, that’s who, the Madam.”

Constance asked, “Why do you want to see the Madam?”

Lois popped her gum then she replied, “I thought I’d see if I could get a job in dis joint. I’m getting kinda tired of bein on de street, you know wad I mean.” Lois popped her gum again.

Constance gave her a critical look and decided that she had the body for the work. In fact she was outstanding and would probably be a good draw. So she said, "Okay, I'll let you talk to Mitzie, but first, get rid of the gum." Lois reached up and took the gum out of her mouth and looked for a place to dispose of it. Spotting a trashcan in the corner she walked over to dispose of the gum, using the time to x-ray the office, checking out the layout. Constance went over and knocked on another door. She opened it and spoke to the person inside briefly. Holding the door open she said, "Mitzie will see you now."

Lois moved over and entered the office. Constance closed the door after her and returned to her own office.

Once Lois was inside, Mitzie came out from behind her desk and giving Lois a close scrutiny said, "Constance says you're looking to get off the street. I don't recognize you. You're not one of my girls. How long have you been in town?"

Lois quickly x-rayed Mitzie and the office. She saw a box she couldn't see through in her desk drawer. She did a spin change and before Mitzie could get back around her desk she grabbed her. Superwoman held her arm around Mitzie pinning her arms to her sides to prevent her getting away or hitting any buttons. She opened the desk drawer and extracted the box and heated it until the lead softened and melted into a lump, sealing the Kryptonite inside. She cooled the lead with her superbreath and then picking it up, placed it into a concealed pouch in her cape. She then led Mitzie over to the window. She opened the window and looked down.

Mitzie started to feel fear. She thought, <Why is she looking down? Is she going to throw me out the window so that it looked like I committed suicide? I told Lex that it was risky having Kryptonite in my possession. I knew how mad it would make the superheroes to find me with it and what they would do in retaliation, but he just wouldn't listen.> She tried to reason with Superwoman, "Listen, I really didn't want that here. It was only here because Luthor insisted."

Superwoman said, "Thank you. You just admitted that you work for Luthor. Lieutenant Henderson would like to have a conversation with you." She picked her up and exited through the open window with Mitzie cradled in her arms. She was joined a few seconds later by Superman. Within minutes they were at the Twelfth Precinct and Mitzie was in Interrogation 5.

Bill said, "Thanks. That's two of the three."

Superman said, "We should have number three here shortly." He and Superwoman exited the precinct and took to the air. Once in the air Superwoman pulled out the lead encased Kryptonite and heaved it into space. They landed on the roof of the Planet and after doing their change they went down to the bullpen.

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### Chapter 23 – Capturing Luthor

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Universal Locator Designation

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Lois had completely forgotten that she was still in her disguise until she heard the wolf whistles and cat calls that she started receiving when she entered the room. She looked down at herself and blushed. She looked around. She saw Jimmy standing at his desk with his eyes almost bugging out of his head. She looked around with a withering look at all of the males in the office and said, "You've never seen an undercover costume before? Get a life!"

Clark chuckled and took off his suit jacket and put it over her shoulders. He said, "I can't blame them. You look amazing, in a cheap sort of way!" With a smug look she pulled his jacket around herself. She sat down at her desk and pulled out the sheet they had gotten from Henderson so that she could check the last

name and address.

She asked, "How do you want to handle this last one?"

He said, "The messenger outfit worked out well the first time. We could try that again."

Lois said, "Let's make sure that he's home." She picked up the phone and dialed his number. A switchboard operator answered. Using a sultry tone she asked "Is Frank Baxter at home?"

The switchboard operator said, "At this time of the day, you can usually find Frank at the Metro Club."

Lois said, "Thanks, I'll look for him there."

Clark had heard the entire conversation. Lois said, "Looks like I don't need to change. I'll see if I can pick him up at the Metro Club. Do you think he'll like what he sees?"

"How can he help it? I'll be right outside."

Lois stood up and removed Clark's jacket and as she handed it back to Clark she scanned the bullpen and could see that all eyes were on her. She did a slow pirouette displaying herself. This elicited a new round of whistles and cat calls.

Clark started to snicker and said, "I didn't know you were such an exhibitionist."

