

Superman vs. The Evil Dead

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Rated: PG-13

Submitted: November 2016

Summary: An ancient Kandarian curse threatens to destroy Metropolis, forcing the Man of Steel to seek help from the most unlikely of heroes. But will even their combined forces be enough to stop the army of the dead?

Story Size: 7,333 words (41Kb as text)

Disclaimer: I own nothing. I make nothing. All characters, plot points, and recognizable dialogue belong to DC Comics, Warner Bros., December 3rd Productions and anyone else with a stake in the Superman franchise. I don't own Ashley J. Williams, the Deadites, the Necronomicon Ex-Mortis, or any of the other characters, plot points, and recognizable dialogue from the Evil Dead franchise either. They belong to Sam Raimi, Robert Tapert, Bruce Campbell, Renaissance Pictures, and anyone else with a stake in the Evil Dead franchise.

Author's Note: I promise to make everything as accessible as possible for the non-fans out there, in both fandoms. I'm also basing this off the theatrical "S-Mart" ending of Army of Darkness, not the Director's Cut, which (**SPOILER!**) depicts Ash in a post-apocalyptic world. I am NOT touching any of the plot points from the Ash vs. Evil Dead television series, as this story takes place in 1994, well before the 2015 premiere of Ash vs. Evil Dead. I've also chosen to use cleaner language for Ash, being as this is meant to be more of a PG-13 tale. I hope you enjoy this.

Clark smiled to himself as he leisurely flew through the air. It was a gorgeous late October evening in Metropolis. The weather was warm for the season, but the light breeze that was blowing held notes of the crisp fall air that was to come. Below him, the trees were ablaze with a multitude of brilliant colors. He breathed in deeply, taking in the unique smells that belonged solely to autumn — the decaying leaves laying in tidy piles all over the place, the sweet scent of the apple picking orchards just outside of the city limits, the first of the fires burning in the hearths of some of the houses.

"This is the life," he mused to himself as he enjoyed the flight. It had been a relatively quiet couple of days for both the superhero and the reporter. It was as if the unseasonably warm weather had lulled the world into sleepy relaxation. Whatever it was, Clark was glad for the break. Sure, it made his work as a reporter harder, if he didn't have much to chase after for stories. Perry would never accept that there wasn't anything worth writing about, and Clark was in agreement on that. But it *was* good to know that innocent people weren't being harmed, killed, or scammed. More than that: it was a relief.

He'd used his downtime wisely. He'd taken Lois out on dates where he'd been able to stay the whole time, without needing to duck out with a limp excuse and no idea how long he'd be before he could return. In turn, Lois had dropped some of her guard around him. She trusted him more, now that he wasn't pulling his constant disappearing act. She'd allowed herself to open her heart to him more, or so it seemed to Clark.

He thought back now on those perfect dates. Just the night before, they'd gone mini golfing together before a romantic dinner at the Szechwan Swan. Then they'd strolled through Centennial Park before heading to Lois' favorite ice cream parlor for sundaes. They'd rounded out the night watching an old movie at Lois' apartment. The other date nights had all been different. One night had been spent dancing. One day had been completely spent at the Metropolis Aquarium. Another day had been spent at a carnival down near the docks.

All in all, life had been good to Clark as of late.

He should have known better.

The scream cut through the quiet evening like a knife, startling Clark out of his pleasant thoughts. He immediately stopped in mid-flight and hovered, searching for the source of the distressed cry. It came again, both to Clark's relief and dismay. He altered his flight path to the northwest and began to move with all speed. As he flew, the screaming grew more desperate in nature and became one, never ending cry for help. Clark pushed himself even faster.

When the scene finally came into view, he thought it was a mugging in progress.

A terrified young woman was backed up against the brick wall of what had been one of Clark's favorite pizzerias, before the owner had declared bankruptcy early that summer. Two men were approaching her at an easy, steady pace, confident in the knowledge that their prey was cornered. Clark angled down for a landing, positioning himself between the woman and her assailants.

"That's close enough, gentlemen," he said as his feet touched the cracked concrete of the back alley. He crossed his arms over his chest.

"Out of the way, mortal!" cried the man in the red flannel shirt.

Something about the sound of the man's voice chilled Clark down to the very marrow of his bones. It was more of a hiss than anything else. The venom was real, but the voice sounded as though it came from the very depths of hell. It sounded *dead*. Both men took another step forward.

"I *said* that's close enough!" Clark warned them, holding his ground.

