

Thanksgiving 2015 — Matchmaker Chronicles Vol 1 CG1

By KenJ <ken.janney@kjanney.com>

Rated PG-13

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Summary: This is the first part of a prologue to a longer NextGen story to be written in this series and deals with the events around Thanksgiving 2015.

Story Size: 8,095 words (43Kb as text)

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

I wish to express my thanks to my Beta reader Ray Reynolds for his invaluable help. This was a VERY rough draft when it first landed in his hands.

A Prologue.

Chapter 1

Universal Locator Designation
Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120
Local designation — Canon Universe also called Prime
2015

It was Wednesday, November 18th. It had been a quiet, slow news day at the Planet which considering recent events was unusual. The previous week, Friday the 13th of all days, there had been a terrorist attack in Paris, but that was winding down. The safety of the French President himself had been threatened during the attacks as he was watching a soccer game between France and Germany when several suicide bombers attempted to enter the stadium. They wanted to kill themselves and as many other people as they could, but when security denied them entry, they detonated their bombs anyhow. The authorities had moved quickly, identified the mastermind, and a dragnet had been spread. It was a truly international incident having ties to a community in Belgium. The attacks had been spread out and had happened so suddenly that there had been no opportunity for Superman or Ultra Woman to intervene. By the time they had heard about it, it was just about over.

Lois was looking forward to going home and spending time with the kids. Clark was out on a publicity tour of the new E.R. at MetGen. They had added a special entrance for the superheroes, and he was there representing himself and Ultra Woman for the grand opening. Jimmy was there as the senior staff photographer and brought along a rookie photographer. In addition, Melody Friez, Eduardo Friez's daughter and newest member of the Daily Planet staff, filling her retired father's desk, was there as the reporter. Melody had been a journalism major in college and had interned at the Planet prior to her father's retirement. Perry had been careful not to have her work under her father any more than

necessary, and her performance had impressed Perry. When Eduardo put in his retirement paperwork, Perry offered Melody his desk. She had been reluctant at first, but with some encouragement from Eduardo, Lois and Clark (who had all been watching her develop as a reporter), she had finally accepted the offer.

Looking at her watch, Lois calculated that she still had time to finish the filler piece that Perry had given her before quitting time so she bent over her keyboard. Looking around, surreptitiously, she saw that no one was watching. Recently, Clark had gotten her a partition which stood eighteen inches above the back of her desk. Ostensibly, it was to give her space to tack up pictures of the children and Clark, but in reality it was there to screen her from casual observation when she used her super-speed to type. She had also gotten a 'silent' keyboard. Her original keyboard had made a clicking sound with each key press ... a dead giveaway. She could type over a hundred words per minute, without shifting to super-speed, but the difference had still been noticeable and had almost given away the secret a couple of times.

Before she realized it, the article was finished, proof read, sent to Perry, and it was quitting time. Lois shut down her computer and collected her things. She grabbed her coat and bag and headed for the second floor. She knew that the kids were there because she had heard each of their individual heartbeats when they had arrived for the after-school program. She knew that Jon, Lara, and the twins, Sean and Celeste, would all be at home waiting for the rest of the family to arrive.

Tonight they were planning to decorate for Thanksgiving. For Halloween the kids had all looked forward to cutting out Jack-O-Lanterns to decorate the front steps. Now, for Thanksgiving, they were going to decorate with cornstalks, leftover pumpkins, fake turkeys and of course Indians and Pilgrims.

They were all looking forward to the arrival of Grandma and Grandpa Kent who would be coming in over the weekend, and the kids were also looking forward to the four days off from school.

As soon as she stepped into the daycare center on the second floor, a smile sprang to her face when there was a chorus of "Mommy!" from four voices, and she was mobbed by eight year old Jessica, six year old Jimmy, four year old Lucy and two year old Sam. She had recently started weaning Sam, and she found that she missed the one on one time she had had with him feeding him, but of course she had felt that way when she had weaned each of her children.

Thinking about breastfeeding her children always brought CJ to her mind. CJ had been her first child and her first experience of breastfeeding. Even though she did not physically give birth to CJ, he had been her child from the time he was about four months of age until shortly after his first birthday when Herb picked him up to return him to his rightful parents. She knew that he was the child of a super couple in the future, but thanks to Herb, she had been his mother. Being forced into breastfeeding, without having been pregnant, had been a rather unique experience. As Herb had explained it, breastfeeding the child was imperative if he were to survive and only she could do it because of the changes made to her milk by her exposure to the Kryptonian aura. That experience had taught her a lot. First, when breastfeeding, she really felt fulfilled as a wife and mother, and second, that she would be required to do that for every child they conceived. (See [url=http://www.lcfanfic.com/stories/2012/html/borrowed.html]Borrowed Time — Matchmaker Chronicles Volume 2[url]).