She giggled and said, "Just giving my adoring public one last look." She used an exaggerated sway to her hips as they exited the newsroom, receiving even more wolf whistles and cat calls as she did. She turned and did a little bow as they were about to enter the stairwell. As she stood up again and started to move into the stairwell she was laughing.

When they exited through the roof door she was still laughing. They took to the air and headed for the Metro Club. They landed in an alley down the street and Lois changed back into her hooker costume. As she exited the alley to head for the club she stuck a stick of gum in her mouth and started chewing.

When she entered she looked around and spotted Frank Baxter at a table. She moved to the bar and took a seat on a stool. When she did she made sure that her left side was toward him so that he couldn't help but see her leg through the slit. She ordered a drink. While she waited to be served she crossed her left leg over the right which only displayed her legs that much more.

Spying her from where he was sitting at a table, Frank thought, <Wow, what a hot babe! What's a dame with those kind of looks doin' in this place?> It only took Frank a few minutes to get up from his table and walk over to her. He said, "You're new around here, aren't you?"

Popping her gum she replied, "Yeah, I just got into town. Thought I'd try to find out where the action is." She popped her gum again as she looked him up and down pretending to be interested.

Noting her appraisal, Frank tried to put on an air of importance as he said, "If you want action, babe, I'm your man. You want I should show you some action?" Frank thought of himself as quite the ladies man and as he leered at her thoughts of the kind of action he would like to show her flitted through his head. He tried to make his ugly scarred face look sexy, though the effort was doomed to failure before he even tried.

Lois thought, <Ugh, ladies man he isn't. Well, I need to play along, no matter how much it leaves a bad taste in my mouth.> Popping her gum once more she replied, "Sure, let's get outta here. You can show me some of the action and maybe I could show you a good time."

Hopping down off the stool, she took his arm as they started walking out. As they walked out the door, Superman appeared behind Frank and grabbed both arms. Lois spun into her uniform and checked Frank's pockets. She said, "This is getting monotonous, they are all carrying Kryptonite." She relieved him of his box and launched it into space.

Realizing, belatedly, that he had been duped, Frank's countenance fell, realizing that he had tried to pick up

Superwoman. He thought, <No wonder she looked so hot!>

Superman said, “Lieutenant Henderson would like to have a talk with you.”

Frank blustered, “Whadda ya mean. I got rights! You can’t do this to me. You gotta have a warrant.”

Superman said, “It’s at Headquarters. They just want to have a friendly talk.” They lifted off side by side with Superman carrying Frank. A few minutes later Frank was in interrogation 7.

Superman and Superwoman exited and headed home. Lois changed into a regular work outfit and they returned to the Planet.

When they walked into the newsroom everyone turned, and seeing Lois in her regular clothes, started booing.

She laughed and said, “Sorry, boys. That was a special occasion. Usually Clark is the only one that sees me dressed like that.”

Chuckling, Clark said, “Eat your hearts out, guys. She’s mine.”

Heading over to Perry’s office, they knocked on his door and entered even before he could say ‘come in’.

As they sat on his couch and he said, “What do you have for me? What was that stir in the bullpen a while ago?”

“Sorry about that Perry. We were helping Superman and Superwoman and I was undercover. It was a little . . . revealing.”

“As long as it doesn’t happen too often. What’cha got for me?”

“The case against Luthor is moving ahead. That’s what we were doing. Bill Henderson got some material witness warrants and we were helping Superman and Superwoman execute them. Four of Luthor’s underlings are now in custody and being questioned. It’s only a matter of time now.”

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Luthor dialed a number. In interrogation 3 Nigel’s cell phone began to ring. Nigel looked at Henderson. Nigel could see from the caller ID that it was Luthor. Henderson saw the caller’s name also and said “Put it on speakerphone so we can record it.”

Nigel answered and put it on speaker. “Nigel here.”

“Nigel, where are you? You’ve been gone for hours.”

“I’m trying to arrange that little job for you, sir.”

“Have you found a sniper to take out Kent yet?”

“No sir, but, I’m working on it. That is a very specialized skill. I’m sure you understand.”

“I’m growing impatient. I have to have Lane and Kent is in my way. I want him eliminated. Don’t you have any contacts from your time in MI5 that you could use?”

“No sir, none that are still around. You’ll have to be patient.”

“What about Frank Baxter? He’s done a number of jobs for us. He’s good with firearms.”

“His specialty is close work with a hand gun. I don’t know if he can handle a scoped rifle.”

