

# Crossing Time

By Dandello <momkat@dandello.net>

Rated: PG

Submitted: April, 2017

Summary: Lois, Clark, and their baby are missing...

Story Size: 1,565 words (9Kb as text)

Copyright: March 29, 2017

\*\*\*

Perry White reread the hand-written note the messenger had delivered only an hour before. 'Please meet us at Manny's Deli at 3PM.' There was no signature. He was as certain as he could be that the hand-writing on this note matched that of a note he'd gotten the day that Search and Rescue teams had given up looking for Lois, Clark, and baby Jordan after Lois's Cherokee had been found in a ravine in Manatauq state park. Search and Rescue had scoured the park for days looking for signs of them, but had come up empty. It was as if the Kents had vanished off the face of the Earth.

The note that day had read 'Perry, we're fine but we can't come home – Lois.'

Clark's parents had received a similar note. Perry assumed that Lois's parents got a note as well.

Perry hadn't been aware of anything that Lane and Kent might have been looking into that would have required them to lay low.

That was six months ago.

Six months of knowing they were *probably* okay, but not knowing for a *fact* that they were tore at him. He had been an award winning journalist before taking on the responsibility of being editor of the Daily Planet. He hated not knowing. And then there were other things: Superman had disappeared for several days after the Kents' vanishing. When he returned, he wasn't the same man, literally. Most people didn't see beyond the primary colored costume and the 'new' Superman looked enough like the 'old' one to pass if you'd only seen printed photos. But Perry had met Superman more than once. Perry knew that they were different people even though the resemblance was close enough they might be related, and probably were.

Other things had started happening six months ago as well. Individually, they could have been coincidences, but together... probably not.

Within days of the appearance of the new Superman, Jerome and Lois Clarke of Crosstime Industries announced they were moving their company headquarters from Los Angeles to Metropolis. They also bought controlling interest of the Daily Planet and several other struggling East Coast media outlets.

As far as anyone knew, Jerome Clarke had never been east of the Mississippi until the company's unexpected announcement.

Perry did some digging into the new owners. There wasn't as much as he'd expected. The Clarkes had initially made their money in preternaturally smart investments, salvage, and mining. There was absolutely no indication of insider information being involved, their salvage operations took on projects others deemed impossible, and their mining projects always used the most modern and environmentally safe methods available. Their safety record was the best in the industry.

Then, when LexCorp disintegrated, the Clarkes were poised to pick up the pieces on the West Coast. It was as if they'd had prior knowledge of Luthor's fall and had just been waiting for it.

These days, they let their grown children manage their various

business interests. Jordan Clarke had a degree in engineering from Caltech and handled technology. The younger son Jonathon, managed entertainment and media. Perry had met him several times. He was in his mid-forties, had a degree in media law and had worked for a small newspaper in Los Angeles while in college. He had married his college sweetheart Karen McKensie and they had three children. He spoke several languages fluently. He knew something of journalism and was sharp as a tack. He had told Perry on their first meeting: "Mom and Dad told me that the newsroom is your kingdom. My job is to make sure you don't have to worry about anything but that – and not getting us sued."

The senior Clarkes weren't exactly reclusive, but they stayed out of the limelight and they especially avoided photographers. They were known for their support of social causes, gender and racial equality being high on their list. Crosstime Industries was well respected and well known for their progressive personnel practices.

When some Crosstime plants voted to unionize, there was a story – probably apocryphal, but maybe not – that Jerome Clarke looked at the documentation, took notes and started checking off items the union rep needed to clarify because the company's policy was actually more pro-worker. He then smiled and said: "No need to go backwards. And that looks like a really good health plan. Can we get our managers signed on with that?"

The Clarkes, through Crosstime, fought for work place integration when segregation was the norm. When local banks discriminated against Crosstime employees, Crosstime opened credit unions. When local jurisdictions balked at open integration, Crosstime supported candidates that supported desegregation. When gender equality became the hot issue, again Crosstime Industries was in the forefront: opening daycare centers, offering parental leave.

Once, in the very early Sixties, when asked why Crosstime Industries had no presence in the South, Lois Clarke was quoted as saying: "For some people and places, blind hatred and stupidity are so entrenched it's a wonder they have the brains to come in out of the rain. These are people who would let their own children go without a future because their hatred of anyone who doesn't look exactly like them is so great.

"We at Crosstime *know* that segregation is socially and economically destructive. But we're just one company. It will take a broom much larger than the one we have to sweep out the sh\*heads that insist that up is down and wrong is right and stupidity brings progress.

"I mean, seriously, how smart is it to willfully ignore major economic blocks because you don't like the customer's race? So long as their money is green with a dead president on it, what does it matter the color of the person handing you the money? And if a person is willing and *able* to do the job, well I'll hire a smart and hard-working colored person over a stupid lazy white one any day of the week. It would be stupid not to. And I have *never* been accused of being stupid."

The South had been appalled at her candor. States and companies in the North and West took notice. She expanded it into an op-ed piece for the LA Times and was nominated for a Pulitzer for it.

There were rumors that the Clarkes had been friends and supporters of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. But if it was more than just rumor, there was no evidence. It was known that Lois Clarke was a close friend to Laurel Tideman of Tideman Industries – they supported many of the same issues, were on many of the same boards.

There was one known photograph of Lois Clarke and it was with Laurel Tideman. It was taken at a women's march in Washington D.C. They were standing together and they were both looking right at the camera. Lois Clarke had to have known that their picture had been taken. Hers was a face Perry White would

have recognized anywhere: Lois Lane-Kent. Her hair was longer but that wasn't the oddest part: the woman in the photograph was at least fifteen years older than the woman who had disappeared. And the photograph had been taken more than thirty-five years ago.

\*\*\*

Manny's wasn't terribly busy at three in the afternoon. Perry grabbed a booth, ordered coffee for himself and waited. He spotted Jon Clarke walk in with two well-dressed older people, a man and a woman.

"Perry, I'd like you to meet my parents, Jerome and Lois Clarke," Jon said. Perry looked up at the faces of Lois Lane and Clark Kent, only they were in their seventies.

"What happened?" he asked as they scooted into the booth to sit opposite him. Jon went and sat at the counter to give them privacy.

Clark answered. "A time storm. It caught the Cherokee, dumped us back in 1942."

"But... the Cherokee was found..."

"What we didn't know was that the storm would come back and return the car to the present. It came back and we weren't in it," Lois said. "We tried contacting people who might have been able to help. They never showed. We were stuck and so we made the best of it. We were able to use what we knew to make small differences where we could."

"The world now is a little nicer place than it was," Clark said.

"And now what?" Perry asked. It felt so odd to be finally talking to Lois and Clark only to find they were now more than a decade older than he was.

"We missed Metropolis," Clark said. "We didn't dare come back until *we* were gone. As it is there are interesting time issues, such as Ellen Lane meeting Lois Clarke at a women's rally and naming her daughter after her."

The air cracked from the sonic boom of a fast moving Kryptonian. "Must be a fire," Perry said.

"Orway and Ninth," Clark said. "Apartment building."

Lois called out to her son who appeared to be staring through the wall. "Jon, remind Jordy we still need to get a handle on the sound pressure waves. That's just annoying."

THE END

All due apologies to Thomas Hunter, Peter Powell and David Ambrose (authors of the film 'The Final Countdown'.)