Looking on the bright side, she no longer aged, and they would be having more children. However, she and Clark had talked it over and decided that for the sake of The Secret, they would wait a while and allow the current brood to mature before starting on the next part of the next generation. They had started

using makeup to disguise the fact that they no longer aged.

The realization that they would be waiting about twenty years until they had their next child was almost too much to bear for Lois, but it had to be in order to preserve The Secret, and preserving that was protecting her family. Her family was the most important thing in her world.

All of these thoughts passed through her mind as she entered the daycare center and knelt down to place her bag on the floor. As she knelt down, she opened her arms wide to accept the hugs from her children and hug them in return.

The staff watched this display with equanimity. They saw it on a daily basis and never tired of seeing all of the affection. Many times the Kent family was held up as an example of what a loving family should look like and many were the times that other families failed in that comparison. However, those that saw strove to imitate the example.

Lois was wholly unconscious of the effect that she and Clark and their brood were having on the community. Those families that they interacted with on a regular basis had all been affected by their example. Many of the families in their neighborhood, especially those with children that played with the Kents, were slowly becoming more like them — happier and more content.

Before she even straightened up, she asked, “All ready to go, kiddos?”

Jessie, as the oldest, answered, “Almost, Mommy. We need our coats.”

Lois replied, “Well, why don’t you and Jimmy get your coats on, and I’ll help Lucy and Sam.”

“Okay, Mommy.” Jessie took Jimmy’s hand and headed for the coat rack.

Fran, one of the workers who had been watching, in appreciation, handed Lois the coats for Lucy and Sam, and Lois thanked her.

Once they were all in their coats, they headed for the van. Lois had one of Lucy’s hands in one of hers and one of Sam’s in the other. Jessie was proudly carrying Lois’s bag and had Jimmy by the other hand. Lois still regretted the necessity of trading in her beloved Jeep, but there were just too many in the family for that vehicle. It had been traded in on a mini-van and then as their family continued to grow, that had been traded in on a fifteen passenger van.

As soon as Lois and the kids walked in the door at home, she was mobbed again, this time by the four older children. Once the hugs had been taken and given, Lois asked, “Jon, has everyone finished their homework?”

“Yes, Mom, all done.”

“Good! Why don’t you all go in and put on a video while I get dinner started.”

Lara shouted, “All right! My turn to pick! I want to watch ‘Planes’.”

Sean and Celeste both shouted, “Yeah, Dusty Crophopper!” in unison. Lucy loved this movie and was in the vanguard as they all moved into the living room. Her favorite character was Dottie.

Lois charged thirteen-year-old Lara, “Lara, keep an eye on Sam, please.”

“Sure, Mama,” she said and picked up Sam while placing him on her hip to carry him into the living room.

A short while later, Clark came in through the back door and stepping over to Lois, looped his arms around her from behind and kissed the back of her neck.

Lois released a contented sigh and said, “I’ll give you just two hours to stop that,” then she giggled.

Still behind her, he reached for the pan lid and picked it up to examine what she was making for dinner. She had started a large pot of stew. He took an appreciative sniff and said, “Smells

almost good enough to eat.”

She turned so that she was facing him and playfully slapped his arm. “You know it will be good enough to eat. With your help, I’ve improved a lot in my cooking over the years. You haven’t complained about my cooking for ever so long, and the kids don’t mind either. And they were bound to be the biggest critics.”

He nuzzled her neck and then said, “When you’re right, you’re right. You are now a tremendous cook ... thanks to my teaching ability.”

She tilted her head to the opposite side to give him greater access to her neck as she sighed, “Yeah.”

On Friday night Jon and the other kids were busy preparing the Thanksgiving decorations while Clark went out to run some ‘errands,’ one of which resulted in some cornstalks, direct from Kansas, to be used in decorating the front porch. Those were placed out along with some pumpkins left over from Halloween and some cutout turkeys colored by the younger children. One of the pumpkins was dressed up with a turkey neck and head, wings and tail so that it looked like an orange turkey.

A little later, after dark, Jon and Lara watched the rest of the kids as Lois and Clark went on a brief errand. They had arranged a meeting with Jonathan and Martha. The older Kents had loaded up the pickup truck and headed out. Lois and Clark, as Ultra Woman and Superman, met them, picked up the truck, and flew it to the outskirts of Metropolis before flying home. While they were carrying the pickup, they flew at treetop level, below the FAA radar. Once the truck landed, Jonathan drove the rest of the way to the Hyperion Avenue house.