“Talk to him. I want this done and I’m getting impatient. I have to have her.”

“I’ll see to it sir.”

“See that you do.” The connection came to an end.

Bill started rubbing his hands together. “I’m glad we got that on tape. That is incriminating. Nigel, I’ll talk to the DA and see about moving forward on your guarantees.” Bill turned to Sergeant Adams and said, “Keep at it. Get as much as you can. I’ll check back later. Get him some coffee or tea if he wants it.”

Bill moved down the hall and entered the room that held Izzie Banks. He had already informed Izzie what they had on him and offered a deal. He had been anxious to cut the deal because what they had on him based on Nigel’s testimony was enough to send him to prison for a very long time. He was spilling the beans on everything he knew about Luthor’s operations. The same thing pertained to Mitzie Daphne and Frank Baxter. In Frank’s case the deal had been a reduction to life in prison rather than the DA going for the death penalty.

Bill returned to his office and placed a call to the Daily Planet.

When it was answered he heard, “Daily Planet, Clark Kent.”

“Clark, Bill Henderson. It looks like it’s all over but the shouting. With the testimony of Nigel, Izzie, Mitzie and Frank we have enough on Luthor to throw the book at him. His secret books would be the icing on the cake. I’m getting ready to go to a judge for a search warrant for his offices and a warrant for his arrest. According to what Nigel said we will need Superman to get them out of the safe before they can be destroyed. But, Superman can’t get near that office while that Kryptonite is there. Any suggestions?”

“Yeah, from what Nigel said. It’s a little chrome plated statue. If you take some lead sheeting or a lead lined box to put it into, it can be rendered harmless.”

“Assuming I get the search warrant we can be ready for a raid in three hours. Do you want to get in on it? It’s your story.”

“I really need to be here so that you can call me when the Kryptonite has been dealt with. Then I can contact Superman and let him know the coast is clear. By the way, don’t forget the statue in Nigel’s office too. They will both need to be dealt with.”

“You’re right, Clark. I had forgotten that. I’ll get the warrant. When we have the Kryptonite neutralized I’ll call you. Should be about 3 ½ hours from now. Talk to you later.”

A few minutes later Clark’s phone rang again and he answered, “Daily Planet, Clark Kent. How can I help you?”

“Mr. Kent, this is Ed Jackson, the realtor. We just got word that the seller has accepted your offer on 348 Hyperion Ave. We can go to closing on Wednesday, next week. You can take possession then. What time are you available? It will take about an hour.”

Clark answered, “We should be available by about ten a.m. Will that be okay?”

“Ten a.m. Wednesday it is. I’ll send the details to your e-mail address. See you then.”

“Thanks, Ed. We’ll see you then.” Clark hung up and looking over at Lois said, “They accepted our offer. We go to settlement next week!”

Lois jumped up and almost flew into his arms. She kissed him and said, “We need to start looking at paint and fabric and upholstery and furniture and . . .”

He interrupted, “Whoa, one thing at a time. Let’s get past settlement, then we can think about all those other things.”

She had a little pout on her face and in her voice as she said, “Spoil sport. This is going to be my, our, first house. No more being an apartment dweller!” She added, /At least in this universe. We have the farm on the other side./

He said placatingly, “I’m not saying we aren’t going to do that. All I’m saying is that we need to wait a few days. We have a lot on our plate right now.”

Lois relented, “Oh, okay. I guess you’re right. Let’s take care of Luthor first.”

Switching over to telepathic communication again, Clark looked over at Lois and thought, /You could go and wait in the lobby until I get the call. I’ll let you know when it’s clear and then you can go up to the office and be there when I arrive./

/Sounds like a plan./ Out loud she said, “Let’s go tell Perry what’s going down and then get a bite to eat.”

They both got up and moved to Perry’s office. After closing the door they stood in front of Perry’s desk. Clark said, “I just had a call from Bill Henderson. They are going to be raiding Luthor’s office in about three hours. They expect to be arresting Luthor and we’ll be covering it. It’s our exclusive so save page one.”

Perry was so excited he jumped up and started pacing. “How soon will I have your copy? How much do you have at this point? Are we looking at a full page spread or just above the fold?”