The man in red looked to his partner, who was wearing a black leather jacket, and nodded. Leather Jacket, as Clark called him in his mind, grinned maliciously, his features a grim tableau of horror. He sprang at Clark, closing the twenty foot distance in a single leap. Cold, dead hands wrapped around Clark's throat. Two eyes — if they could be called that, as they were completely white and missing the irises and pupils — stared hungrily at Clark. Bloodless lips peeled back into a strange hybrid smile/grimace, showing off unnaturally sharp teeth.

The hands squeezed with surprising strength, cutting off Clark's airway. He fought back, kicking and trying to pry the fingers from his windpipe. But the grip was like steel and Clark found himself making little progress. He would have to risk using his powers, though he was loathe to do it in such close range. Blowing his opponent backwards with a blast of super breath wasn't an option — Clark could scarcely breathe. His strength was weakening with every beat of his heart. Black dots were swimming before his eyes — there was no way he could effectively aim his heat vision, even if there had been a clear, non-lethal place to aim it.

He settled for flight. With his attacker now attempting to use his teeth to rip a chunk out of his neck, Clark shot across the alley and slammed the attacker into the wall of video store that resided next to the pizzeria. For a moment, the impact stunned Leather Jacket, and his grip loosened enough for Clark to draw a breath and some much needed strength. He took the opportunity to break free of Leather Jacket's grasp. Leather Jacket violently pushed himself away from the bricks and lunged at Clark again. This time,

Clark anticipated the inhuman speed and agility that the attacker possessed, and easily dodged the attack. The man roared bestially at Clark.

Clark ignored him and sped over to Flannel Man. But he was too late. The fight with Leather Jacket had given Flannel Man the opportunity he'd needed. The young woman was laying on the ground, bleeding from a vicious bite in her neck. Clark was horrified. He'd seen all manner of strange things in both his travels as Clark and his rescues as Superman, but cannibalism hadn't one of them. Until now.

Now he saw Flannel Man chewing the hunk of flesh he'd torn from his victim. Clark's stomach clenched and churned in disgust, though he managed to keep his face as close to neutral as he could. Flannel Man swallowed and sucked the end of one finger, as if trying to get the last remnants of the woman's blood from it.

"Delicious," Flannel Man declared mockingly. "You're next," he told Clark, eyeing him predatorily.

"I don't think so." Clark shook his head as he stepped to the woman. "Ma'am?" he called, not getting any kind of a response. He felt for a pulse and found none. "Ma'am? Can you hear me?" It was ridiculous to ask, but he felt somehow obligated to ask anyway.

"Leave her. She's dead," came a disturbing calm voice from behind Clark.

Flannel Man and Leather Jacket turned to the newcomer, as did Clark. A man stood at the mouth of the alley. He couldn't have been more than thirty, Clark saw. He was dressed in brown pants and a blue button-down shirt and had black hair. He carried a sawed off, double barreled shotgun in his left hand, and his right hand...

Clark took a double take.

The man's right hand was a chainsaw. Not holding a chainsaw. From the wrist down, there was no hand. Just a chainsaw that had been somehow attached to the stump where his hand should have been.

"Back up, Superman," the man commanded. "Let me handle this."

"You!" Leather Jacket, pointing a bony finger at the newcomer. "You will never retrieve the Necronomicon!"

"We'll see about that," Chainsaw Hand said.

"This pathetic city will be ours before dawn!" Flannel Man swore.

"You'll have to get through me first," Chainsaw Hand challenged.

Flannel Man seemed to take Chainsaw Hand's words seriously. He lunged toward the man. Clark had to act fast. As Flannel Man passed him by, Clark sprang at him, tackling him from the side and knocking him to the pavement. Flannel Man's head twisted unnaturally far to sneer at Clark.

"You will make an excellent soldier of the dead," Flannel Man declared. "Join us!"

He snapped his teeth, straining to reach Clark. Clark instinctively drew back away from the razor sharp teeth, even though he knew the man couldn't harm him.

"Yo! Ugly!" Chainsaw Hand called.

Flannel Man stopped, just long enough to look up at Chainsaw Hand. A second later, a shot rang out and Flannel Man's head exploded into a mass of blood, flesh, and brains. Instantly, the body went limp and Clark pushed himself up off the ground.

"Groovy," Chainsaw Hand said with grim satisfaction as he gazed upon the carnage he'd created.

"Put the weapon down!" Clark commanded, in a harsh tone rarely used by Superman. He held his hands out in a placating gesture, lest the man spook and act out dangerously.

