

Sleeping With the Boss

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Summary: What if Clark Kent had been a little more supportive and Lois a little more trusting during the episode “Stop the Presses”? Would things have ended the same or would they have stopped the Press brothers sooner?

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A/N: I hated the way Lois and Clark were written in “Stop the Presses.” It was forced and out of character, and honestly, it reeked. So here’s my fun rewrite to that episode that gives Lois and Clark a second chance at doing it right.

It had been a long and tiring day. Lois had been promoted to Editor, and Perry White was now working upstairs, making the normal day to day routine Clark Kent shared with his wife disappear. He was happy for her. She tried to hide the little gloat she had let out when Perry had announced her promotion, but she wouldn’t be his Lois without gloating a little. It would take some adjusting, but they would figure out how to work together with the new title, just like they always did.

Then there was the investigation into Eric Press. It seemed like every time he was getting somewhere there was a call for help... a very big call for help. The explosion at the Advanced Strategies Lab tonight had taken a lot out of him—more than he was willing to admit. Thankfully no one had been hurt. The researcher he’d spoken with said the computers were acting haywire. That was exactly how Dr. Klein had described STAR Labs computers when Eric Press had broken in. He knew he was onto something he just didn’t know what.

He unlocked the front door to the townhome and nearly ran into Lois as she was rushing out the door. “Whoah! Honey, slow down...”

Lois, throwing her coat on as she headed for the door, throwing her shoes on as she grabbed her keys gave him a quick kiss, “Sorry. Emergency. Tomorrow’s lead fell through. I’ve got to get down to the office.”

“Okay,” he nodded, as he gave her a hand with her jacket, “Did you already eat?”

Lois shook her head, “I’ll grab something on the way.” She turned to look at him and stopped short, “You look a little pale. Are you okay?” She ran her hand up his cheek.

He gave her a weak smile trying to lighten her up with a joke, “Sure. I just got blown up. No biggie.” At her wide-eyed expression, he chuckled, “Lois, I’m fine, really. Go.” He leaned in to kiss her.

Lois looked at him skeptically, “Are you sure?”

“Positive.” He leaned in to kiss her. “Go. Save the lead. I’ll be here when you get back.” He closed the door behind her and let out a long sigh. He really didn’t feel that great, but he wasn’t about to give Lois something else to worry about right now.

“Help! He’s got my car!” The cry for help reached his ears, and he let out a long breath. It seemed rest wasn’t something that would be happening tonight.

Lois raced through the newsroom, as she found the legal team and the reporter, Janet that had not validated her source before sending her story to print waiting for her. She’d *said* Perry had

already signed off on it. She’d *said* it was a solid story. *She’d* lied.

“Perry signed off on this, huh?” Lois glared at her as she slammed the door to the conference room.

“It was a solid lead,” Janet argued.

“I’m sure it was.” Lois folded her arms over her chest angrily. Seeing the empty newsroom behind the team of lawyers that had taken up shop in the conference room was only a bitter reminder of the fact that her evening at home with Clark had been interrupted because of the incompetence of one reporter. Recalling her past run-ins with Perry, she forced herself to calm down.

“Ms. Lane...”

“You lied to me.” Lois continued. “You lied to me and because of that all of us are stuck here working late missing time with our families...”

“I know. I’m sorry.”

“Well? How are we going to fix this?”

Three hours later Clark finished up his patrol and headed home. He frowned when he landed on the balcony and saw Lois still wasn’t home. Changing direction, he headed toward the Planet to check on her.

“Lois?”

Slowly Lois began to come to. She frowned as she felt the stiff muscles in her lower back and the crick in her neck. Why wasn’t she in her bed? She looked around and saw Clark looking down at her in concern. She was in Perry’s—her office. The events of the evening came back to her, and she groaned.

“Clark? How long was I out?” She stood up, trying to stretch her tender muscles from her unconventional sleeping position.

Clark gave her an apologetic smile, “I’m not sure. I just got back from patrol and saw you weren’t home.”

“Janet was supposed to call when she finished rewriting,” Lois grumbled, as she allowed him to pull her onto his lap as she stared at the mess on her desk in disgust. The Front Page was still a mess.

Clark picked up a redlined story on her desk, “This story?”

Lois glared at the article in his hand angrily, “You know they wouldn’t dream of doing something like this to Perry.”

“I’m sorry. Any luck on your lead?” Clark asked, as he moved to rub her shoulders.

“Sorta, I’ve got this rewritten, but a lot had to get cut out which meant I needed to find something to fill the extra space we have on the front page. So I’ve had to rework the whole City section. I’ve got the lab explosion, but no pictures. I’ve got pictures of the fire on Third and no story. I’ve got – Several stories in the mix and— I don’t know. Perry made this job look a lot easier.” She sighed happily as his magic fingers continued to knead the tense muscles in her back. “That. Keep doing that. It feels good.”

He placed a kiss against her neck and whispered, “This?”

She grinned, looking back at him, “A little lower.”

“What do you got left to do?” He asked, as his hands ran up and down her lower back, tracing the outline of the back of her ribcage with his hands.

“I’ve gotta check Janet’s article against Legal’s...” She let out a long sigh as she felt a warm sensation spread across her lower back. “That feels nice.”

“Where’s the Legal Notice?” He asked.

She pointed to the folder in front of her, and his heavenly touch was removed from her lower back as he sifted through the folder. “Did they cover everything?” He flipped to the last page. “A hundred page memorandum?”

“They like to be thorough.” Lois rolled her eyes. Then pointed at her shoulders, “Speaking of thorough.” She laughed as she watched him flip through the file at super-speed before turning his attention back to massaging her lower back and shoulders.

She reached for the copy of Janet's story, leaning back against him. "All right, Mr. Encyclopedia. Help me finish this up so we can go home."

His body rumbled against her as he laughed, "Gladly."

After sending the paper to print and helping Lois double check Janet, the new city beat reporter's story against all the Legal Notices on what could not be said in the article. It had taken everything in him not to fly her home at super-speed when he'd found her asleep at her desk this evening. He knew she wouldn't have appreciated him trying to 'mother hen' her as she'd put it countless times.

He'd been mildly ticked when he saw the empty conference room and Lois alone in her office. Why everyone thought it was okay to just leave Lois alone to do the heavy lifting he didn't understand. They were taking advantage of her being new in her role as Editor in Chief. As Lois had stated earlier, they wouldn't dream of doing something like this to Perry. He hated that this was something he couldn't fix for her. Helping her speed through what he could to get them both back home was all he could think of to let them both get the rest they needed. The more his hands moved up and down her back though the less he was thinking about rest.

"Okay, that's everything." Lois sighed, leaning against him as he kneaded at the sensitive flesh of her neck and shoulders. "You feel good."

"You're very tense." He remarked, aiming another long blast of heat vision toward the tight muscles.

"It's been a tense day." She whispered, looking back at him with a half-smile. "Thanks for helping me finish up. You're very handy to have around."

"Glad to be of service." He placed a kiss on her shoulder as his hands moved up the back of her neck. She let out a soft moan, reaching her arm back to finger the hair on the back of his neck. He smiled against her neck as he replaced his hands with his lips, nibbling on the sensitive skin.

He pulled her closer, groaning his approval as she reached behind her, running her palm over the length of his thigh. "I've missed you." She sighed happily as she traced the outline of the familiar muscles beneath his trousers. He groaned his approval as he felt her press against him.

"I missed you too." He managed just before she turned in his arms, sliding onto his lap as she feathered his face in heated kisses. He groaned against her lips as she hiked up her skirt to allow enough room to straddle him. He ran his hands up and down the length of her legs as he captured her mouth with his own.

She tugged on his tie, loosening it from his cotton shirt and tossed it to the ground. "So, not fair." She murmured, working her way down the long line of buttons on his dress shirt. "At least when we're partnered up...I can..." His hand moved up her skirt, running his palm over her round bottom in search of his target. "Oh!" She looked back at him in surprise as he tugged her pantyhose down with her panties. "Oh, please tell me you left the suit at home..." She moaned, tugging his shirt out of his pants as she reached for his belt buckle.

"What do you think?" He murmured against her, pulling the fabric to her blouse back to reveal the soft ivory lace holding her breasts securely. He ran his hands up her sides, kneading the flesh as he nibbled at her collarbone, moving down her body with his lips.

"Oh, Clark," She sighed happily as he buried his head into her chest.

It was bound to happen. They both knew it. They had yet to spend a single night together as husband and wife without making love so it shouldn't have come as a surprise. She opened her mouth to let out a soft 'oh' as her husband leaned her back onto the desk.

In the back of her mind, she could hear something ringing as the world around her dissipated. He fell against her heavily. She grinned happily at him as he cradled her in his arms, "We should just stay like this forever. Save...so much time." She murmured, running her hands over his perfectly sculpted chest, glancing down at his naked torso.

"Might make going on rescues a little awkward." He teased.