Lois said, "I'd say, full page with a banner headline!"  
 Perry grabbed his phone and punched in a number.  
 "Composing, put a hold on page one. You'll get the copy in ..."  
 He looked at Clark who looked at Lois who shrugged and looked over to Clark.

Clark said, "Five hours."

Perry completed, "Five hours, that'll be too late to make the evening edition. We'll have to hold it and put it out as a special."  
 He hung up the phone, "Go get me the story."

Lois said, "You got it Chief." They exited his office.

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Three hours later Lois was in the lobby of LexTower when a squad of police entered. Plain clothes came in first and took the security guard by surprise as they took him into custody. They kept him away from his panel so that he couldn't alert Luthor. The squad piled into an elevator car and Lois watched as it went up and stopped on 98. She thought, <So far so good. They are neutralizing the Kryptonite in Nigel's office.>

A minute later she saw the elevator resume its course to 100. She wished she could be there for a ring side seat but she had to content herself with waiting where it was safe.

A minute later she saw Luthor exit another elevator. She sent a thought to Clark, /Clark, it looks like Luthor was warned somehow. He must have had someone at the precinct on his payroll that Nigel didn't know about. He just exited an elevator while the police were going up to apprehend him. I'm going after him./

/Lois, no! He's dangerous./

/He won't do anything to me! He wants me, remember?/

/I'm on my way./

Lois maneuvered so that Lex would almost literally run into her. She stopped him and said, "Mr. Luthor, I'd like to reschedule that interview. When would you be available?"

Nervously he looked back over his shoulder. He looked back at her and said, "How about right now?"

Lois said, "I don't have everything I need to do an interview. I \*would\* like to schedule it though."

Luthor said, "I'm sorry, but I must insist on right now." He reached out and grabbed her elbow and started dragging her toward the exit. Just then Clark Kent came in through the doors they were headed for. He pretended to just see them and said, "Lois, oh I see you found Mr. Luthor. Did you schedule the interview?"

Luthor said, "We're going to do it right now! Get out of the way."

Clark said, "Wait a minute. That's my wife. I think I have something to say about when she does an interview."

Luthor growled, "Not any more, you don't," as he pulled a wicked looking automatic from a shoulder holster.

Lois was wearing heels and before he had a chance to take aim Lois tramped down with her spike heel on his foot and knocked his arm up just as he pulled the trigger. The pain of her heel being jabbed into his instep caused Luthor to scream and pull the trigger in reflex.

This gave Clark the opening he needed and he rushed him using just a smidgen of superspeed. He closed with him and grabbed his gun hand with his left hand and delivered an uppercut just off the point of Luthor's jaw. There was a sickening crunching sound and Clark did a quick x-ray exam. Sure enough, he had broken Luthor's jaw. He was satisfied that he hadn't killed him. Luthor was unconscious before he hit the floor. Secretly Clark hoped that his jaw would be wired shut for a long time.

The report of the firearm caused some of the people to duck, but, human nature being what it is; there was an even greater number that wanted to see what was happening. What they saw was a woman, apparently being abducted by an armed man and another man taking him on with nothing but his fists. A cheer

went up when Luthor was felled by a strong uppercut. There were also numerous flashes as people pulled out their cell phones and activated their cameras to document the action. One individual seeing the confrontation between Luthor and Lois early on had grabbed his phone and made a video of all of the action. Later Lois downloaded the video from the internet where it had been posted on a video sharing site as a memento.

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## Chapter 24 – Wrapping Up The Case

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Universal Locator Designation

Common name ALT2

%%%

Clark pulled out his cell phone and called Henderson. As he was dialing he sent a thought to Lois, /See if he has any Kryptonite on him./

"Henderson here."

"Bill, Clark."

Lois sent, /Sure enough. Just like all of his henchmen./ She pulled a little lead box out of his pocket and stuck it in her purse.

Henderson said, "Clark, Luthor must have gotten a warning. He's not here. We've neutralized the Kryptonite so you can call Superman anytime."

"Well, Bill. I don't know how to tell you this, but, Lois and I are in the lobby and Luthor just attacked us. I had to deck him. He's here and he isn't going anywhere any time soon if you want to come collect him."

Clark could hear Bill laughing as he replied, "The Hero of 9<sup>th</sup> and Siegel strikes again, huh? I guess I need to come down and place him in protective custody! I'll be right down."