"With all due respect, Superman," Chainsaw Hand said dismissively, his eyes never leaving Leather Jacket, "this doesn't concern you." He gestured in a "come at me" way to Leather

Jacket.

Leather Jacket took the invitation to attack. Chainsaw Hand revved his chainsaw, anticipating the moment of impact. Clark used a burst of speed to wedge himself between the two men. A second later, Leather Jacket crashed into his chest while he felt the chainsaw's blade skipping over his spine. Leather Jacket fell backwards and Clark took the opportunity he'd been given. Using a discarded piece of piping, Clark restrained the man before turning to Chainsaw Hand.

"Drop your weapons!" he commanded again, looking around for something else he could use to tie up Chainsaw Hand.

"Superman, you need to listen to me," Chainsaw Hand said, making a stop motion with his remaining hand. "If you don't destroy that *thing*..."

The warning came too late. Leather Man broke out of his restraint.

"What the heck?" Clark managed, just before Leather Jacket pounced at Chainsaw Hand.

In that same moment, the woman who'd been bitten and killed bolted upright. Clark's blood went cold. He felt almost like he was in some kind of horror movie as he looked into the now blank, white eyes and distorted facial features.

Zombie!, his mind screamed at him.

"My hero," the woman mocked him. "Let me give you a reward, Superman! An *eternal* reward!"

She flew at him and raked her fingernails across his chest — fingernails that had mysteriously and magically grown several inches and been filed into sharp points. Had Clark been a normal man, his chest would have been sliced open down to the ribs. The woman looked surprised by her failure to cause him any damage. Clark grabbed her and held her as tightly as he dared. Whatever was wrong with the woman, he wasn't going to harm her. But what could he use to secure her? He'd already seen Leather Jacket break out of steel piping. And whatever condition Leather Jacket had, it was clear this woman and Flannel Man both had as well.

He frantically searched, and finally lit upon a length of steel cable. He quickly retrieved it, all the while holding on to the woman, who was snapping at him with her teeth. He used the cable to tie her to the bumper of an old, rusty truck that was decaying in the alley. He knew it likely wouldn't hold for long, but he heard the chainsaw whirring in the night air. He had to stop Chainsaw Hand from doing anything else crazy.

He was too late. Leather Jacket's head went sailing through the air and landed twenty feet away.

"Are you crazy?" Clark shouted as he sped over to Chainsaw Hand.

Before Chainsaw Hand could respond, Clark relieved him of his gun and detached the chainsaw from his right arm. As he'd thought, there was no hand hidden within the machine. By some accident or birth defect, the man was missing his right hand. Clark tossed both weapons to one side.

"What is *wrong* with you?" Clark demanded as he grabbed the man to prevent him from fleeing.

"I know it looks bad, but, trust me, this was the only way. Now let me go so I can finish the job," Chainsaw Hand said, arrogance dripping from every word.

"This is only the *beginning*," Leather Jacket's head said, evil intelligence still gleaming in those blank, dead eyes.

Terror ripped through Clark and he let go of Chainsaw Hand in surprise as he looked at the disembodied head on the ground.

"The dead *will* take over your world. We'll swallow your soul!"

"Yeah, yeah. I've heard that one before. Now swallow this," Chainsaw Hand said casually as he picked up a brick that was laying on the ground, brought it to the head, and smashed in the skull.

Clark was too frozen with shock and horror to move. By the

time he was able to will himself to move, it was over and Chainsaw Hand was wiping his one good hand on his pant leg.

"Now, where's the she-witch?" Chainsaw Hand asked, looking around. "Aw, great," he moaned, spying the broken cable where Clark had restrained the woman. "Some help *you* are," he spat at Clark.

"What...what *was* that?" Clark asked, shaking his head, trying to make this all a dream. He pointed to the remains of the two men.

"Deadites," Chainsaw Hand said, as if it explained everything.

"Come again?" Clark asked.

"Deadites. You know. Someone who's been killed, possessed by evil, and come back to kill us all."

"Possessed?" Clark asked, his brain still trying to process everything he'd just witnessed.

The man rolled his eyes in annoyance. "Look, I don't have time for this. Long story short, all those stories you've ever heard about demons and evil spirits and the like? They're all true and worse than you've been taught. And now that evil has broken free from where it was locked away. I have to find a specific book in order to send it back to hell. And neither you nor anyone else is going to get in my way, got it?" Chainsaw Hand said as he retrieved his weapons. He holstered the gun in a holder that was strapped to his back after popping out the spent shells and stuffing two new ones in. Then he slipped the chainsaw back onto his right stump, hefting it as though checking its weight and fit on his arm.