She giggled, "Yeah, that suit's distracting enough as it is." She could have sworn she heard something ringing.

His body rumbled against hers as he laughed. She grinned back at him, and he leaned in to kiss her, "You feeling any better?"

"Yeah, I think so. I didn't realize how much went into Perry's job until I had it. Kinda overwhelming." She commented with a sigh.

"You'll get the hang of it. Perry wouldn't have given it to you if he didn't think you could handle it."

"I know." She whispered sadly. "It's just different is all... being the boss."

"For what it's worth I think you're doing a good job." He whispered in her ear, "Even if I did have to fight the urge to carry you home when I found you asleep at your desk earlier."

Lois laughed, "You didn't!"

"And give your missing partners in crime a piece of my mind...I didn't think you'd appreciate that though."

"No." She sighed, "but thank you for wanting to." She leaned against him, running her hands up and down his chest, feeling the velvety smooth skin beneath her fingertips. "Your color's back to normal."

"I told you I'm fine." He cupped her cheek. "Just a run in with a lab explosion."

"You didn't look fine." Lois pressed, resting her head on his chest. "What happened earlier?"

"I think—because I can't prove it yet—Eric Press hacked into the computer system at that lab and set off that explosion the minute I arrived."

"What?? Clark!" Lois looked at him in concern.

"I'm fine." He reassured her, "really. But whatever Eric Press is planning—can't be good for the people of Metropolis."

"I thought he was just a hacker. I mean, all he's done is hack into the government systems..."

"STAR Labs." Clark added, "School and bank records. I know, but this had his MO written all over it. He could have killed a lot of people today."

"Makes you wonder why the change though, doesn't it?" She sat up, reaching for her bra that had been discarded earlier.

"Yeah, but..." A sharp knock at the door echoed inside her office, and they both turned toward her office door.

"Ms. Lane? Are you in there? It's Roy from the Press Room..."

Lois frantically began throwing on the clothing items she'd been so eager to remove as Clark spun back into his suit. "Um, just a minute!" She called glancing at the door in dismay when she saw it was not locked like she had thought earlier. "You didn't lock the door." She whimpered, fumbling with the buttons to her blouse.

"I came in through the window." He pointed behind her. "I thought you locked it." He helped her with her jacket.

"Where's my panty hose?" She looked around the desk and couldn't find it.

"Ms. Lane?"

"Oh, just forget it." She mumbled, toeing her feet into her shoes and heading for the door. "Uh, yes?" She hoped it wasn't too obvious what she and Clark had been doing in there just a few minutes ago.

"We've got a jam on the printing press. Nothing's going in or out tonight I'm afraid." Roy explained.

"Can't you just call a repairman?" Lois asked, slightly

annoyed, holding the door in place. It was nearly ten o'clock at night, and it seemed ridiculous that she was getting pulled into a problem with an obvious solution. She could hear Clark chuckle lightly from behind her.

"We can, but we need authorization...for the bill." Roy explained. "We've been calling for the last half hour... Might want to check your phone settings."

Lois felt the heat rush to her cheeks as she glanced back at the phone that had been kicked off her desk from her and Clark's frenzied lovemaking. "I'll be sure to do that." She said, pasting her best smile across her face. "What do you need from me?"

"Need a signature to authorize the service call on the printing press." He handed her the clipboard.

She quickly scribbled her signature on the clipboard and handed it back to him. "Anything else?"

"That's it. You have a good night, Ms. Lane." He said then with a twinkle in his eye called out, "Mr. Kent."

Clark laughed harder from behind the door, and she widened the door, "Night Roy."

Lois closed the door behind him and sighed, "Can we go home now?"

The next morning, Clark finished his morning patrol and found Lois still asleep. Seeing the time he gently nudged her, "Lois?"

She groaned, rolling away from him, "Still dark out."

"I know, but you're supposed to be in by six." He reminded her. She whimpered in protest. "Come on, Honey, get up."

He nudged her once more, and she finally turned toward him. "Who's idea was it to have the Editor come in so early anyway?"

Clark laughed, "Probably Perry's."

"I need coffee."

"Go on and get ready. I'll get some breakfast going."

"And coffee."

"And coffee." He promised.

Once she was in the shower, he headed downstairs to start throwing breakfast together. Eggs. Milk. Flour. Bananas. "Muffins." He thought to himself, whipping the mixture together at super-speed after turning the coffee maker on. Using his heat-vision, he baked the muffins until they were golden brown.

Just as the coffee maker finished brewing he looked up to see Lois rushing down the stairs, throwing her jacket on, "I'm late. I'm really really late."

"Breakfast." He reminded her, handing her a muffin.

She took a quick bite, pouring her coffee into her travel mug. "Thanks. Meet you at the Planet. I've got to..." She looked around. "Where are my keys?"

Clark grabbed them off the key rack. "Here." He leaned in to kiss her.

After racing around the newsroom to make her meeting, Lois headed for the coffee station to refill her mug where she found Annie and Lynn giggling together. Curious she approached them with a friendly smile, "Morning. What's so funny?"

They both stiffened when they saw her, "Nothing, Ms. Lane." Annie stammered turning away.

"Just having some coffee," Lynn added heading toward her desk.

Lois stared at the two retreating figured dumbfounded. It had been a day. Twenty-four hours since she'd been named Editor-in-Chief and yet already she felt like the only person that still treated her the same was Clark.

"Everyone's gonna look at you differently now that you're the boss, Lois." Perry's voice interrupted her thoughts. She turned to see her mentor standing behind her, holding his own coffee mug. "even though you're the same person you were yesterday." He held out his coffee mug, "Don't mind if I do."

Lois gave him a knowing smile, "Don't they have coffee upstairs?"

"Aw, all they've got is that fancy designer espresso junk. Tastes like sludge." He said, taking a sip of his coffee. "Ahhh, nothing like the taste of good ol' newsroom java."

Lois could read between the lines with Perry pretty well. She knew he missed the newsroom. The short time Lex had owned the Planet and tried to micro-manage him was the only time she'd seen Perry not live and breathe the hustle and bustle of the newsroom. She quietly wondered how well he was adjusting to his new role with the Planet.

She nodded, taking a sip of her own coffee as they walked back toward her office. "So, how's it going? Are you doing okay?" Perry edged cautiously.

Recalling last night's headache she sighed, running a hand through her hair, "Let's just say I had no idea how much you juggled every day. You make it look so easy."

Perry grinned, "You didn't see me when I first started. I was running around here like a roof rooster."

Relieved to hear she wasn't the only one to struggle with the responsibilities of Editor she smiled, "Really?"

"Oh, yeah. I was a mess. It's a ton of responsibility, you get squeezed from every angle, and it all rests on your shoulders. That's the worst part; the job can be very isolating at times." Perry looked back at her carefully as he lingered at the door. "Give yourself some time, Lois. You've got the brass to do the job. I wouldn't have picked you if you didn't."

Lois smiled, "That's what Clark said."

"Well, he's a smart man." Perry awarded her a broad smile. "You two holding up okay? I know it can be tricky trying to juggle everything with family and all the responsibilities that come with this job—but I didn't have to do it while being Alice's boss."

"We're fine, really," Lois reassured him. "How're you liking your new job?"

"It's nine to five, more money, less hours." He gave a forced smile, "What's not to like?" There was something in his tone for sure. "I, uh, better get back..." He said, pointing toward the newsroom. "Thanks for the coffee."

"Anytime," Lois said.

Carly, her new administrative assistant, approached, notepad in hand. "Ms. Lane, your morning meeting got pushed up to eight. I pushed back the staff meeting to allow enough time just in case you run over..."

Back at the townhome, Clark was busy at work, researching everything he had on Eric Press to try and find a connection to the lab explosion. Lois was right. It didn't make sense for Eric Press to all of a sudden start targeting his cyber attacks for major science labs or to create threats that were life threatening when prior to that he'd just been performing pranks. It was almost as if someone else was calling the shots.

He checked the background information he had on Eric and found two living relatives. His father, Evan Press. One of the oldest and most influential people in Metropolis and his brother, Ethan Press. He frowned when he saw the arrest record. Everything from disorderly conduct to attempted kidnapping and arson.

He picked up his phone and dialed, "Metropolis P.D. Bill Henderson please." After a few minutes, he was finally transferred. "Hey Bill, morning. You were heading up the disappearance of Eric Press, right? I noticed he's got a brother, Ethan... Has anyone checked with him since Eric disappeared? They haven't heard from him either, huh? You are? Do you think I could come take a look? Great. I'll meet you there in five."

Lois let out a long breath as she sank into her office chair. Everything that could go wrong had gone wrong this morning.

Between waking up late and then rushing to make the early meeting with the Publisher it had been a hectic morning all around. Now here she was with half an hour before the staff meeting and no idea what was going on the afternoon edition.

The phone on her desk rang, and she glared at it daring it to ring again.

It rang again.

“Lois Lane.” She answered the phone.