Five minutes later Bill stepped out of the elevator with two uniformed patrolmen. He said over his shoulder to the uniforms, "One of you, cuff him and when he wakes up, read him his rights." Bill pulled out his cell phone and call headquarters. "This is Henderson. I need a black-n-white at LexTower immediately. East entrance. Pick up."

He turned back to Lois and Clark and said, "You guys want to come up and witness the opening of his safe?"

Clark said, "Lois can. I have to get back and write this up for the evening edition."

Bill said, "Okay, Lois, you ready?"

"I'd rather stay here and make sure he gets picked up and doesn't get away."

"Okay, I guess we can wait."

After Luthor was picked up Lois went with Henderson to Luthor's office. When they walked in Superman was already there talking with Detective Muggervin. Henderson said, "Okay, according to St. John, the walk in vault we are after is behind this bookcase. Once the bookcase is out of the way, you need to open the vault and immediately remove the documents before his security system has a chance to destroy everything. Think you're fast enough?"

Noting some valuable first edition manuscripts in the bookcase Clark knew that Luthor wouldn't go to the extent of removing all the books before moving the bookcase itself so he looked for another means of moving it. Using his x-ray vision he saw a hidden mechanism and a release switch. He stepped over and activated the switch. The bookcase swung out on arms which moved it out and to the side automatically. He was correct in his belief that Luthor wouldn't want to exert himself unnecessarily.

Once it was open, Henderson turned to Superman and repeated, "Think you'll be fast enough to get everything out of the vault?"

Clark responded with Superman's deep voice. "I guess we'll find out, won't we. Everybody, stand back."

Superman stood before the vault door and grasped both sides.

He dug his fingers in through the crack between the door and frame, enlarging them with his invulnerable fingers. Once he had a good grip he said, "Here we go." He flexed his arms and yanked the door off its hinges. Less than a second later the door was leaning against the wall. As soon as Clark stepped into the opening he could feel the effects of Kryptonite and thought, <Not again. Too late now, I've got to get those books no matter what,> and he sped inside.

Fortunately Lois was standing off to one side but even so she was on the fringes and could feel the effects. With a pained expression she took a pace back to put more shielding between herself and the Kryptonite. Also fortunately Superman was traveling as fast as he could because there was more than paperwork in the vault. Aside from the paperwork there was a Kryptonite trap and other evidence of crimes, weapons etc. He was able to scoop up a double armload and start to leave the vault. He could feel his powers fading the whole time. He was just about clear when the flame weapons started to fire. As soon as he cleared the portal of the vault with the books and other artifacts in his arms his powers finally gave out and he collapsed. As he did intense flames shot out from all sides and anything in the vault would have been incinerated in seconds and that included him, if he had still been in there. Even that brief exposure would have made him vulnerable just as it caused him to pass out as soon as he was out of the vault. This was the same technology being used by the Toasters. Lois wanted to go to him and pull him to safety, but, she knew that if she tried, she would simply collapse next to him. Frantically, she shouted, "Bill, drag him over here, quickly! There's Kryptonite in there!"

Bill and one of the uniforms standing by each grabbed one of Superman's arms and dragged him away from the open vault. As they were doing this Bill directed the other uniform, "Gather up all of that material and find a box to put it all in."

Bill had dragged Clark away from the immediate vicinity of the Kryptonite but she could see that it wasn't quite far enough. She realized that she needed to act. Lois said, "I'm going to go contact Superwoman. Don't move him until she gets here."

Lois left at a run. She took the elevator down to the lobby and exited the building. She ducked into an alley and spun into her Suit. She took off and flew up to the balcony of Luthor's office. When she landed she could see that the flames inside the vault had stopped. Even at this distance she could still feel the Kryptonite. She asked, "Lieutenant, do you have any of that lead left?"

Henderson said, "Sure."

"As soon as it is cool enough for you to enter, I need you to go into the vault and wrap up the Kryptonite that's in there."

Henderson, not being one to go by half measures said, "It's kinda hot in there still, but I'm going in, now." He disappeared into the vault.

A few seconds later Lois could feel the pain disappear. She entered as Henderson exited the vault with sweat streaming off his face. She said, "Thanks Lieutenant. You're a life saver."

As he was mopping his brow Henderson said, "Amazing, this little chunk of rock did all of that? It must be awfully powerful stuff."