"Who *are* you?" Clark managed.

Chainsaw Hand eyed him suspiciously, as if gauging Clark's intentions. Finally, he nodded to himself. "Name's Ash. Why? You need a name to give the cops?" He gestured with his chainsaw to the bodies.

Clark hesitated. He knew the right thing to do would be to hand this lunatic over to the police and let them deal with things. After all, the man had murdered two people right before his eyes. But...were they *really* people? What they had done...the abilities they'd possessed...it wasn't normal. It wasn't *human*. What if Ash was telling the truth?

Ash was studying him. "Am I free to go, officer?" he mocked.

"Tell me something, Ash," Clark replied instead. "Are these people...uh..."

"They aren't *human*, if that's what you're asking. They used to be, but, once the evil gets hold, they change. And they don't ever change back. Believe me, I know."

"What do they want?"

Ash shrugged. "The souls of every last living person on this planet. That, and the book."

"The book?"

Ash rolled his eyes. "Keep up, would ya? I don't have time to play twenty questions here." Taking in Clark's puzzled expression, he rolled his eyes again. "I'll explain on the way. But, I'll warn you. You had better stay out of my way. I know these things. You don't. Help me or don't help me at your own risk."

If what he's saying is true, that these things are out to kill more people, like they did that woman, I have no choice but to help. But that means trusting Ash, and I don't know that I can, or even if I should.

"All right," Clark agreed slowly. "But you need to tell me everything."

"Deal."

"There's a book," Ash said, a few minutes, later as they stood atop the *Daily Planet* building, eyes and ears peeled for any sign that other Deadites were attacking anyone else in the city. "It's called the Necronomicon Ex Mortis. Basically, The Book of the Dead. Within the pages, it contains a series of incantations that can awaken the evil, or send it back, as needed. I've been tracking it down for a long time now, in an effort to banish the evil from this

realm, back to hell where it belongs. Not long ago, I got a tip that it might be here, in Metropolis, but I wasn't sure. Not until tonight, anyway. If the Deadites are here, it means the book has to be."

"How do you know all of this?" Clark asked, scanning the area around them with his enhanced vision, but seeing nothing out of the ordinary.

Ash sighed before answering. "Unfortunately, I've had a lot of experience with the Deadites and the book. More than I'd like to admit or remember."

"Ash...I need to know everything," Clark prodded.

"Look, there's not much to tell, all right? The evil killed my best friend, his girlfriend, my girlfriend, and my sister," Ash said after a moment, his voice a million miles away in his memories. "I had to chop them up just to survive. I watched it kill two innocent, obnoxious hillbillies, a woman who'd dedicated her life to trying to find the pages of the Necronomicon to restore the book, and her boyfriend. I saw the Deadites slay countless soldiers back in the medieval ages. And please, don't ask. It was a whole, strange, time traveling mishap that I'd just as soon not relive in my mind."

Clark tried to gauge if the man was lying, but, oddly, Ash appeared to be telling the truth.

"The evil even got into me, once. It took my hand and turned it against me. I had to use this chainsaw to cut it off at the wrist." He patted the machine in question.

Clark winced, unable to imagine how desperate a person would have to be to cut off their own hand. Ash saw the wince.

"It wasn't so bad. Luckily, I'm a leftie," he said with a grim grin.

"Lucky for you," Clark said, no trace of humor in his voice. "So, Ash, tell me something. What happens if we find this book?"

"We recite the words, create a portal, and shove the evil back through the gateway. Bam! We save the world, maybe go out and celebrate by knocking back a few drinks, bedding a few girls. You know the drill."

"Are you *sure* it'll work?" Clark asked skeptically, ignoring the man's cavalier attitude.

Ash nodded once, completely self-assured. "Absolutely. I've done it before."

"If you've done it before, then why is Metropolis under attack from the dead?" Clark demanded.

Ash's face darkened in annoyance. "Okay, so maybe I didn't say every single, tiny little syllable, but basically, I said the words. I'd like to see *you* get ancient Kandarian right on the first try."

Clark shook his head and went silent. He wasn't going to argue the point any further with Ash. After a few minutes, he spoke again.

"Okay, first thing's first. We need to find this book before those Deadites do. Did your lead give you any clue where it might be?"

"No," Ash said, with a shake of his head.