“Hey Honey,” Clark’s voice echoed on the other end. “I’ve got a possible lead on Eric Press’ kidnapping I’m following up on with Henderson. I probably won’t make it back in time for the staff meeting.”

“Okay, what kind of lead?” She asked, the reporter’s instincts in her were itching to know where he was taking what had just a day ago been their story.

“According to Henderson, he’s got a brother that went off the radar around the same time Eric went missing. I’m going with Henderson to do a ‘wellness check’ this morning. See if there’s any sign of Eric over there.”

“You think his own brother could have kidnapped him?” Lois asked curiously. Carly stepped into the office handing her a stack of requests with red flags indicating where to sign. “Orthopedic chair, really?”

“Orthopedic chair?” Clark asked.

“Uh, sorry, not you,” Lois said, scanning the stack of requests in front of her.

“Well, according to the police reports he’s pretty unstable. Nothing ever sticks though because his dad’s always bailing him out.” Clark explained.

“Oh, to be privileged.” Lois rolled her eyes.

“Ms. Lane, Publisher is on line three,” Carly said, pointing at the time.

“Okay, just a minute.” Lois said to Carly then turned back to Clark, “Well, just keep me posted on how it goes.”

“Okay, I gotta go. Henderson’s giving me that ‘hurry it up’ look.” Clark said with an annoyed tone.

Lois laughed, “Okay. Love you.”

“Love you too.”

She hit the button for line three. “Mr. Rose? Yes, this is Lois Lane....”

Clark walked out of Ethan Press’ penthouse apartment with Bill Henderson. “Neighbors said he hasn’t been by in almost a week.” He remarked.

“I’ll open a missing case on him, but guys like Ethan Press don’t exactly make a lot of friends,” Henderson explained.

“Thanks for letting me come with you. I really appreciate it.”

“Anything to get Old Man Press off my back the better,” Henderson chuckled. “But if Ethan Press is behind Eric Press’ kidnapping it can’t be good for Eric Press.”

Clark watched the detective head for his squad car and took a deep breath. The images that had been on Ethan Press’ walls ran through his mind. Lex Luthor. Everything the man had ever done was plastered all over his wall along with every major close call he’d had as Superman. Whatever Ethan Press was planning, it was big, and it was going to mean bad news for Metropolis...

Lois paced around the conference room running through the assignments for the week. She held the clipboard in her hand, “Annie, how’s that subway hijacking story going?”

Annie looked up, “Fine. Snagged an interview with the suspect. I’m meeting him at three. Shouldn’t have any trouble making deadline.”

Lois nodded, “Okay, good...” She glanced at Harry who was staring down at his notes.

“Harry, your Metro lead?”

“The O’Connor murder. Got a tip the wife’s gonna confess. I

oughta have copy for you by six.” Harry nodded proudly.

“Perfect.” Lois made another note on her clipboard, “Ralph?”

Ralph took a bite of his doughnut as he spoke, “I think we’re talking Column One here. Everything I’ve got says the mayor’s definitely having an affair with that call girl.”

Lois shook her head, “Sounds more like a tabloid page one to me, though.”

“Agreed, except for Hizzonor’s pillow talk apparently spills the beans on some major corruption. I’m just waiting for my source to confirm it.” Ralph grinned with a confident nod.

Lois still wasn’t sure but nodded, “Great. Keep me posted.” She glanced toward the end of the table where Clark’s missing seat was and sighed, “I guess that’s it. Everyone get to work.”

The reporters gathered their things and headed out. Lois stared at the empty conference room for a minute then let out a long breath before heading back to her office. As she passed by Ralph and Annie, she heard them talking.

“Must be nice not to have to come to staff meetings.”

“Perks of sleeping with the boss I guess.”

She stopped mid-stride, turning to face them, “I’m sorry, I didn’t catch that.” They looked back and forth between one another. Neither saying a word. “Problem?”

“No,” Ralph said hurriedly, shaking his head.

“No, Ms. Lane,” Annie said looking away before they both disappeared.

“Uh-huh,” Lois said before slamming the door behind her.

On his way back into the newsroom, Clark spotted Jimmy coming out of the dark room. “Jimmy, can you do me a favor?”

Jimmy looked toward the blonde he’d told Clark about the day before. Darlene. He was afraid she’d turned into a fatal attraction vixen after a failed date attempt with him.

“Anything!” his young friend said eagerly.

Clark did his best not to react as the young man looked to him eagerly, ready for Clark’s request. “I want you to check and see if you can find the last outgoing numbers coming from Eric Press’ modem. There was a cyber attack that caused that lab explosion yesterday. I want to see if we can connect those to Eric Press.”

“You got it, CK.” Jimmy nodded.

“Also, check and see if you can find any bank activity on either Ethan Press or Eric Press within the last two days.”

“Ethan Press?” Jimmy asked.

“His brother,” Clark said flatly.

“Phone records and bank records. You got it.” Jimmy nodded, heading toward the elevator.

Clark sighed, watching his young friend frantically press the elevator button and avoid Darlene. He headed toward Lois’ office to catch her up on what was going on. He glanced at the time and sighed. It had taken him longer than he expected to finish up with Henderson. Then Superman had been needed to help divert a runaway train where the brakes had gone out. Hopefully, Lois’ day was going better than yesterday.

Lois sunk down in her chair as she stared at her soggy salad. Frustrated with its condition she threw it in the trash. It was quiet. The phone wasn’t ringing. No one was barging in her office. She could finally breathe.

Ralph kept hounding her about his story, and she still wasn’t sure about reserving page one for a story she suspected might sound like something from Tattletale Weekly rather than the Planet. She kept trying to do what she thought Perry may or may not do, but she was finding it harder and harder to make those calls.

A tap at her door and the warm smile of her husband pulled her out of her reverie. It was nearly two o’clock, and she hadn’t seen him all day. “Hey, how’d it go with Eric Press?” She asked. She really was itching to find out what had happened during his

investigation. That was one drawback she'd noticed about this promotion. She was finding herself missing little things she'd been able to do as a reporter that she couldn't do as an editor.

Clark took a chair and pulled it up next to her, "I found a possible lead I think. Eric Press' brother, Ethan is also missing. Henderson has put out an APB out for both brothers. No one's seen or heard from them since Friday." He looked at her hesitantly.

"You think this Ethan kidnapped his own brother?" She asked.

"I don't know. From what I've been able to find out about Ethan... I think this is more than just a kidnapping." He explained hesitantly. "I took pictures of the wall at Ethan Press' apartment when Henderson and his team went over there."

Lois felt her skin crawl when he showed her the pictures. "Clark..." Tabloids and news headings of everything Lex had ever done stared back at her. She shivered as she felt the goosebumps rise on her skin. If this man was as obsessed with Lex as he seemed then Metropolis had a lot to be worried about.

"I've got Jimmy checking the phone records for Eric Press." Clark explained, "The guy's obsessed with Luthor which makes him..."

"Dangerous and deadly." Lois nodded, "I know."

"Do me a favor and don't go jumping in feet first on anything... If he's obsessed with Luthor the way, I think he is..." He reached for her hand and kissed it.

"There is no danger of that happening anytime soon. I can't even get a break long enough to finish a salad let alone investigate a story." She explained sadly.

"Well, there's one perk of this job." He grinned back at her.

"Haha." She lightly smacked him on the arm.

Ralph knocked on the door, "Hey, no currying favor with the boss, Kent. Where you been? You missed the meeting this morning."

"I was following a lead," Clark said wearily.

"Again with the Superman stories. What do you got some special signal that tells you where he's gonna be?" Ralph asked as he made himself comfortable in one of the chairs at her desk.

"Uh, what is it, Ralph?" Lois asked, trying to steer the conversation elsewhere.

"I've got a meeting with my guy in half an hour. You said I had to take a partner." Ralph reminded her.

"Oh, right." She'd forgotten. "Um, Annie?"

"She's with Tom." Ralph reminded her.

"What about Mitchell?" Lois couldn't remember who she'd approved vacations on yesterday. Someone had asked for today off.

"Bermuda." Ralph took a bite. "It's fine. I can go by myself. I got this." He puffed out his chest. She did her best not to laugh as Clark turned away suppressing his own laughter.

"No, if it's as big as you say it is you'll need help. How about... um, Clark?" She said the name before she even realized it.

"What??" Both men looked at her in surprise.

"Yes, you've got some free time while you wait for Jimmy to get that research on Eric Press back..." Lois pointed out.

"Okay, yes, but that doesn't mean..." Clark began to argue.

She shook her head, "So, you've got time. Ralph *needs* help on this." She looked at him pleadingly hoping he wouldn't be too mad about her partnering him up with the most annoying reporter employed at the Planet.

"Hey, I don't *need* any help I..."

"Yes, you do." Lois cut him off.

"I know I'm going to regret this." Clark said, turning toward Ralph.

"Thank you." She leaned over to give him a kiss on the cheek. "You're a life saver."

"What's the story?" Clark asked.