As soon as they arrived at the house and were in the door, they had eight grandchildren all vying for their attention while Clark carried in the luggage and equipment.

Since Sean and Celeste were now eleven years old, their powers were coming on. They had started getting stronger and faster once they turned ten. Now, at eleven, their super-hearing had been coming on, and they were in on the family secret. Martha’s extra suitcases and boxes contained sewing equipment and bolts of spandex cloth of various shades because Sean and Celeste were going to be getting their new uniforms made while Martha was there.

Sean was unsure of what color scheme he wanted, so for the time being he was going to have a solid blue in a shade similar to his dad’s with a blue cape.

Celeste was planning to use her Kryptonian name as her super persona. Her Kryptonian name was Noel and seizing on the obvious, she had decided to use a green and red color scheme for her uniform. Hers would not be a full body suit like her mom’s or sister’s, but would instead be like a Speedo swimsuit in green with a yellow belt, a pleated, knee length-red skirt, red cape, calf-boots and elbow-length gloves.

Construction of the suits was placed on hold until after the holiday.

Saturday night, Clark was out on a rescue and Lois had just put Lucy and Sam to bed while the rest of the children played board games in the playroom. She was still upstairs when she heard voices in front of their house with her super hearing. Using her x-ray vision she investigated. What she saw caused her some concern. Spinning into her uniform, she flew out through her bedroom window. Making a wide circle, she returned from the direction opposite her house and confronted two teen boys just as they threw one of their pumpkins down, smashing it on the sidewalk.

They didn’t see her as she hovered in the air over the street and listened.

“That’ll show him. Stuck up, four eyes, teacher’s pet, Kent.

He gets in the middle of all of my plans. I still need to get even with his side-kick, Kaplin, but this is a start.”

She was relieved to see that it was the plain pumpkin that had been destroyed. As the boys started to run away, Ultra Woman drifted down and made her presence known, “Going somewhere, boys?”

Upon seeing the super-heroine, Ultra Woman, confronting them, they stopped dead in their tracks. One of the boys, intimidated by her presence, caved and blurted out, “Bud did it, not me!”

Ultra Woman turned her attention to ‘Bud’ Kyle. She knew Bud very well. He and Jon had been butting heads since kindergarten, and it had only gotten worse when they had gotten into middle school. She addressed him, “So, your name is Bud. Well, Bud, it looks like you have a mess to clean up.”

“Nah, no way. I didn’t do nuthin’ and you can’t prove that I did.”

“Well, Bud, they say that in a court of law, the testimony of two or more witnesses can result in a conviction. Your buddy just gave you up and I saw what you did. Now, here’s the deal. You have a choice to make. You can make restitution by replacing the pumpkin and cleaning up the mess you made, completely. That stuff can make the sidewalk slippery, and we don’t want anyone to fall. Or, I can call the police, and you can be charged with vandalism and littering.”

Bud sneered and replied in a haughty tone, “I’m a minor. That don’t worry me none.”

“Ah, but your parents won’t appreciate it when they have to come to the precinct to get you out. They also won’t appreciate having to appear in family court. And they most definitely won’t appreciate paying the fine for the littering that you did or paying to replace the pumpkin you broke.”

“My old man will pay it and probably laugh. He’d think it was funny.”

Bud was starting to get on Lois’s nerves. He was explaining why he acted the way he did, by saying that it was the way he was raised, and that his father supported his behavior. This family needed to be dealt with. She zoomed away and returned in the blink of an eye with a dustpan and brush. Hovering a foot off the ground, she said, in a firm, no-nonsense tone, “Okay, if that’s the way it is, I’m not giving you the options. You are going to clean up the mess you created and you are doing it right now. Get busy.” She held the implements out for him.

Bud grumbled, but he took the proffered items.

As he did, Ultra Woman floated up to ten feet above the ground and her fisted hands went to her hips in an intimidating pose. Ultra Woman indicated a trash bin, handy nearby and said, “Use that trash bin.” Lois was happy that he was complying because there really was nothing she **could** do to force him. She had to rely on the **intimidation factor** that the uniform and persona afforded.

As Bud started to scoop up the vegetable he grumbled and continued to grumble the entire time. When the last had been scraped up, Ultra Woman indicated a hose attached to a faucet and said, in a commanding tone, “Wash it!”