"Then I guess we look everywhere," Clark said, determination falling over him.

"Well, I hate to admit it, but, with your freakish abilities, it should be a cinch," Ash said, eyeing Clark up and down as he stroked his chin in thought.

Clark chose to ignore the intentional barb in Ash's words. "What does this book look like?"

"Oh, about this big," Ash replied, holding his hands apart. "Bound in human flesh. Cover looks like an evil face. Ink made out of human blood. You know, typical hell-book design."

"Great. That's...helpful," Clark said, not holding his sarcasm back.

Where to start though? That was the question. The public library? The museums? What about private book collectors? Did he have the right to look through their property, even with just his x-ray vision?

The library, he decided. He knew they kept rare books there.

"Let's go," Clark said as his mind settled on his decision.

"Even with my powers, we still have a *lot* of ground to cover, if the book is even still in the city, let alone in all of New Troy."

Ash nodded grimly. "Let's get to it. Where do you want to start?"

"The police station."

Ash backed up a step, his hands up before him, as if warding off an attack. "Whoa, whoa, wait a second. The last thing we want or need is the cops getting involved in this. I told you, man. Those people I shot? They were already dead!"

Clark shook his head. "It's not like that. I need someone to let me into the public library to take a look around."

"Can't you just, you know? X-ray the place?" Ash held up two fingers to his eyes and wagged them like scanning lasers.

"Not the basement. It used to be an old war bunker, with lead lined walls. That's where the incredibly rare, one of a kind books are kept."

Ash looked uneasy with the prospect, but nodded anyway. "Okay."

Clark stepped to Ash, picked him up, and flew through the night, straight to Detective Henderson. The man clearly didn't understand *why* Superman needed access to the library at such a late hour of the night, but he *did* understand that Superman needed a favor. It was enough, and he called up the library's security team. As it turned out, an old colleague of his, Arnold, was the head of security there, and before Clark knew it, he was given clearance to check whatever he needed in the library.

He zoomed through the massive building at top speed, scanning as he went. He still didn't quite know exactly what he was looking for, but something told him he'd know it when he saw it.

"Anything?" Ash impatiently demanded as Clark systematically flew up and down every aisle twice, to check both sides.

"Nothing," Clark said wearily, coming to a stop before Ash. "I don't think it's here."

"Got any other bright ideas, Wonder Boy?" Ash snapped.

Clark sighed and ran his hand through his gel-slicked hair, leaving grooves in that otherwise perfectly coiffed hairdo. "It'll take too long to attempt to look through every collection of books in the city. There *has* to be a better way."

Just then, he heard a shriek of terror split the air. It sounded close — just across a dozen blocks or so. He grabbed Ash without a second's hesitation.

"What the hell?" Ash complained several seconds later, when he finally realized they were a few hundred feet up in the air. "Whoa! I didn't agree to this!"

"Someone's in trouble," Clark replied, keeping his gaze firmly fixed ahead, looking for the source of the cry.

They were too late. A Deadite had already torn an old woman and her young grandson apart. Blood and organs lay spattered about on the pavement. Enraged, and reconciling to himself that the Deadite was no longer a living human, he blasted the demon apart with his heat vision. It was enough to make him late for the next attack, just three streets north of his location. A snarling Deadite bit the shoulder of a muscular biker, turning the man into a minion of evil. Ash dispensed two quick bursts from his shotgun and both creatures' heads exploded into a spray of blood and brain matter.

That was just the beginning for the night. Clark and Ash worked together to save as many people as they could from becoming Deadites and joining up with the army of the dead that was terrorizing the city. All the while, they worked in earnest to try to find the book. The night deepened, then finally began to retreat as the sun started to make its way back toward the eastern horizon. The two heroes managed to save a great number of

innocent men and women, but they were too late to save the vast majority of them. Too many demons were roaming the city, attacking at random. There was no way they could be everywhere and save everyone.

"This isn't getting us anywhere," Clark yelled over to Ash as the two battled a throng of the dead near midtown, just before dawn.

"We need to focus on the book," Ash agreed, maneuvering so that his back was against Clark's for safety. "We'll never win against the Deadites without it."

Clark heard the chainsaw rev and begin slicing off appendages. He knew these people weren't truly people anymore, but it still sickened him. He was exhausted, slick and sticky with demon blood, and disheartened. As he had all night long, he wracked his brain trying to think of the next rational place to check.

"Superman!"

Clark's attention instinctively snapped to where his super hearing had picked up the sound of his name. A chill ran down his spine in the same instant. There was something awfully familiar about that ghastly, demonic voice.