"It's a bit complicated to explain..." Ralph began.

"Mayor is supposedly sleeping with a call girl, and call girl is supposedly receiving inside information from the Mayor." Lois summarized, seeing the annoyed expression on her husband's face. He was talking about it, so at least he hadn't shut the idea down completely.

Clark looked back at her with an 'Are you serious?' expression on his face. "Just give me a minute, and I'll be there." He said to Ralph. Ralph took another bite of his apple and nodded heading back toward the newsroom.

"Really? You couldn't think of *anyone* else to put him with?" He gave her an annoyed look.

"I know. I know he's green and obnoxious, and I'm sorry, but... he *may* have stumbled on something here."

"What about Jimmy? He's looking for some investigative experience." Clark reminded her.

"Be serious." Lois threw him an annoyed look.

"I am."

"He doesn't have enough experience for something like this."

"And you think... **Ralph** does?" Clark asked.

"Please," She pleaded with him. "I can't send him on something like this on his own. The Publisher will be all over me."

"Fine. I'll write up the update on the Press story and then baby-sit Ralph at his interview." He rolled his eyes.

"Thank you." She smiled at him, leaning her head back wearily. "It's not even three yet, and I'm already exhausted."

"I'm sorry." He gave her shoulder a gentle squeeze. "Did you already have lunch?"

"I tried." She chuckled, pointing at her trash can.

"You need to eat something, honey. You can't run on fumes." He reminded her.

"I know." She sighed, "Believe me I know."

Carly with her impeccable timing as always rushed into her office with the list of the itinerary for the next hour. "Ms. Lane, you have Copy Department on line two and Phil in Marketing is asking why you haven't approved his request for an orthopedic chair..."

"I'll send you the story in a few." Clark said getting up then turned to Carly, "Make sure she eats something please."

Carly gave her a pointed look and Lois sighed, "I got distracted."

"I'll call in an order," Carly said, jotting down a note in her clipboard.

"Thanks, Clark." Lois smiled at him.

"I'm still trying to figure out how I got talked into this," Clark commented before giving her a grin. "You do realize this means you owe me... big time."

Lois grinned, pulling out her calendar for him, "You find time in this monstrosity, and I'm all yours."

"Ms. Lane? Copy?" Carly reminded her.

"Oh, tell 'em to keep their pants on." Lois sighed slightly annoyed. Carly nodded and stepped out to answer another call.

Clark grinned at her, then his face straightened up, "I thought we canceled the plans with my folks this week."

Lois' eyes widened. "I forgot to call them."

He chuckled, "It's too late to cancel now. Maybe it won't be too bad. We'll just pick something up on the way home."

"And disconnect the phone?"

"I would, but I don't want Carly showing up at our house with that clipboard in the middle of the night." He leaned in to kiss her once more. She watched him close the door behind him and sighed, staring at the blinking light on her phone.

"It never ends." Lois said as she reached over to pick up the phone, "Hello... I mean, Lane here... No, I don't know what my lead is yet — better prep the subway story as back up, okay? Thanks... Uh-huh—"

After finishing up his interview with Ralph's supposed source

at City Hall, Clark headed back to the Planet. The ‘source’ of Ralph’s turned out to be a golf buddy of Ralph’s dad’s. Ralph seemed oblivious to the tell-tale signs that his source was lying through his teeth.

Three hours wasted. Hopefully, Lois wouldn’t be too much longer. His parents were in town for the weekend visiting dad’s friend, Al and getting ready for ‘camping Metropolis Style’ as Al had put it. He and Lois had invited them to come to dinner before they headed out to New Troy Campgrounds but that had been before Lois’ promotion.

Now both of them were running around trying to put out fires both literally and figuratively. They’d planned on canceling, but then they both had forgotten. He glanced at the time. If they left now, they’d have just enough time to swing by Chinatown to pick up some takeout from that place his mom liked...

He was almost halfway down the ramp when he spotted Lois coming out of her office with Carly behind her. “Ms. Lane, what about...?”

“Whatever it is, is going to have to wait,” Lois said hurriedly. “I’m dropping this off downstairs, and then I’m going home.” Lois patted the package in her arms.

Clark caught up with her as she was coming up the ramp. “Are you escaping?” He asked with a grin.

“Yes!” She cheered, jamming the call button on the wall. “How did it go with Ralph’s source? Do you think we have a story there?”

“I’ll tell you later.” He promised. “Right now you’re off the clock.” He helped walk her back into the empty elevator car that had arrived. “I’m off the clock...and we can finally catch up on this.” He leaned in to kiss her.

“I like the way you think.” She grinned against his lips.

The elevator doors closed behind them, and he pulled her close to him, running his hand over her cheek as his lips found hers. She dropped her bags to the floor, freeing her arms to move up and down his chest as he deepened the kiss. His arms circled her waist, and her lips met his just as enthusiastically. Her arms wrapped around the back of his neck, running her hands through his hair.

He dipped his head down and began nibbling on the sensitive flesh of her neck, smiling as he felt the tension in her back muscles loosen from his ministrations. “That feels good.” She sighed against him.

“You feel good.” He murmured, recapturing her lips with his as he felt her tugging on his tie. His hands moved up and down her sides as he held her close.

“Too bad we can’t just pull the emergency stop.” Lois giggled. “We’re bad hosts. We forgot the food and the guests.”

“I’m sure they’ll understand.” He chuckled against her lips, looking down at where she had folded his tie around her hand several times and was now working on loosening the knot. “Always with the tie.” He teased. She pulled him to her once more, capturing his mouth with hers in a fiery kiss. In the back of his mind he heard the soft bell of the elevator and the doors open but leaving his wife’s arms wasn’t high on the list of priorities.

Hearing the gentle ribbing and catcalls from the other staff members in the lobby they separated, turning away from one another unembarrassed as they stepped off the elevator. Lois smoothed out the wrinkles from her shirt, tucking it back into place. He readjusted his tie as they made their way through the lobby, dropping Lois’ package off with shipping before heading toward the parking garage to head home.

“Okay, food is out of containers.” Lois tallied off looking toward the empty Chinese cartons on the counters as Clark super sped around her finishing up the last minute settings for the table. “I think there’s a bottle of Merlot in the—”

“Got it.” He reappeared in front of her with the bottle in

question and lightly blew on it to make a small amount of frost appear on the bottle. “Table’s set and ...” He looked at the time, “Five minutes to spare.” He leaned in to kiss her.

“Only five minutes?” She teased with a grin. Thankfully there had been no calls from the office on her cell while they’d been picking up dinner.

“I can only go at super-speed so long.” He grinned.

“Tell me about it.” She said, linking her arms around his neck. “Hopefully your parents don’t mind takeout. I still can’t believe I forgot to call them...”

“Stressful few days.” He reasoned, leaning in to kiss her.

The double ringing of the phone and the doorbell reached her ears and she let out a frustrated growl. “Always something.”

“You get the phone. I’ll get the door.” Clark said, pointing toward the phone on the counter next to her. “Hello?” She groaned inwardly when she heard Carly’s voice on the other end. So much for a relaxing evening.

Clark crossed the living room to answer the door, “Hope we’re not late.” His dad handed him a bottle of wine. “Martha picked it up at one of the shops while we were out today.”

Clark chuckled inwardly. It was the same bottle he’d pulled out of the pantry earlier. “No, you’re fine.” He exchanged hugs with both of them, “Come on in. Lois will just be a minute...” He explained as they headed into the dining room where the food and place settings were.

Lois was standing in the doorway of the kitchen and gave a friendly wave as she spoke on the phone. “We’ve got to get the Evening Edition out there somehow. Can’t we rent a truck...?”

His mom looked at him in surprise, “What is she running the paper now?”

Clark grinned, “Actually, yeah.” At their surprised expressions, he elaborated as he poured them a glass from the chilled bottle of wine, “Perry got promoted, and Lois is the new editor.”

His parents exchanged impressed looks, and then his dad nodded, “Hey, that’s great.” He looked at him with a quizzical expression. “Isn’t it?”

“Oh, yeah. Absolutely. It’s just been a—adjustment for both of us.” He explained, gesturing to his wife who was mouthing ‘sorry’ to them as she finished her conversation on the phone.

“... Yes, fine, just do it. You’ve got my approval. ‘Bye.” Lois clicked the phone on the receiver and took a seat next to him.

“Sorry. Delivery truck broke down.”

“Congratulations on the new job!” his mom said with a smile.

Lois gave her a hesitant smile, and his dad added, “We’re so happy for you.”

“Thanks. It’s...exciting. Let’s eat.” She handed the plate with the rice to his mom. “We didn’t have time to cook, so I hope Szechuan Palace is okay.”

“We understand,” Martha reassured. “Looks great.”

Just as Lois was about to take a bite of her food the phone rang again, and she let out a frustrated sigh, “Sorry.” She set her fork down and headed for the kitchen to answer the phone. “Just start...”