In reply she said, "You have no conception. It really isn't the size so much as the type. Some forms are more potent than others. That must be a crystalline form if it's small."

Henderson replied, "Yeah, it looked like green glowing quartz."

She picked up Superman she said, "That's the worst kind," and flew out the French doors that led to the balcony. She took him to the apartment and put him in bed. As soon as she did this she returned to Lex Tower and reentered as Lois Lane.

When she exited the elevator on the top floor, Bill Henderson and the police squad were waiting for the elevator with the books

and other evidence in hand and Mrs. Cox, in handcuffs, in tow.

Lois asked, "How much did I miss?"

"Well, you apparently got through to Superwoman because she came and picked up Superman and took him away, probably so he can recover from the Kryptonite exposure." He indicated that the squad should precede them into the elevator. He said, "Send the car back up for us."

When the doors closed and they were alone, Bill said, in a conspiratorial tone, "I think I have a good idea as to just how close 'friends' you and Clark are to Superman and Superwoman." He handed the ball which was the lead wrapped Kryptonite over to Lois as, with a wink, he continued, "Here, why don't you dispose of this for them."

Seeing his wink, Lois gave him a questioning look and said, "Thanks Bill, I'll see to it that they get it."

He smiled and said, "You do that and take care of Clark." Again, he winked at her.

She was stunned. She said, "How?"

He smiled and said, "Detectives are trained observers. Don't worry. My lips are sealed."

She said, "Thanks, Bill."

He said, "If you didn't want to ride down in the elevator with me, I would understand."

With that, Lois did her spin change as Bill looked on. He watched in fascination and tried to hide his amazement, but couldn't. She heard him mutter, "So that's how you two do it. Handy."

Superwoman said with Lois' demeanor, "Thanks, Bill. You'll have to tell us later what gave us away."

Bill nodded his agreement. He said, "We can talk later. Clark needs you now."

She nodded her appreciation and taking off, flew through the office and out the windows again and headed for the apartment flinging the lead coated Kryptonite out into space as she did. Once there she grabbed the laptop and stuffed it into a backpack. She put the backpack on under her cape, picked up Clark and flew to Kansas. When she landed she pulled a lounge chair off the porch and moved it into the sun.

The Kent truck wasn't in the drive so she figured that the Kents were in town. Pulling the shirt of his Suit off of him she put jeans on him over the rest of his Suit. She laid the bare-chested Clark in the lounge chair and spun out of her Suit into her business suit. She pulled another chair over beside his and sitting down opened the laptop.

She typed up the story at superspeed and after making sure of her wireless connection, she e-mailed the story to Perry. As soon as this was done she went upstairs, changed into a midriff baring tank top and shorts, packed the backpack and spun into her Superwoman uniform.

She put a polo shirt on Clark and picked up the backpack. Again she put it on under her cape, and picking him up they took off for Hawaii.

He came to while they were over the Pacific Ocean en route. He was still groggy as he asked, "Where are we going?"

She smiled at him and said, "One of your favorite places. Only this time we're going to a place with a little more privacy for full healing." Her eyes had mischief in them.

He raised a single eyebrow in inquiry and said, "Ohhh," then asked, "Did you pack the brown bikini?"

She laughed and said, "I guess I should have waited to ask you your preference. I'll have to keep that in mind for the future. I packed the pink one."

He leered at her and said, "Just as good, maybe better."

When they landed they were at the base of a cliff that seemed to stretch up forever. Since there was absolutely no one around to see them Lois spun out of her uniform and into her shorts set. Because of his condition Lois helped Clark out of his clothes and

into jogging shorts. She put Clark's suit into the backpack because he wouldn't be doing a normal change for quite a while.

After spreading out their towels they lay down in the sun and almost immediately Clark fell back asleep. Lois rolled on her side and just drank in the view of her husband, thinking, <We made it through this. We should have some time now. Time to be with my, Super, husband, my, forever, husband. Time, actually we have all the time in the world ... no, all the time in \*two\* worlds ... no, two \*universes\*.>

They had finished this story. There was another one still waiting for them to finish in the other universe but there was time, as much time as they wanted to take because whenever they decided to go work on that story they'd arrive back there five minutes after they left and Lucy would be asleep upstairs, blissfully unaware of their absence. They would pick up right where they left off. Right now all she could think about was finishing up on this story. There would be a lot of follow-ups to be done. Then she thought that maybe then they should take some time off to fully recharge and recover. Maybe they'd return here for a few days.