"Come and find me, Superman! Come and meet your doom!" the voice taunted.

"Luthor," Clark groaned with dread. "Ash! Come on! I knew where we have to go!" he called over to the unwanted partner he'd been stuck with.

"Just a second! Eat this, you filthy hippie," Ash cried as he rammed his chainsaw into the open, gnashing maw of a Deadite. For good measure, he used his good hand to squeeze off a bullet into the creature's forehead. "All right, let's move," he instructed a heartbeat later.

Clark flew them both to the top of Lex Tower. He allowed Ash to touch his feet to the helipad on top of the building first, then lightly touched down himself. Two figures stood with their backs to Clark and Ash, looking out over the city like vultures searching for prey. Clark took four cautious steps forward, toward the center of the helipad. He was about to call out to the people standing there when the figure on the left whipped around with a jerk and inhuman speed. Clark nearly recoiled as he saw what was left of Lex Luthor.

The billionaire's suit — once worth a couple of thousand of dollars — was tattered and bloodied. His bloodless flesh was a sickly white. Scratches and gashes covered his face and hands — apparently, he hadn't gone down without a fight. His once piercing, calculating, intelligent eyes were milky white with no discernible pupils. Clark had to wonder how the creature that had once been his greatest nemesis could even see. One of them wasn't even located in its socket anymore, but hung, instead, by the retina, swinging freely near his nose. Or, rather, what was left of his nose. The small nub of flesh looked as though something had chewed it off. Large chunks of his hair appeared to have been ripped out of his skull.

When Lex grinned malevolently at him, Clark could see that the veneers he wore over his teeth to give him the perfect smile expected of someone of Lex's status were missing. The uneven teeth beyond were needle sharp points, ready and able to rend flesh from any unfortunate mortal who happened by.

"Superman!" the unearthly voice of the dead man shrieked in what sounded like revulsion and delight. "Or should I say *Clark Kent*?"

Involuntarily, Clark froze at the sound of his real name. How had Luthor found out? Had he always known? Or had the evil that had taken over somehow given him that secret knowledge?

"Clark Kent? The newspaper twerp?" Clark heard Ash muttering to himself in surprise.

"Ah, so you *haven't* told your cohort about yourself," Luthor taunted with an evil smile.

"It doesn't matter," Ash said, stepping to Clark's side. "Let's face it: I'm the one you *really* want." He used his middle finger in a beckoning gesture. "Come on. Show me what you've got."

"You?" Luthor spat out a globule of blood. He sounded bored. "I don't need *you*. The book is already mine."

"You lie!" Ash challenged. "If you had it, there'd be a hell of a lot more Deadites around here."

"Oh?" Luthor asked, malevolent amusement in his voice. "Lois, my dear! Why don't you show them?"

The second figure, who'd continued to have her back toward them until this moment, turned. Clark blinked. She looked... totally normal.

"Lois?" he called out. "Lois, come on. Let's get you out of here," he encouraged. He took a step toward her.

She stepped back as he approached, clutching a brown, leathery tome in her arms. She seemed afraid of him.

"Lois? What's wrong?" he asked.

"You lied to me, Clark," she replied, chiding him. She wagged a finger at him and made a "tsk tsk" sound in her throat like a disappointed mother. She looked away from him. "Didn't your mother ever tell you that little boys who lie go to hell?" She whipped her head back around to look at him.

The transformation from the Lois he knew to a moldering Deadite was instantaneous and bone chillingly terrifying. Clark jumped back in alarm, a cry of surprise and a little fear escaping him in the same moment.

"What's the matter, Clarkie?" she taunted with a grin full of razor sharp and blackened teeth.

"Lois, what happened?" Clark moaned aloud.

He knew she was lost to him. While he'd been trying to protect the city — and the world — he hadn't been there to protect Lois from the cancerous evil that was spreading like wildfire. The dead had gotten to her. He could see the ring of teeth marks on the left side of her neck. She was one of the Deadites now. If only he could get the book! Maybe there was a spell or incantation or something in there that he could use to drive the evil out of her. He would do anything to save her, even if it meant sacrificing his own life.

"You found me beautiful once," she reminded him, flashing another evil smile at him.

"Honey, you got real ugly," Ash shot back as he loaded his shotgun.

Lois threw her head back and howled a laugh. "You're too late, Ash! We possess the Necronomicon now! You've lost! One more incantation and Satan himself will walk the Earth again!"