Clark glanced toward Lois’ plate and sighed. She said she hadn’t had a chance to eat earlier. “Look, son, if this is a bad time we could...” his dad’s words intruded his thoughts and Clark looked back at him and shook his head.

“No, Dad, it’s fine it’s just...”

“I see, how long will it take?” Lois tapped her hand on the doorway as she spoke.

“...been a little crazy.” He finished weakly.

“Well, that’s to be expected.” His mom gave a reassuring smile.

“Forget it!” Lois snapped into the phone. Clark couldn’t help but feel a little sorry for the person on the other end of the phone.

“not worth the overtime.”

“It’s perfectly understandable.” His mom added.

“We’ll just have to go with the subway lead. Okay.” Lois hung up the phone and reclaimed her seat. “I told them no more calls.” She said with a sigh as she took her first bite. He could tell from the look on her face it was probably the first bite she’d had since breakfast that morning.

He gave her a reassuring smile before taking a bite of his own food. “This looks delicious.” His mom said. “I always love their...” the phone rang again, and Lois hung her head in defeat. “Lo-Mein.”

Irritated at the intrusion once more Clark interjected. “I’ll get it. Eat.” He got up to answer the phone before she could argue. “Eat.” He ordered before turning to answer the phone. Carly, Lois’ administrative assistant was on the line. Why she was at the Planet this late he wasn’t sure. “Hi Carly.”

“Is Ms. Lane there?”

“No, she’s finishing up dinner. I’ll have her call you back when she’s done.” Clark noted the dirty look Lois just threw him but ignored it.

“But we still need to get...”

Ignoring the protests, he added, “She won’t be of any use to you if she hasn’t eaten. She’ll call back in an hour. No more calls until then.” He added the last sentence in his Superman tone, sending the message that he meant business. He hung up the phone and took his seat back at the table.

Lois glared at him irritably. “Clark! You can’t just...”

“They will manage for an hour. Believe me.” He reassured her.

“Just eat and enjoy the hour before she starts in again.”

“What if there’s an emergency?” Lois interjected.

“Clark’s right.” Martha added, “You’ve got to put your foot down otherwise they’ll run you instead of the other way around. You won’t do anyone any good if you’re not taking care of yourself.”

Lois relented on her argument for the moment at least and began to work on finishing her meal quietly. He knew she was mad at him for cutting her off from the phone like that, but he needed to do something to make sure she didn’t have a repeat of last night.

“I guess it’s your turn to take off at a moment’s notice, huh?” his dad joked with Lois.

Lois sighed, offering a slow smile, “Hopefully things settle down soon. Everyone seems to think their emergency is a real...”

Clark hung his head when he heard the familiar sirens reach his ears. “What is it?” she asked.

“A bridge collapsed.” He gave them an apologetic smile, “I’m sorry. I gotta...”

“Go.” Lois nodded.

“Yes, of course.” His dad chimed in.

“Eat.” He ordered to Lois. “I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

“Be careful,” Lois called after him.

Lois watched Clark leave and shook her head. “Always something.”

“Gives a whole new meaning to the term balancing act, doesn’t it?” Martha asked.

“You have no idea.” Lois smiled.

“He’s just worried about you.” She added, seeming to sense her current mood after Clark had ordered an hour of silence from Carly. She had a feeling she’d be paying dearly for it when the phone did start ringing again.

“I know. I just... want to prove I can do this. I mean, Perry’s been able to handle this job on his own for years. I don’t want to let him down.”

“But you’re not Perry any more than he is you.” Jonathan chimed in. “It’ll take some time to figure out, but you two will find the right balance. I have to agree with Martha and Clark here

though. You’ve got to put your foot down. They can’t expect you to jump when they say jump 24/7. You’ll burn out that way.”

Lois let their words sink in. Taking the reins from Perry had been an eye-opening experience. She was constantly juggling the demands of the fifty different reporters on staff with the pressure coming from upstairs to generate newspaper selling stories. She missed being the one writing the stories rather than the one editing them. Making the leap from reporter to editor was harder than she’d ever imagined it to be. It was an honor to be selected and came with plenty of perks, but it also came with an intense amount of pressure she didn’t know if she was ready to take on.

Just as she took her last bite of dinner, the phone rang again. She looked up at the clock and saw the time. One hour on the dot from the time Clark had told Carly not to call. Martha and Jonathan helped clean up then left early for the evening while she fielded calls from the Publisher and the Press Room trying to balance their conflicting needs by phone. She was determined not to go into the office tonight.

After helping rescue all the people that had become trapped under the bridge collapse earlier and checking with Emergency Personnel on what the cause could have been they found a weak spot in one of the beams, causing it to give out. A repair crew had been dispatched, and everyone was safe thankfully. Clark did a quick patrol around the city then headed back home. Judging by the time he knew his parents were probably long gone. Hopefully, Lois was still home and hadn’t been called back to the office again.

“Well, what do you mean you don’t have a photographer?? I sent Jimmy ... The Planet has plenty of photographers employed. I’m not going to reserve one photographer for you just because you... If I can’t get one to respond then I call the next. No, I don’t care about your relationship with him just... I’m done arguing. I expect those photos to be on my desk by seven am, or you’re going to be on Dog Shows for the next month!” Lois slammed the phone down irritably.

“I hate him. I hate him. I hate him.” Lois fumed angrily as she turned toward the door he had just closed behind him. “Hey,” Her tone softened, “Everything go okay?”

“Repair crew is fixing the broken beam. Everyone is safe and no casualties.” He said sinking down on the couch heavily. “How about you?” He asked, pulling her down with him.

She let out a long sigh, “Worst hostess award goes to me tonight.”

“At least you were here for the whole dinner.”

“Rescuing people from a collapsing bridge is more forgivable than racing to answer the phone every two seconds.” Lois countered.

“I’m sure they understand.” He reassured her. “You get everything sorted out with Carly?”

“Yeah, but then Tom started in. He was covering the bridge collapse earlier and got upset because I didn’t send Rogers out there with him. He didn’t answer the phone, so I sent Jimmy.”

“Oh, brother...” Clark groaned, as she finished.

“So even though Jimmy’s probably got plenty of great shots Tom is refusing to have them run with his story,” Lois added with a bite in her tone. “When did we replace all these journalists with two-year-olds?”

“I don’t know.” She leaned her head back against him and sighed. “Did Carly finally go home?” Clark asked, running his hand through her hair.

“Yeah, she called with a rundown on everything they did while I was taking five as she put it.” She gave him a half-smile, “Apparently she hadn’t taken a break either so...”

“So, you weren’t the only one burning both ends of the candlestick?” Clark prompted. She threw him an annoyed look

and he shook his head, “I’m not going to apologize. It needed to be done. You are exhausted and I could tell by the look on your face you never ate anything this afternoon, did you?”

“No...” She sighed. “It got cold when I got pulled into a conference with the Publisher.” She explained avoiding his gaze.

“Honey, you’ve got to slow down a little. Delegate. The world will not come to an end if you shut your office door or turn your ringer off for half an hour and take time to relax a minute. Perry used to shut himself in there with his Elvis records all the time.”

“I know.” She sighed. “I’m trying too hard.”

“You’re pushing yourself too hard and too fast for too long. You can only go at super-speed for so long.” He reminded her.

“I just want to do a good job.” She explained. “I mean, Perry’s put a lot of faith in me, and I don’t want to blow it.”

“You’re not going to blow it, honey.” He smiled at her reassuringly, “It’s not your style.”

“What if I do?”

He looked at her tenderly, “Then you’ll know you tried your best and gave it your all.” He tightened his arms around her. “You’ll be fine.”

“Did I tell you Perry stopped by this morning?”

“No.”

“I think he misses the newsroom.” She commented sadly. “Kinda like how I miss being a reporter.”

“Well, it’s an adjustment for everyone.” He remarked good naturedly, uncertain where she was going with this.

“Thanks for not giving me a hard time about Ralph. I couldn’t think of anyone else to suggest at the moment and...”

“You so owe me for that one. Three hours of listening to him put his foot in his mouth repeatedly while failing to figure out his source is yanking his chain for publicity.” Clark sighed, leaning back.

“So there’s nothing there?” Lois asked with a heavy sigh. “I’m sorry.”

“According to Ralph he’s got the *story of the year*, but no there’s nothing there but a one-way ticket to a lawsuit and out of court settlement.”

“Good thing I didn’t mark any copy for his story yet.” Lois ran her hand through her hair. “I’m so tired.”

“Here.” Clark raced them upstairs and laid her on the bed. “Better?”

“My hero.” She grinned back at him.

“I aim to please.” He grinned back at her, leaning in to kiss her.

“That you do.” She pulled him down on the bed with her, resting her head on his chest.

“I think I may stop by Evan Press’ and see if there’s anything the police may have missed the first time. Thankfully there wasn’t another cyber attack today but after what I found...” The sound of her deep breaths against him made him pause. He looked down and saw she had already fallen asleep. “Good night, sweetheart.” He whispered, leaning in to kiss her.