Bud grabbed the hose and turned on the water to sluice the remaining residue into the gutter.

As soon as he was finished and the faucet turned off, Lois took each of the boys by a handful of the back of their coats and lifted off with them. She flew them to the local precinct and addressed the desk sergeant, “Sergeant, I wish to press charges against these two. They smashed a pumpkin, destroyed private property and in doing so, littered the sidewalk.”

“Oh, a couple of hooligans, eh? Well, first off, I think they need to clean up the mess they made. Then we’ll call their parents.”

Bud interrupted to address Ultra Woman and blurted out,

“Hey, you said that if we cleaned up the mess you wouldn’t take us to the police!”

Ultra Woman looked at him and said, “Woman’s prerogative, I changed my mind.” She addressed the sergeant, “They already cleaned the mess up. All you need to do is call the parents. I believe that there should be a fine and possibly a family court appearance mandated. Thank you, Sergeant.”

There were several uniformed officers standing around looking appreciatively at Ultra Woman. Her skin-tight uniform always showed off her trim though voluptuous figure (her figure was still especially voluptuous because she was in the process of weaning Sam and her breasts were still a little fuller) to good advantage. She was glad that she had never been ashamed of her body and showed off as much of it as she could, most of the time because she knew that Clark appreciated it. One of the patrolmen took out his cell phone and snapped a couple of pictures. Her super-hearing picked up the accelerated heartbeats of the patrolmen and a subdued comment, “What a babe! It’s a shame she’s married to Superman.” The patrolman next to him overheard and snickered, “Like you’d have any chance.” The sergeant called a couple of them over and said, “Take these two back to holding. Put them in a cell by themselves. Keep them segregated from the adults.”

“Will do, Sarge. Do we have to cuff these dangerous felons?”

Thinking that it might help to teach them a lesson, he replied, “It is standard procedure.”

Making a show of pulling out his cuffs, the patrolman said, “Okay, you two. Hands behind your backs.”

Astonished at this, the two hastened to comply and the patrolmen snapped on the cuffs before leading them away.

Lois was a little uncomfortable about this, but she saw the wink that the sergeant gave her and hesitated as the teens were led away.

After the guys were out of earshot, the sergeant said, “Don’t worry, Ultra Woman. It’s something we do with kids, part of the ‘Scared Straight’ program.”

Ultra Woman nodded her understanding and said, “I hope it helps.” As she was turning to leave she said, “Thank you, sergeant.”

“Any time, Ultra Woman. That’s what we are here for.”

When Clark returned from his rescue, Lois told him of the incident. He asked, “Isn’t Bud the one that has caused Jon so much trouble?”

“One and the same. I think I now have a better idea as to why he is the way he is. His father facilitates his behavior. I think that whole family needs counseling.”

“Okay, maybe the visit to family court will result in mandatory counseling.”

“We can only hope.”

Chapter 2

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120

Local designation — Canon Universe also called Prime 2015

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It had been a crazy week at the Planet and a frustrating week for the superheroes. There had been more terror attacks at scattered locations across the globe and there had been little or nothing that they could do about them. Accidents can be dealt with since most of the time in a car wreck the victim will be there until rescued, but a terror attack occurs and ends so quickly that there is no stopping or preventing it. Superman and Ultra Woman had been able to airlift some of the victims to hospitals, but that

was all.

Things had quieted, somewhat, and by Wednesday the 25th, Lois and Clark were happy to be heading home with four children in tow.

They were actually going to be having a rather large gathering, JJ Olsen, his brother and sister, were joining them as were Jack and Mel Kaplan and Hattie. Jimmy and Lucy frequently availed themselves of the time that their children spent with Lois and Clark to have some alone time together. Added to that, recently Jimmy had started a new tech company and was busy getting it off the ground. He had kept his job at the Planet so that they would have a steady source of income until the business was bringing in enough of a cash flow. That made eighteen mouths to feed so they were actually cooking three turkeys. With four cooks it was going to be somewhat crowded in the kitchen, so a division of labor was devised. One turkey was an oven roast, one was going to be smoked and one was scheduled to be deep fried. The smoking and deep frying were going to be done out back, and that was where Jonathan and Clark would be doing the cooking, leaving Lois and Martha in the kitchen to make the oven roast, stuffing, sides and desserts. Martha was doing the turkey, stuffing and some pies in the oven while Lois worked on the vegetables.

Jonathan had the smoker set up with mesquite chips for flavor, and once it was ready he hung the cleaned turkey inside.