"Over my dead body," Ash countered.

Luthor cocked one eyebrow and his blank eyes gleamed with delight. "Your proposal is acceptable."

He lunged at Ash while Lois flung herself at Clark. Clark heard shots being fired, followed by the revving of the man's chainsaw. But he couldn't spare a look at the battle raging behind him. Lois tossed the book aside as she leapt at him, catching Clark around his throat with her hands. Her nails — now more like the claws of some feral beast — dug into his skin as her fingers locked around his windpipe with vice-like strength. He was forced to use both hands to try to loosen her grip enough to suck in a breath. He held it, knowing it would last him a good twenty minutes under the right circumstances, but knowing that these were definitely *not* the right circumstances for that.

"Don't you want a kiss?" the creature wearing Lois' body asked with murderous delight. "Come on, lover boy!" She opened her mouth and wagged her tongue at him.

Thinking fast, Clark smashed his forehead into hers. She, apparently, hadn't expected that. It caught her off guard. Her grip slipped and she sailed backwards for a good dozen feet or so. She hit the ground hard and Clark took the opportunity to take another lungful of air.

The book! his mind screamed at him as he heard Ash hit the helipad beneath them with a thud. A second thud suggested that he'd used an arm or leg to sweep Luthor off his own unholy feet.

While Lois shook off the shock of the blow, Clark dove for the book. Lois screeched as his fingers closed around the ancient tome. The book was rough and leathery beneath his touch, though he was painfully aware that the cover was actually comprised of preserved human skin. He had only a second to flip open the cover to a random page filled with unfamiliar symbols written in blood that was still somehow as red as fresh blood running from a wound. Then Lois was on him again, landing on his back with a force and heaviness he hadn't anticipated. The air whooshed from his lungs.

"Ash..." he tried to call out, not for help, but in an attempt to get the book away from Lois.

He didn't get the chance to finish his sentence. He heard a dagger being unsheathed just a heartbeat before he felt the effects of Kryptonite. Despite the pain and weakness he felt, he managed to roll onto his back and lift the book as a meager protection from the knife's glowing green blade. Lois easily knocked the tome from his trembling fingers and plunged the blade into his heart.

Clark felt every last tear as the jagged stone ripped through his newly vulnerable flesh. He tasted his own blood as it bubbled up into his throat. He tried to scream but his vocal chords refused to cooperate. But he didn't need to. Ash was aware of what was happening. A fresh coat of blood covered him from head to toe. He approached Lois from behind, chainsaw raised.

Knowing, on a visceral level, what was to come, Clark wanted to look away, but his eyes betrayed him and stayed glued to what had once been the woman he loved.

"Clark!" the demon woman cried out for him as Ash began to liberate her head from her neck.

"Clark!" she repeated as Ash kicked the offending, severed head off the helipad to the street, hundreds of feet below.

The last thing he was aware of was the coldness creeping over his body as the evil set in and took hold, while he helplessly bled out as Ash began to dismember Lois' still fighting body so that he could finally be free to use the book to vanquish the evil for good.

"Clark?"

Clark's eyes snapped open in a panic. He tried to move but found himself bound, further fueling the terror racing through his veins. He gave it a second try, finally breaking free of his bonds, tearing the throw blanket that was wrapped around his body cleanly in half as he lurched off his couch and hit the floor with a loud thud. That was enough to jar him into full wakefulness, though it took him several long seconds to realize that he was safe at home in his apartment.

"What a dream," he whispered to himself as he shook his head. "No," he corrected himself almost instantly. "More like what a nightmare."

He pushed himself up off the floor, but the nightmare still lingered in his mind. His pulse was still racing at breakneck speed and he could hear the pounding of his blood in his ears. He felt sick to his stomach at the remembered shards of the dream — in particular, seeing Lois meet her demise. It was enough to make him nearly forget his glasses as he stumbled toward the door. He remembered only when he went to rub the sleep from his eyes. Quickly, he stuck them on his face and opened the door.

His heart stopped when he saw Lois.

She was a Deadite.

He wanted to say something — anything — but found no words, though he knew that he recoiled from her in horror. Lois smiled — her grin uneven and her teeth deadly sharp.

"Wow," she commented gleefully. "Is my costume really that good? I've never seen you look like that before," she laughed as she let herself into his apartment.

"C...costume?" Clark gulped, his mind spinning.

Lois rolled her bloodshot eyes and spat out the rubber teeth in her mouth. "It's the paper's Halloween party tonight, remember?"