The next morning had been just as hectic as the day before, but with Lois having the rest she needed it was a little easier getting out the door. Thankfully Clark had made something quick for her to eat on the road as she finished up her morning coffee. After the budget meetings and setting up a schedule with Carly to make it, so they both had some time to breathe and get everything done she found Ralph in her office angry about not having the copy for his story.

“What do you mean I can’t have copy?” Ralph asked defiantly.

“I’ve yet to see any evidence to back up your claims. So far you’ve only given conjecture and insinuations from your source. There is no physical evidence that what you’re saying happened really happened.” Lois shot back.

“My source is the evidence!” Ralph argued.

“If all you’re going on is your source’s statement then you’re opening the Planet up for a lawsuit. I can’t risk it.” Lois shook her head.

“You thought I had a story yesterday,” Ralph argued.

“I thought you had a lead. I didn’t promise any copy. I said you could run with your lead. You ran with it and still have nothing to go on but conjecture.” Lois snapped irritably. “Find me evidence. Find me proof that what your call girl says happened, really happened. Otherwise, you can help Harry with his follow up on the O’Connor murder trial.”

“I can’t believe you’re killing my story!” Ralph snapped.

“It’s already dead. You’re still trying to breathe life into something that should have been dead on arrival.” Lois snapped irritably.

“If this were Kent’s story you’d let him run with it.”

“Excuse me???” Lois turned to confront him. “I know you did *not* just say that to me!”

“It’s true, and you know it!” Ralph shrugged. “You let him come and go as he pleases, miss staff meetings...”

“After he called in to say he’s following a lead. Yeah, I also let Dianne run with a lead yesterday morning too. You forgot that part, didn’t you? Oh, and I let Myers take a sick day...but yeah, sure, let’s focus on my husband not being in the staff meeting.” She narrowed her eyes at him, “You do *not* want to go there, Ralph!”

“Really? You stuck him on my story then the next day you think there’s nothing there. You sure those two aren’t connected?”

Ralph shot back. Lois could feel her temperature rising as she glared back at him. If she’d had the power to fire him right now, she would have. Unfortunately, until the position of editor was filled permanently, she didn’t have that power. The insinuation was insulting both to her as an editor and to Clark as a journalist. He wouldn’t dare make an accusation like that to Perry. “This is a good story, and you know it. If it Kent was on it...”

“No, you’re right, Ralph.” Lois narrowed her eyes at him angrily ready to light into him.

“Ha! So you *admit* it!” Ralph sneered.

“You’re right in the fact that if this was Clark’s story, I wouldn’t kill it.” Ralph gave her a *‘I told you’* look until she finished her statement, “I wouldn’t kill it because I wouldn’t *have* to!” She snapped, smiling inwardly when she saw the dumbfounded expression on his face. “He wouldn’t be sitting here arguing with me about the story. He’d be investigating it. He wouldn’t be arguing about having copy for a story with no evidence because he wouldn’t bring me a story without having something called hard facts to back up his claims. Now, are you done throwing insults? I’ve got a paper to run here, and you have a new partner to find!”

Ralph stepped away from her, taken aback by the anger he saw reflected in her eyes. “Okay. Hard facts.” He repeated.

“Get out of my office and go find your new partner!” Lois snapped irritably.

Clark scanned the room, grimacing as he found rope, a knife, and a business card of a Colonel Marcus Raine. There was a stack of printouts on STAR Labs ‘special projects’ with Dr. Klein’s name circled on them. Clark scanned through the files with his x-ray vision and frowned when he realized what the files were of.

“I don’t understand what this is about?” Evan Press continued. “You said you were looking for my sons.”

Bill Henderson nodded, waving him out of the room and into the hallway as he reassured the millionaire of their intentions. “We’re doing everything we can to help find your sons, Mr. Press.”

“We have reason to believe that your son Ethan, kidnapped Eric,” Clark said bluntly after seeing the rope in the closet and the

books in the study he knew his suspicions about Ethan were right.

“Ethan wouldn’t do something like that.” Press dismissed their claims. “The police already did their search.”

“We’re doing another search. Mr. Press. It’s called due diligence. You do want to find your son, don’t you?” Henderson asked.

“Summer reading?” Clark asked, pointing out the books that had been leafed through heavily on the desk in the study.

“What? Those are the books Ethan was reading for a research project.”

“Why is he keeping them here when he’s got his own apartment?” Henderson asked.

“He has a roommate that doesn’t let him get any rest,” Press said haughtily.

“*How to Get Away With Murder.*’ *Every Knot You Need To Know.*’ *The Art of Strangulation.*’ *The Darkness of Cain.*” Clark read off the titles for him.

“It’s not what it seems.”

“Sir, your son is in danger. You can either continue to stonewall us and the police, or you can help us find him and get Ethan the help he needs.” Clark added. “Your choice.”

“Yes, I understand.” Lois sighed, running a hand through her hair as she listened to Mr. Rose continue on his tirade. “I’m sure he was a great friend but a Colonel going missing in less than twenty-four hours isn’t exactly front page news. . . . Well, for starters he’s rumored to be a drunk and a . . .” She rolled her eyes as he continued on his tirade. “I’ll see what I can do, but I’m not making any promises. Okay, breaking news. Bye.” She hung up the phone as Perry entered her office.

“Suits squeezing you, huh?” Perry asked with a knowing smile.

“Yeah, you could say that.” Lois sighed. “Come for another cup of coffee?”

“I already got a cup.” Perry held up his mug with a grin. “Just wanted to stop by and see how things were going.”

“They’re good. You know, the normal stuff. Publisher trying to put his buddy’s missing poster on the front page. Ralph wanting to put tabloid articles on the front page. Getting accused of favoritism. . . .”

“If someone’s not complaining you’re not doing your job right.” Perry reminded her. “From where I’m sitting you’re doing . . . well, you’re doing a fantastic job.” His smile was less enthusiastic at that remark.

“Thanks, Perry. That means a lot to me.”

“Don’t let them push you around. They’ll take a mile if you give ‘em an inch.”

“That’s what Clark said.” Lois smiled softly.

“He knows his stuff.” Perry smiled, “and he’s not going to let anyone push you around . . . and neither should you.”

“I’m . . . learning that,” Lois admitted softly. “It’s hard though.”

“Learning curves come with the territory.”

Jimmy knocked on the door, “Hey Chief!” He grinned when he saw Perry standing there.

“Hey, Jimmy I saw your photos on this morning’s paper. Great stuff.” Perry complimented.

“Thanks. It was Lois that gave me a shot though. If it’d been up to Tom he’d of had pictures from his phone.”

“Don’t get me started,” Lois warned.

Perry let out a loud laugh, “Oh, Lord have mercy that boy will never learn.”

Jimmy walked toward her with a file in hand. “CK wanted me to get these phone records for him, but I can’t seem to find him anywhere.”

“Oh.” Lois noted, “Just leave them here on my desk. I’ll give them to him when he gets in.”

“I’m going to get out of your hair,” Perry said, as he headed

for the door. “Take care and remember what I said.”

“I will. Thanks, Perry.” Lois called after him.

“Here you go.” Jimmy dropped the folder off and headed out.

She reached over to look through the folder when Carly burst in with her list on the itinerary. “Ms. Lane, I’ve got Copy on line three. . . .”

After stopping by STAR Labs to talk to Dr. Klein as Superman about his medical records and what kind of information Ethan Press could have access to he made a detour at Joe’s and picked up a doughnut with some coffee and the cinnamon pastries Lois liked so much. Clark made his way back into the newsroom, catching up with Jimmy. “Jimmy, any luck on those phone records for Eric Press?”

“Oh, yeah, I put them on Lois’ desk when I was looking for you earlier,” Jimmy explained sheepishly.

“Thanks, Jimmy. Anything on the bank records?”

“Last transaction was Saturday. Filling up at a gas station on Exit 12.” Jimmy said. “I’m waiting on the credit card records though.”

“Exit 12? Isn’t that over by EPRAD’s testing center?” Clark asked, putting the pieces together in his head as he spoke.

“Yeah, I think so.” Jimmy nodded.

“The same testing center where the lab explosion took place.” It wasn’t a question. More of a statement. He spotted Lois talking with Dianne outside her office. “Thanks, Jimmy. Do me a favor?”

Jimmy nodded, “Name it.”

“Send those records over to Inspector Henderson. He’s heading up the investigation. Have them check EPRAD for Ethan Press’ trailer.”

“Trailer?” Jimmy asked.

Clark handed him the license plate information he’d gotten from Henderson earlier. “Apparently Evan Press bought his son a new toy before both brothers went missing.”

“I’m on it.” Jimmy patted him on the shoulder before heading to his desk.

Clark walked toward the Editor’s office, relieved to find Lois alone. “Busy morning?” He asked, closing the door behind him.

“You have no idea.” She let out a long sigh. “Where you been all morning?”