Clark had the deep fryer set up on a stand over a propane fire. That was going to be the trickiest of all, because it was necessary to guard against hot spots and an improperly thawed turkey since any ice (water) could cause geysering when it flashed to steam. If there was an oil geyser it could ignite. Clark made sure that the bird was properly thawed by using his heat vision on it and was able to lower it into the oil without incident.

The start time of each bird was staggered due to the different cooking times so that they would all be finished at about the same time.

The Kents had borrowed a number of folding tables and chairs, and the children were in charge of setting them up and putting out the place settings. Sam's highchair would be at Lois's side.

Just before the first of the guests was to arrive, Lois, Clark and the four oldest kids heard voices raised in fear, and they sounded fairly close.

Jon and Lara immediately went to Lois and said, "That sounds like the Livingstons', down the street. We want to help."

Lois nodded and they spun into their uniforms as did Lara. They joined Clark in the back yard. Clark put an arm around Jon while Lois did the same for Lara; then they took off, straight up, travelling too fast for the eye to follow and arced back down from a slightly different direction.

As they approached, Lois saw Karl and Carol Livingston and their two older children on the sidewalk as smoke billowed from the house. Carol had her head buried in her husband's chest and was weeping inconsolably. Before they landed, Lara said to her mom, "I don't see the baby. I want to go for her. I babysat her just last week. I know where her room is."

"Okay, Sweetie, go get her," and as they landed, Lois placed Ultra Woman 2 on the ground. As soon as her feet had touched the sidewalk, Ultra Woman 2 used her super-speed to enter the house at a run while Ultra Woman stopped to talk to the family.

Carol Livingston was frantic and seeing Ultra Woman screamed, "My baby's still inside. The smoke was too much. It drove us out of the house. I couldn't go for her."

Ultra Woman placed a reassuring hand on her shoulder and a restraining hand on Karl's shoulder as he started to move in the direction of the door, and in somewhat stilted phraseology said, "Ultra Woman 2 has gone in to see if there is anyone left inside. I

am sure that she will find her."

While Ultra Woman and Ultra Woman 2 were dealing with the family, Superman and Kam-El went in to see what was happening to the house and found that the kitchen was in flames. Superman immediately saw a deep fryer on the gas stove in the kitchen and picked up a large lid to smother the fire in the pot. Kam-El turned off the gas supply to remove the source of ignition, and then Superman carried the pot out the back door while Kam-El tried to use his super-breath to put the flames out. The problem was that this power wasn't fully developed in him as yet so all he did was fan the flames. Before it became a problem though, Superman reentered and said, "Hey, sport, not that way. Watch." Leaning in close to the flames, he inhaled and sucked away the oxygen and heat, snuffing the flames."

"Thanks, Pop. Guess I've got a lot to learn. Hey, I hear a siren approaching."

"That's what I'm here for, to teach you," and he put an arm across Jon's shoulders and gave him a man hug. "You're doing just fine. You'll learn all the little tricks. It just takes time. Yeah, the fire truck should be here shortly. I guess we are finished here. We may as well go outside. I'll have to talk to the firemen."

Meanwhile, Lara had sped directly to one year-old baby Virginia's room and bundled her up in a blanket. Virginia had been crying, but Lara had spoken to her in a low soothing tone. The tone and the fact that the baby recognized the voice quelled her fears, and she settled down. Covering the baby's face with the blanket and throwing her cape over her, Lara shifted to super-speed and took her out of the house. As she exited the door, she slowed to a walk and approached Carol first, removing her cape to reveal the bundle that she carried. She then handed the baby over, opening the blanket to reveal the smiling baby's face as she saw her mom.

Carol hugged her baby to her chest and looked at Ultra Woman 2 to say, "I don't know how to thank you."

Lara lowered her voice a tone to disguise her natural voice and replied, "No thanks are necessary. Just knowing that she is safe is enough."

A few seconds later, just as a fire truck pulled up out front, Superman and Kam-El came out of the house. Kam-El stepped over to where the family was standing while Superman moved over to talk to the engine captain.

Several residents were out in the street; some of them had their cell phones out and were taking pictures of the superheroes.

Amber, the oldest Livingston girl, who was a year younger than Jon, saw Kam-El approach and screamed, "Oh, Kam-El!" She threw caution to the wind as she quickly stepped over to him, threw her arms around the young superhero's neck and kissed him on the lips. There was more than one flash as pictures of the incident were taken. As he disengaged himself from her, she rushed on, "Could we go out on a date? I know all about Emerson. I'm not famous like her, but could we?"

The color in his cheeks could be seen beneath his mask. Without hurting her, he pushed her gently away and lowering his tone a bit said, "Uh, thanks, but, uh, I don't date."