She thought, <I need to tell Clark about Bill. Maybe we could invite him to dinner some night and he can tell us what gave us away. We are going to need to be more careful in the future. It may be good to have someone like Bill know our secret. I'm sure we can trust him.>

Based on past experience Lois had a good idea as to how long he would be out so she grabbed some money and spun back into her Suit and took off. She headed over to Kihei and after landing and, spinning back into her shorts and top, found a pizza shop. She was in a quandary as to what to order. Suddenly it hit her, they were in Hawaii, after all, so she ordered a Hawaiian pizza; cheese, tomato sauce, ham and pineapple with a double order of each topping.

After about an hour Clark woke up and he just lay there. He realized that Lois had just gotten back from somewhere because he had heard her change. He could hear Lois' heartbeat and the steady rhythm of her breathing. Both were comforting sounds to him. For a time he simply lay there thinking, <When the other Lois died I was in the depths of despair. When Herb proposed the missions and offered the possibility of finding another Lois my despair turned to hope. Now that hope has been realized, not only for me but for Lois as well. We're together now and we have a lifetime ahead of us to be together. Thanks, Herb, for helping me find her, my true Lois.> Then he realized that he was smelling a delicious aroma.

Clark opened his eyes, looked over at Lois and when he did he was looking directly into her coffee colored eyes. She asked, "Hungry?"

He spotted the pizza box and said, "That's a wonderful surprise. What kind did you get?"

She was chuckling as she held up the box as she replied, "I figured that since we were in Hawaii, I'd better get a Hawaiian pizza." She opened the box to display the contents. She set it down and picked up some other items. She offered, "Coke for you, cream soda for me and ... a half pint apiece of chocolate ice cream." Setting these down, she reached in and pulled out a slice and presented it to him so that he could take a bite. As he was chewing this she took a bite of the same slice. They alternated feeding each other and themselves until the whole thing had been consumed.

Curious, Clark asked, "We seem to be on a rather deserted stretch of beach. Where are we?"

"We're on the south shore of Maui, right across from the 'Big Island' and below the Haleakalā volcano. The cliffs are kinda steep here so unless you come in by canoe or 'air' the way we did it's hard to get here. We have the beach all to ourselves."

When they had finished Lois said, "I feel like a swim. You

said you wanted to see me dive. Watch this."

He sat up as she took off down the beach. Just as she hit the shallows she took off in what looked like a flat dive. He knew that she was flying, but that didn't matter. She was headed straight out and she 'dove' straight into a wall of water that was just starting to break as it hit the shallower water. He lost sight of her for a few seconds but then he saw her again as the next wave was approaching. She was body surfing the wave in. When the wave broke over her it obscured her from sight again, but, then she stood up, like Venus rising from the oyster shell and every bit as beautiful. Her tank top was sticking to her body like a second skin and, since it had been white when it got wet it had turned transparent as had her white short shorts.

She approached him slowly and she could feel his eyes on her the entire time.

Breathless at this vision of his beautiful wife, all he could do was to stare at her.

She walked over and straddling his hips, she knelt down and sat in his lap and as she did she could feel his excitement. As she settled down her arms circled his neck and she moved in for a kiss. The kiss started soft and tender and rapidly escalated as her breasts were pleasantly being mashed into his chest.

His hands came up, and grasping her tank top, he slowly peeled it from her upper body. She removed her arms from his neck and stretched them over her head to allow him to remove her top. Immediately she moved in and started another kiss. Their tongues began that ancient dance as the kiss deepened and their desire flared. There followed a period of marital intimacy.

Lois heaved a very contented sigh and said, "That was wonderful. I'm glad I have my super husband back. I couldn't imagine doing that with anyone else."

Clark said, "I don't want you to even think about doing something like that with anyone else. You're my wife, now and forever. How about a swim before we head home?"

With a wicked little grin she answered, "As long as when we leave we stop in Smallville again. I want another roll in the hay."

He laughed and said, "Anything my beautiful wife wants."

They were both still naked as they stood up and hand in hand headed for the surf.

The end, for now.

Footnotes:

<http://www.florida-scubadiving.com/scuba-certification-padi-vs-naui/#>