“Watching Henderson give Evan Press the riot act.” Clark said with a grin.

“Henderson?”

“I told you last night we were going to head over there and see if there was anything at his dad’s since we couldn’t find anything at Ethan’s’ place.” Clark reminded her.

“Oh, I think it must have been after I fell asleep.” Lois smiled apologetically then noticed the bag in his hand. “Those for me?”

“Yes.” He handed the pastry bag to her. “Cinnamon pastry bites. Fresh out of the oven at Joe’s.”

“So good.” She said with a grin as she took a bite. She handed him the folder on his desk, “Jimmy dropped those off.”

“Thanks.” He took a seat next to her as she finished her second bite of the pastry, reveling in the taste on her tongue.

“Enjoying yourself?”

“Eating is a privilege these days. I’m savoring every moment I can.”

He watched her lick the cinnamon off her lips and grinned. “You missed a spot.” He leaned in to kiss her, tracing her lips with his tongue and taking in the mixture of cinnamon, sugar, and coffee that was uniquely his Lois.

Remembering they were at work he pulled away, catching the heated gaze she was giving him, “So, notice anything on there?” She asked, looking away as she pointed to the green folder in his hand.

He opened the folder and saw where she had highlighted a

familiar number for him. “Dr. Klein’s direct line.” He frowned.

“Why is Eric Press hacking into Dr. Klein’s records?” Lois asked.

“When did you have time to do this?” Clark asked, avoiding the question with a smile. He was impressed she’d had time to help him with his investigation and slightly amused to see that fiery grin of hers when she was hot on a lead.

“Don’t change the subject.” Lois countered.

“I...” He stopped, hanging his head as the calls for help and sirens reached his ears.

“What is it?” Lois asked.

“EPRAD’s Test Rocket Launch Pad is malfunctioning.” He sighed, “We’ll finish this later.” He leaned in to kiss her.

“Be careful.” She warned.

“Always.” He kissed her once more then left, heading toward the stairwell, tugging at his tie.

As Clark made his way toward the test site for EPRAD’s rocket center where the sirens he’d heard were blaring, he spotted a suspicious looking trailer parked outside. It was painted in lead paint making it impossible for him to scan it. He recognized the trailer as being the same make and model as the one Press said he’d bought Ethan last week. Making note of the trailer, he headed toward the test rocket launch pad to find out what the Presses had done now.

The test rocket launch pad lit up in flashing lights with the scientists running around in panic. “Forget it! Let’s get out of here!” one of the scientists said, tugging on her arm toward the exit.

“What’s wrong?” Clark asked in concern.

“We can’t shut it down!” The man said frantically. “The computer’s actually forcing the engine to overheat!”

“Can’t you cut off the fuel supply?” Clark asked.

“The only way is to fuse the internal pump! Superman, we’ve got a nuclear warhead in the silo, if this thing explodes...”

“I understand.” Clark nodded, pushing him toward the exit. “Go!”

Clark walked into the flames of the rocket until he found the internal pump the scientist had told him about earlier. Finding the pump, he used his super-strength to fuse the pump and drain the main fuel supply. Slowly but surely the engine began to sputter, and the rocket turned off.

He let out a long breath as scattered applause filled the air and he stepped away. Thankfully the sun was out to recharge him, but he still felt drained. After checking with the scientist from earlier on his thoughts, he headed back to the trailer to see if he could find Eric or Ethan Press.

“I’m not saying the bridge collapse isn’t news, it’s just not column one, that’s all...” Marie said, pointing at the blank copy on the mock-up for the afternoon edition.

Lois did her best to focus on the meeting, but there was something gnawing at the back of her mind that she couldn’t shake. Why hadn’t Clark answered her question about Dr. Klein’s line being directly hacked into? What would a hacker have to gain by hacking into one scientist’s records?

Lois got up, “Excuse me just a minute,” She poked her head out of her office. “Jimmy!”

Jimmy looked up from his desk and headed to her, “What’s up?”

“Can you look and see if you can find what Eric Press was trying to access when he hacked into this number’s modem?” She handed him the phone records.

Jimmy motioned for her to follow him, “Sure thing.”

“Ms. Lane? This meeting isn’t done.” Marie called after her.

“You need to handle that?” Jimmy asked, pulling up his chair at this desk.

“No.” Lois shook her head. “Just pull it up.”

Jimmy nodded and at lightning speed he was able to tap into the firewall of Eric Press’ computer where an electronic SOS had been put in place. “Whoa! Check this out.”

It was a binary code spelling out the letters. Lois squinted at it, “What does it mean?”

“It’s programmer language,” Jimmy explained. He ran a converter program on his computer and the code quickly changed to letters with a disturbing message.

“Help me! I’m being held hostage! My brother’s trying to kill Superman!” the same message was written over and over again.

“Oh, my God!” Lois breathed.

After typing a few more keys Jimmy was able to access the history of Eric Press’ computer.

The screen pulled up images of Superman under the gamma rays of the sun, showing his absorption of the sun and how fast he recharged. “What is he doing with these?” Lois asked in shock.

Panic coursed through her veins as she looked toward the elevators. Where had Clark said he was going?

“Superman saved the day today at the EPRAD Test Rocket Launch Pad where scientists say the computerized engine was hacked into and made to overheat almost creating a nuclear disaster with the warhead being developed by EPRAD...”

Thankfully Superman showed up just in time to stop the engine from exploding...”

“Nuclear warhead. The lab explosion.” Lois recounted aloud. “His medical files. They were tests to ... I’ve got to go!”

“Wait, Lois!” Before she could hear his response, she was already out the door.

The phone on Jimmy’s desk rang and he picked it up, “Inspector Henderson? You got the bank records? Great. Yeah, CK said to check EPRAD’s Test Center...I’m not sure what’s going on but Lois just ran out of here in a panic. You might want to bring backup.”

Clark groaned as he stood up, taking in the sun’s rays. When he’d opened the door to the trailer, he’d been propelled several feet from some sort of weapon. He couldn’t be sure, but it seemed to be an improved version of the quantum disruptor Lex Luthor had gotten his hands on last year.

“You’re making a big mistake,” Clark warned, advancing toward him.

“Out of control rocket? This looks like a job for Superman!” Ethan fired the weapon at him once more, knocking him to the ground, “or not.” He turned behind him, “See, Eric, didn’t I tell you he’d save the day?”

“I swear, Superman, I never wanted anything to do with this.” Eric pleaded with him. “Get out of here before—”

Ethan fired the weapon at him again, “Superheroes are so predictable.”

He felt weak. Weaker than he had in his encounter with Luthor. Whatever that weapon was seemed to be weakening him with each blast. Without having time to recuperate from his encounter with the rocket...

“Stop groveling! You’re wasting your mea culpas on him. He won’t be around long enough to exonerate you.” Ethan pointed the weapon at him once more, and Clark aimed his heat vision at the trigger, hoping it was made of metal like the last one.

“Ow!!” Ethan growled at him, dropping the weapon to the ground. “You’re going to pay for that!”

“Superman!!” Eric threw the weapon out of Ethan’s grasp, and Clark took advantage of his distraction to grab him.

“Going somewhere??” Clark hoisted him up in the air. “Where do we start? Kidnapping? Reckless endangerment? Espionage? Attempted mass murder??”

The sound of sirens and police cars could be heard from the distance. “Superman!” Lois’ voice reached his ears as the police

approached.

“We’ll take it from here, Superman...” one of the officers said, taking Ethan into custody.

They approached Eric, and he stopped them. “He wasn’t involved.” He corrected them.

Eric gave a relieved smile when the officers put the handcuffs away and guided him toward the squad car for questioning.

“Are you okay?” Lois asked him when the officers were out of earshot.

“Fine.” He reassured her. “How did you know?”

“I had Jimmy check Eric’s computer to see what they were looking at. Why didn’t you tell me?” She asked in a harsh whisper.

“I didn’t want you to worry.” He explained. “You’ve had enough to worry about...” He stopped when he saw Henderson approaching.

“Eric Press said there was some weapon Ethan Press got his hands on from a military officer?” Henderson asked, looking at him with a critical eye, “Superman, you okay?”

Clark pointed toward the weapon that Eric had thrown. “Right over there.” Henderson motioned for the officers to follow him to retrieve the weapon.

“Bill’s right, you don’t look good,” Lois observed.

“I’ll be fine.” He reassured her. “Nothing, a few hours in the sun, won’t cure.”

“You don’t look fine.” She hissed at him through gritted teeth. “What did he do to you? What weapon is he talking about?”

“New and improved.... Quantum Disruptor.” He whispered, barely saying the name loud enough for her to hear.

“Get changed.” She ordered. “We’re going to see Dr. Klein ... now.” He would have argued, but the look on her face told him not to even bother.

Lois had rejected three calls on the ride to STAR Labs then two more when they had been in Dr. Klein’s lab. “You should answer that.” Clark said with a knowing look.