Just then Superman finished with the engine captain and joined the rest of his family. Standing next to Jon and placing an arm around him, he said, "I think we need to go."

Placing an arm around Ultra Woman 2, Ultra Woman joined Superman in waving to the Livingstones as they took to the air and made a wide circuit to return home.

They immediately spun back into their regular clothes and moved through the house and into the street to make their way to the crowd around the Livingstone's house.

Addressing the first person she met, a neighbor named Donna Jordan, Lois asked, "Hi Donna, what happened?"

"Oh, hi Lois. The Livingstones had a fire. The superheroes just left. Say, Lois, you're a close friend of Superman's. You just

missed him. Hey, wait a minute; didn't you have a thing for Superman some time ago? Are you disappointed that he married Ultra Woman?"

Lois smiled and replied, "Let's see, I'll try to answer your questions in order. Yes, Superman and I were friends and still are. I am sorry I missed him, but oh well. Yes, a long time ago I had a 'thing' for Superman, but I got over it. I'm married to Clark now and I am happy that Superman is happily married too. Now, how are the Livingstones?"

"They seem to be okay, but it doesn't look like they will be having a happy Thanksgiving."

Lois thought for a second and then said, "We'll see about that."

As she made her way through the crowd she telepathically called Clark, /Clark?/

/Yes, Lois./

/Are they going to be able to have Thanksgiving dinner?/

/I'm afraid that their turkey was ruined along with most of their kitchen./

/Let's invite them over. We will have plenty./

/If you want to, okay by me./

By this time she was standing next to Carol Livingstone and Lara was at her side. Lara held her hands out to baby Virginia and the baby reached for her in turn, so Carol let Lara take her.

Lois put her arms around Carol as she began to cry and mutter, "Ruined. It's all ruined. Dinner, the house, everything is ruined."

Clark had gone over to stand by Karl and heard what the engine captain said after his inspection. "The kitchen sustained some damage. Fortunately Superman got here and put the fire out quickly. I think you will need to replace the range, some of the tile, perhaps a couple of cabinets. Most of the other damage is from the smoke. You may be able to get away with cleaning the drapes and such, to get rid of the smoky smell."

"Can we return to the house?"

"I don't see why not. Thanks to Superman and Kam-El we didn't have to go in with water. They had the fire out before we even got here so there's no water to sop up or soaking your carpets. What happened?"

"I was deep frying our turkey."

The captain interrupted him, "Inside? On the range?"

"Yeah, is that a problem?"

"I'll say that's a problem. Always do that outside. You need a burner stand to hold the pot and a gas tank for the burner. Let me guess, the oil sprayed out and ignited."

"Yeah, I was careful, but it happened anyhow."

"It only takes a little water in the bird for that to happen. Okay, I think I have enough to complete my report. We have to return to the barn in case we are needed elsewhere. Have a good day, what's left of it." (Barn is a nickname firemen use for the station house. It is a nickname dating back to the days of horse drawn fire engines.)

As the fire truck drove off, Lois turned to Carol and said, "You, Karl and the kids are joining us for Thanksgiving dinner. Go lock up and come with us."

"No, Lois. No, we can't. That would be too much of an imposition."

Lois countered, "It's no imposition. Look, Clark and I have been meaning to have you guys over for a while now. This is a perfect opportunity."

"Well, I have to check with Karl."

"I think Clark is talking to him."

In fact, Clark was talking with Karl. "Karl, you guys will be needing something to eat. We'd like to have you over for Thanksgiving dinner with our family and friends."

Karl was hesitant and said, "Thanks, Clark, but that would be too much of an imposition."

"It's no imposition. We are inviting you and your family to join us."

"I'll need to check with Carol."

"I think Lois is already talking to her."

In a defeated tone, Karl said, "Okay, okay, you win. We'll come over for dinner."

"Good, we'll set a few extra places."

"I really need to call my insurance agent."

"Okay, we'll expect you in about an hour."

"One hour it is."

Carol looked over and saw Karl talking to Clark. She caught his eye and looked questioningly. As he nodded, she turned to Lois and said, "Okay. We're coming."

Since Lara had been the one to rescue the baby, she was feeling somewhat possessive of her and asked, "Since you are coming for dinner, can I take Virginia with me?"

Carol looked at her daughter, the daughter that she almost lost in the fire and saw how contented she was in Lara's arms. "Sure. You can take Virginia," she said.

Jon asked, "Can Amber and Karl Jr. come now?"