"Oh...oh, right!" Clark said, sudden remembrance flooding him.

His dream had so badly shaken him that he'd lost track of what day it was. Halloween was the following day, and Perry's annual Halloween party was tonight in the ballroom of the Lexor Hotel.

"Don't tell me you forgot," Lois said, disappointed.

"I...no. Not totally," he admitted. "I guess I fell asleep in front of the TV and got a little...you know," he said with a shrug. "I momentarily forgot what day it was."

"Well, be that as it may, you really *do* need to get dressed if we're going to get there on time," Lois prodded as she sat down on the couch, thankfully ignoring the untidy pile of shredded blanket on the floor.

Clark nodded and obediently headed for his bedroom, where his costume hung in the closet.

"What's with the enthusiasm?" he asked, curious. "You don't seem like the Halloween party type to me. Or the type to dress as a zombie. A very convincing one, I might add."

"You really think so?" she asked, pleased. "You're right, I wouldn't normally go like this but you know Lenny, Aaron, Marty, and Hugh in classifieds?"

He nodded again as he ducked behind a privacy screen he'd once picked up in Japan. "Of course. Hugh's the one who tipped me off on this place."

"Yeah, well, they went as the four horsemen of the apocalypse last year. Lenny was Pestilence. His costume was amazing and he won for scariest costume. I swore to myself that I'd take it this year."

"Well, you certainly scared the daylights out of *me*," Clark confessed, though he wasn't about to let on why.

Lois fell silent as he continued to don his costume for the evening. After a few minutes, he emerged, now dressed as Santa Claus. Lois rolled her eyes and arched an eyebrow, stifling a laugh.

"Really?" was all she asked.

He shrugged. "I didn't have much choice. It was either this or a Ninja Turtle costume that the costume shop had in my size. I guess I should have reserved something a little sooner."

It wasn't a complete lie. The shop had also had a Superman costume in his size, but, all things considered, that wasn't *really* a costume for him, since costumes were meant to make a person look like someone they weren't.

Lois nodded and jerked a thumb at the television. "And what's with the movie?"

"What about the movie?" he asked.

Lois pointed at the Deadites on screen. "Evil Dead 2?"

Clark was surprised. "You know it?" He picked up the television remote and switched the device off.

She shrugged. "I went on a double date with this guy, back when the movie came out. I thought the gore was hilarious. He threw up and got threatened that I took the movie so much better than he did. First and last date I ever had with him."

"Yikes," Clark said, raising his eyebrows. "The last time I was home for a few days, back when the paper was being rebuilt, a bunch of my old friends and I got together. Someone had the third movie on VHS and had it on in the background. I thought it was kind of funny and thought I'd check out the other two, but," he shrugged, "I guess I was more tired than I thought."

"It's been crazy, getting back into the swing of things. The paper might be back for a couple of months now, but we still have a lot of work to do, getting reestablished as the public's main news source. Lex..." Here, she shuddered. "What he did...it almost cost us everything."

Clark moved to sit next to her on the couch. Cautiously, he put his arm around her. She immediately laid her head on his shoulder. "I'm sorry, Lois."

She picked her head back up and shook it confidently. "No, I'm sorry. If I'd only listened to you back then..." She sighed. "I still have nightmares about what could have been."

Clark nodded sympathetically. "I do too. Luthor might be long dead now, but, well...let's just say that he's made his way into my nightmares as well."

She nodded silently. Clark just let the peaceful quiet in the apartment rule for a few moments while he simply enjoyed being with Lois. After almost losing her to that monster in a man's clothing, Lex Luthor, every moment with her was even more precious in his mind. Seeing her ripped away from everyone who cared about her by that controlling sociopath had been one of the hardest things he'd ever gone through, because, Superman or not, there had been nothing he'd been able to say or do to make Lois see the truth. He'd had to rely solely on hopes and prayers that she would finally wake up and see what was happening, in the event that he wouldn't find the evidence to expose Luthor for the criminal he was in time to stop their sham of a wedding.

"Well," Lois said after a couple of minutes. "We'd better get going if we don't want to get stuck in traffic."

"Good point. After you," he said, gesturing toward the door.

"Thanks," she said, smiling. "You know," she added thoughtfully as she reached the door, her fingertips brushing the knob, "if you're interested in watching those Evil Dead movies, I can swing by the video store on the way back from the party."

"Ah, that's okay. I'm good," he replied with a glance back at the television and with a chill creeping up his spine. "I've had more than my fill of them."

THE END