“Someone told me I need to do a better job at putting my foot down. This is me, putting my foot down.” Lois retorted. At his look she sighed, “I already called Carly to make sure no one burned the place down. They’re fine.”

“Okay, Superman, it looks like you took quite a blow...” Dr. Klein said returning to the lab.

“Well, between the nuclear reactor and the disruptor I’m not exactly feeling a hundred percent.” Clark reasoned.

“I don’t doubt it. It seems Mr. Press was trying to drain your energy reserves.” Dr. Klein explained. “Luckily you were in the sunlight during this encounter so you had the sun’s rays to help keep you charged.” He stopped and looked at him grimly, “You’re going to have to take it easy for a few days at least. Let yourself recover. No super feats until we’re sure you’re back at a hundred percent.”

“But—”

He was cut off by Lois interjecting. “Clark and I’ll make sure he takes it easy.”

“Good.” Dr. Klein nodded. “I’ve also removed your files from our database and placed them on a separate server with extra firewall protection. Someone would have to know where to be looking in order to find it and now the only people that know about it are in this room.”

“Thank you for your help Dr. Klein.” Clark smiled weakly at the doctor.

Clark had gone straight home from STAR Labs. After she finished marking up the mock-up for the evening edition complete with the story on the capture of Ethan Press she’d come home and found Clark stripped down, soaking up the last of the sun’s rays before it set for the evening. She’d changed out of her work clothes and into a pair of grey stretch pants and cotton tank top.

After making a last call to the Planet and making sure Carly had things handled she finished looking over the evening edition before marking it with her final approval.

“Okay, just call me if there are any issues. I already signed the contracts for the new delivery service. Mr. Rose already signed off on those. I’ll send the final copy of the evening edition and they can get it to Press... Thanks Carly you too. Have a good night.” Lois hung up the phone and turned to Clark who was still sleeping off the effects from his encounter with the Presses. She gave her and Clark’s article, one more look over she hit the send button and closed her laptop.

She took a seat next to him on the bed, running her hand over his cheek. When she’d called to follow-up with Henderson on Ethan Press’ arrest they’d discovered he had admitted to killing the Colonel that had been reported missing. She’d sent Harry to sniff out the scandal with Colonel Raine selling a top-secret weapon to someone as deranged as Ethan Press. Hopefully they’d have something for tomorrow’s afternoon edition to follow up on their lead of the Press scandal.

For now, she was going to just enjoy the quiet. Today had been the first time she’d felt like herself. It had a lot to do with helping Clark investigate the Press story. She knew he didn’t need her help on it. He’d had her helping him to give her a taste of investigating a story to help with her transition. The more she thought about it though the more she felt like she was losing a part of who she was by taking on this role. She still hadn’t gotten the Pulitzer she’d sought after. The idea of giving up that dream... There were still so many stories to write. She wanted to be the one writing the stories not figuring out where they went on the layout. She wanted to be diving into investigations with Clark not stuck in her office trying to find the time to sneak a bite of food in her busy schedule.

Clark had been more than understanding and supportive through the changes that had been thrown at both of them. She knew he’d support her no matter what decision she made, but right now what her heart told her was she missed being a reporter. She missed working with her husband. She missed spending her days with him and helping stop the bad guys and speaking out for those that can’t speak for themselves. That was why she’d become a reporter in the first place. Her goal had never been to be Editor or to move into a cushy office. It just wasn’t her. There might come a day when she could see herself settling down but that wasn’t today.

Clark began to stir, turning toward her, “Hey,”

“Hey,” She smiled weakly at him leaning into him, lying her head on his chest. “How are you feeling?”

“Okay,” He leaned up, brushing his hand against her cheek. “How are you?”

“Okay.” She looked back at him, wrapping her arms around his waist, relishing in the fact that he was indeed okay.

“That face tells a different story.” He whispered, leaning in to kiss her cheek. “What’s wrong?”

Lois sighed, tracing random patterns on his chest. “Just doing some thinking.”

“Uh-oh.” He teased, resting his chin against her head.

“Today’s the first day I actually felt like myself since I became Editor.” Lois explained hesitantly.

“Well, that’s good, right?” Clark asked, looking at her with a reassuring smile.

“Except I didn’t feel that way because I was being Editor. I felt that way because I was helping investigate the Press story.” Lois pointed out, leaning back against him.

“Oh.” He tightened his arms around her. “You miss it.”

“Desperately.” She admitted shyly. “I haven’t even gotten my first Pulitzer yet. If I take on being Editor I can kiss that dream good-bye.”

“Sounds like you’ve really thought this through.” he observed.

“Yeah,” She looked back at him sadly, “What happened

today...it could have been avoided if we'd been working on this story together. Maybe we could have stopped Ethan Press sooner ... before he got his hands on that weapon. Don't even get me started on why the military is even developing something like that..."

Mid-sentence she found herself cut off by his lips caressing hers. His hands moved to cup her cheek and she whimpered in protest when he pulled away, "You can't do that." He whispered, resting his head against her cheek.

"Do what?" She breathed.

"Try and take the blame for all this. There's no telling when we would have figured out what was going on with the Presses. Now, Raine knew the danger when he agreed to sell a top-secret military weapon like that." He reassured her, nuzzling her ear. "Bad guys are in jail. I'm assuming the paper's been put to bed since you're home..." He grinned at her, running his hands up her ribcage, tracing the outline of her cotton tank top.

"I've been home for a few hours." She said, fingering the gold band on his hand as he moved it up to cup her right breast. "You're supposed to be resting."

"I've been resting for the last five hours." He murmured against her neck, pressing his palm against the front of her chest. "I've had enough rest."

"Oh, Cl..." She opened her mouth, sighing as his hands moved up her body. His mouth moved over hers, slipping his tongue inside the confines of her mouth. She sighed happily against him as he leaned them back onto the bed, rolling them over so she was beneath him.

"I love you." He whispered against the nape of her neck, breaking away from her as he stroked her jawline, staring back at her with an intense passion. He could make her melt with just a simple touch or caress.

She leaned in to recapture his mouth with hers, murmuring against him, "Make love to me Clark," The passion that had been building between them soon overtook them as they fell into one another's arms.

The next day Lois was looking over the copy for the next edition. The headlines read:

***SUPERMAN STOPS NUCLEAR EXPLOSION
PRESS CHARGED WITH MURDER, ESPIONAGE***

By Lois Lane and Clark Kent

Lois smiled looking at the mock-up, seeing her and Clark's names together just as they should be, "Looks like our lead story to me."

"I'll get this down to press." Jimmy nodded, taking the mock-up down to print where he bumped into Perry who was standing in the doorway. "Hey, chief! What're you doing down here?"

Lois exchanged a knowing look with Clark, "I just thought I'd stop by, see how things were going, you know." He took a deep breath and said, "God, I love the smell of ink in the morning."

Jimmy frowned, "But it's not morning."

Perry sniffed, "Aw, hell, Jimmy, I know that. Just doesn't sound as good you know."

Jimmy offered him a supportive smile, "We miss you Chief." He patted him on the back before leaving.

"I heard you two had a busy day yesterday." Perry began hesitantly.

"You could say that." Lois smiled back at him.

"Just another day in the life of Lane and Kent." Clark remarked with a smile.

"So, what can I help you with?"

Perry smiled back at her weakly, "I wanted to talk to you about something...and I want you to know it has nothing to do with... Aw, look, I won't beat around the bush here, Lois. Truth is, I miss the newsroom something awful. After thirty some odd years being down here, I guess it's just become a part of me..."

"I know." Lois smiled back at him.

"You do?" Perry asked.

"Yeah, and actually..." She looked back at Clark with a smile, "...we think we have a solution." Perry looked up at her in anticipation and Lois continued. "I miss being a reporter as much as you miss being an editor. Not to say I wouldn't want the job down the line but right now ...I'm just not ready. We're not ready." She emphasized her point, taking Clark's hand in hers. "Which is why we think you should take your old job back."

"Really?" Perry asked, uncertain if he'd heard her right.

"Really," Lois said, "But I do like the parking space and the raise in pay. So maybe a raise and better parking and we call it even?"

"Deal!" Perry reached out to hug them both.

"Lois, I gotta talk to you..." Ralph interrupted, "Hey guys," He nodded toward Perry and Clark then turned back to her, "I got this killer scoop. Guaranteed headline. Better than the mayor story."

"Don't tell me. Tell Perry." Lois said taking her nameplate off the desk. She walked back into the newsroom and set her nameplate back on her desk next to Clark's.

"You sure about this?" Clark asked.

"Yeah, I know where I belong." She leaned in to kiss him. He grinned against her lips, moving his hand to cup her cheek.

"And that is?"

"Right here, with you." She whispered, leaning in to recapture his lips with hers again. "What do you say we celebrate this reunion at home?"

"Sounds good to me." He leaned in to capture her mouth with hers, lingering outside the elevator for a moment before following her inside the elevator car.

THE END