Carol looked at her kids and said, "I don't see why not. We have to do some things here before we can come over, but they are free."

Amber had something of a crush on Jon and was happy to hear that they could go early and moved next to Jon. As soon as Karl Jr. joined them, they along with Lara and Virginia headed for the Kent residence.

When they got there they found that JJ and his siblings were already there, and a few minutes later Hattie Kaplin and her parents arrived.

Amber knew Hattie from seeing her at the Kent's home on other occasions and apprised her of what had happened. "... Then Superman and Kam-El swooped in along with Ultra Woman and Ultra Woman 2, and we just knew that everything was going to be all right. Sure enough it only took a minute for Ultra Woman 2 to find baby Virginia and bring her out. Then Superman and Kam-El put out the fire." She paused and took a deep breath before she continued and almost screamed as she said, "Then I kissed Kam-El!"

Hattie was flabbergasted and burst out with, "You what??"

"I kissed Kam-El! Can you believe it? Right on the mouth! Wow, he's a dreamboat."

Hattie was disgusted and muttered, "I keep missing him. This is the third or fourth time he's been seen and I haven't seen him yet!" Then she raised her tone and said, "And you got to kiss him!"

Amber could see that Hattie was bothered by her revelation and couldn't help rubbing it in as she reiterated, "Right on the mouth," in a somewhat dreamy tone.

Hattie was steamed, but Jon didn't let it ruin the day. With the help of JJ, he quickly brought her out of her dark mood.

As they sat down to dinner, Lois looked around at her family and friends and said, "We have so much to be thankful for."

Standing, Clark nodded his agreement, "Yes, we each have a lot to be thankful for, even Karl and Carol. They can be thankful that even though they went through this trial, no one was hurt. The house can be repaired, but there will not be any hospital time for anyone."

Karl and Carol each reached for and clasped the hand of the other as they both nodded their agreement.

Martha stood as Clark sat back down and said, "Jonathan and I have been around for quite a long time. There for a while, all we had to be thankful for was each other and then suddenly, Clark joined our little family. Then we became that much more thankful for what we had. It was about thirty years later that Lois joined our family which only increased our thankfulness that much

more. Now we have eight lovely grandchildren and our thankfulness cup overflows.”

As Martha sat down, Mel Kaplin spoke up, “When we finally had Hattie, we thought that there wasn’t much more that we could be thankful for, then Hattie made friends with Jon Kent. Through Jon we met this marvelous family. At first we weren’t sure about their relationship because of what we had heard about,” she nodded at Lois, “the famous Lois Lane and how she was always getting into scrapes that Superman had to get her out of. Once we got to know Lois and Clark though we saw how the stories were all blown out of proportion. We saw their family and realized that a family that demonstrated so much love for each other couldn’t be nearly as dangerous as the papers made them out to be. We are thankful to be associated with the Kent family, all of them.”

JJ as the oldest of the Olsens, felt it was incumbent upon him to speak for his family, “We are very thankful for our aunt and uncle and our cousins,” he looked directly at Hattie as he finished, “and the friends we have made.”

Hattie blushed prettily as she took his meaning. She really liked JJ and she felt a little sorry for him. She knew that he had a poor self-image because of his weight and hoped he would get over it with time.

As the senior man present, Jonathan stood up and said, “Let us bless this food,” and proceeded to pronounce the blessing before starting to carve one of the birds. As he did, he smiled and said, “You have a choice to make; we have three different birds ...”

After the dinner, the kids helped to clean up and then they went to the playroom while the adults adjourned to the living room for coffee and wine.

Clark addressed Karl, “Did you get hold of your insurance man?”

“Yes, he’ll be out tomorrow morning to inspect. He said that I can probably expect a check for the repairs in a week, but that I should go ahead and start the work.”

“How long do you think it will take?”

“At least a week. There will be a lot of clean-up and some cabinets need to be replaced, the range and some of the tile on the floor as well.”

“What are you going to do for meals in the meantime?”

“I don’t know. Take-out I suppose.”

Lois said, “Let me handle that.”

Carol, gulped, “What?”

Lois reiterated, “I said, let me handle that. I’m going to talk to our neighbors about providing meals. That’s what neighbors do for each other.”

Lois called all of her neighbors and arranged a meeting. A couple of hours later they were all assembled in their living room and Lois addressed them, “I want to thank you all for coming out on such short notice. As you all know, one of our neighbors had an unfortunate incident today. As a result, they are not able to prepare any meals. This situation could pertain for a week. Perhaps, we, as their friends and neighbors could get together and share the load to provide them with the meals that they would need. Breakfasts and lunches don’t necessarily need to be cooked so we will concentrate on dinners.”

Florence Rose, one of the neighbors grumbled, “Why can’t they just order take-out?”

Lois looked at her and asked, “If it were you, would you like to depend on take-out for a week. Or would you appreciate your neighbors chipping in and providing meals?” Lois looked around and caught the eye of Donna Jordan. She addressed the crowd, “When we got there to see what was happening, I spoke with Donna. Donna remembered that I am a close friend of

Superman’s. I want to point out something — all Superman does is help people. He takes people to the hospital when they need it, he prevents crime, he pulls people from mud-slides and floods, he even prevented a huge asteroid from crashing into the Earth and killing almost everyone; and Ultra Woman, ever since she arrived, is right there beside him, also helping out. I realize that those are big saves, saves on a global scale, but in our little corner of the globe, helping out our neighbor in need is every bit as important as those flashy rescues. Now, I ask you, what would Superman and Ultra Woman do? Would they say to the Livingstones, ‘Order take-out,’ or would they help?”

Looking around at her gathered neighbors, Donna spoke up, “Lois is right. What would Superman and Ultra Woman do? I think they would help and I for one want to follow that example. Carol, I’ll be providing your dinner tomorrow night. In fact, why don’t you guys come over for dinner and the evening? It’ll be fun.”

Following Donna and Lois’s example, it had not been mentioned, but everyone knew that the Kents had invited the Livingstones to their home for Thanksgiving dinner, the Livingstones were scheduled for visits for the rest of the week. One of the invitations came from Florence Rose.

After the meeting broke up, Carol turned to Lois and said, with a tear in her eye, “Lois, I don’t know how to thank you. I’m overwhelmed. You really have made a difference here. I know I can speak for Karl when I say, we appreciate all that you have done for us.”

Lois shrugged it off, “It was nothing, Carol. It’s just neighbors helping neighbors.”

“But you did it. If not for you we’d be eating take-out and be miserable. This way, we can concentrate on the repairs.”

Lois gave her a hug and said, “It’s just what Superman or Ultra Woman would do, Carol. Wouldn’t it be nice if everyone did it too?”

“Yeah, you’re right. You know, I haven’t been the best friend I could be to some of my neighbors, but that is going to change. I’m going to use Ultra Woman as my example. I’m going to try to be more helpful, be a better neighbor.”

“You do that, Carol. I’m sure that would make her happy.”

In the evening of Friday, the twenty-seventh, the doorbell was rung and when Lois answered it, Bud Kyle was on the stoop, holding a pumpkin. When she had opened the door, she said, “Well, Bud, did you want to see Jon?”

When he looked up she could see that he had some healing bruises on his face and around his eyes and he said, “I came to replace the pumpkin I ruined.” He proffered the large orange squash to her, “and to say that I’m sorry.”

Lois accepted the pumpkin and said, “I hope you have learned a lesson.”

In a somewhat belligerent tone, he replied, “Yeah, I have.” As he turned away, she saw that he moved stiffly, as if he were in pain. Using her x-ray vision, Lois checked and saw bruising and red welts on his back and ribs.

Bud didn’t hear her gasp of dismay. She stopped him, “Bud!”

He turned back to her as she asked, “What did your father do to you?”

He hung his head and said, sullenly, “Nothin’. He didn’t do nothin’,” as he turned away and left.

Lois placed the pumpkin on the porch where the other had been and called her husband, /Clark!/ as she stepped back into the house.

Having just returned from a rescue, he replied, /I’m upstairs./ She rushed upstairs and plopping down on the side of the bed, she said, “I think we have a major problem.”

“What would that be?”

“Bud Kyle was just here to deliver the replacement pumpkin. Clark, I think he is a victim of child abuse. I think his father beat him because of what he did. His face was bruised, and when I checked using my x-ray vision, so is his body; and he had red welts on his back.”

“Lois, you know we aren’t supposed to violate individual’s privacy by using our x-ray vision on them.”

“This was justified. That kid was injured.”

“I know and I sympathize, but there are just some things we don’t do.”

Chagrined, Lois replied, “I know. It’s just like old times. I was jumping in before checking the water level, but it was probably my fault! I was the one that took him to the police.”

He could sense that she was on the verge of breaking down, so taking her in his arms, he said, “Look, maybe the appearance in family court will help. We can only hope that it will and that they will be ordered into counseling.”

Lois relented and slumped in his arms, “Yeah, you’re right. I guess we’ll just have to wait and see.”

THE END