

# A Town Called Smallville

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Summary: What if Smallville, KS was like Eureka, OR — one of the small ‘special’ towns founded for scientific research?

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“Got an interesting tip from a buddy of mine in Kansas City,” Perry began. “Seems there’s this decent guy — a farmer — who gets thrown off his property by the Federales who then start tearing his place up with bulldozers. Whaddya think? Up for a little trip to Kansas?”

“Let Clark go. I’ll stay and watch for Superman,” Lois stated.

“Now, Lois, let’s keep an open mind here. ‘The Poisoning of America.’ I’m seeing a *Planet* special investigation here.”

“Really? I’m seeing guys in overalls discussing hog futures.”

“Private property rights versus the public good,” Perry insisted.

Lois shook her head. “We’ve got that story here in Metropolis.”

“Urban and rural. It’s the same story. Same problem.

Sometimes it’s easier to understand in a smaller setting. A microcosm.”

“Perry, exactly where did your buddy say this was happening in Kansas?” Clark asked.

“Your home town,” Perry said.

“Perry, somebody is pulling your leg,” Clark said. “There’s no way the Feds are digging up *anything* around Smallville, Kansas.”

“And why’s that?” Perry asked.

“Just trust me on this one, Perry,” Clark said earnestly. “The Feds are not digging in Smallville. But I would be curious to find out who told your buddy they *were*.”

“Well, I trust my source and I’m done arguing,” Perry stated.

“But Perry...” Lois protested. “It’s *Smallville*.”

“Yeah, I got you. That’s probably how the first reporter at Love Canal felt. Say, didn’t that reporter pull in a Pulitzer Prize?”

“Perry, you’re wasting your time,” Clark warned.

“Well, I’m paying you and so I get to decide if I’m wasting *your* time or not,” Perry stated, heading back to his office. “Go find me a story... in Smallville.”

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Clark had been positively glum on the plane. He brightened once they had their rental car and started towards Smallville.

“America’s breadbasket, Lois,” he said expansively, waving at the fields of wheat and corn while they waited at a train crossing. The train wasn’t moving and the several railroad employees they could see seemed to be taking their time figuring out the problem.

“Don’t tell me. 4-H changed your life,” Lois grouched.

“Can’t help it if I’m a farm kid,” Clark stated.

“If I ever need a cow milked, I’ll remember that.”

“You can joke, but take away Middle America and what have you got?”

“Art, music, theater...”

“...crime, drugs, poverty.”

Lois glared at the unmoving train. “How long is this going to take?”

“It takes as long as it takes.”

“I didn’t realize Zen was popular in the country.”

Clark chuckled. “It always takes people from the city a while to decompress. Fortunately for you, this weekend Smallville’s holding the annual Corn Festival.”

“This is a good thing?”

“Sure. We’ll see the Corn Queen Pageant. The Husk-Off. The Corn-O-Rama. Popcorn, creamed corn, corn-on-the-cob. We’re in luck.”

“Be still, my heart.”

Clark actually laughed. Lois sat back and looked over her surroundings — train in front, wheat on one side, corn on the other and a semi behind them. That’s when she noticed a small faded sign set back from the road. ‘Entering Smallville Military Reservation. Est. 1948. Visitors must report to the Sheriff’s office.’ There was a DoD logo on the sign.

“Um, want to explain that?” Lois asked, pointing to the sign.

“How do you think I knew that Perry’s source was wrong?”

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They stopped by Wayne Irig’s farm before heading into Smallville proper. To Clark’s surprise, there actually was a bulldozer parked in front of Irig’s house.

“Wayne, what’s going on?” Clark called when Irig walked up to the rental car. Irig was a grey old man wearing worn overalls who looked too much like a farmer not to be one.

“Clark? Remember that meteor storm in ‘66? Oh, of course you don’t, you weren’t around then,” Irig said. “Well, turns out some of the pieces were radioactive. Don’t want that laying around.”

Irig peered more closely at Clark. “What are you doing home? I thought you left here for good.”

“Someone told my... our... boss that the Feds had kicked you off your land with bulldozers.”

“Who’d do a fool thing like that?” Irig asked.

“So, you’re okay?” Lois asked.

“Sure, why shouldn’t I be?”

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“So, that was seriously weird,” Lois said. “Radioactive meteorites?”

“There was a big meteor storm in ‘66. Most of the pieces burned up but lot of it what made it through came down in this area,” Clark told her. “The geology classes used to have field trips out around here to find pieces. I expect they still do. First I’ve heard about any of it being radioactive.”

“Could he be lying about it?” Lois asked.

“Wayne Irig? No way,” Clark insisted. “He’s a friend of my dad’s. I remember that before his wife died, they used to give out these great caramel apples at Halloween.”

Lois didn’t say anything.

Clark gave her a sidelong look. “Okay, where’s the joke?”

Lois looked mystified. “What joke?”

“You’ve made fun of everything else,” Clark pointed out.

“Let’s hear the caramel apple joke.”

“I love caramel apples. Do you think they’ll have any at the Corn Festival?”

“Just ask Maisie. I’m sure she’ll have some.”

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Clark parked the car near the sheriff’s office on Main Street. It was a brick structure tucked between the bookstore and the hardware store. Across the street was the town square complete with band-shell and gazebo. A banner reading “Smallville Corn Festival” was hung from the gazebo. A group of high-schoolers were playing country-rock. It all seemed so small town ‘normal’ — until Lois realized she’d never seen instruments like the ones they were playing. The guitars had no strings and the drum set looked to be made of pieces of circular glass. Nor could she spot any amplifiers or the loudspeakers they had to be using.

The craft booths looked normal at least — until she realized the

booth selling movie posters specialized in science fiction and prominently featured ‘Day of the Triffids’. And where there would have been photos of movie stars and TV celebrities, there were pictures of Superman and scientists, some of whom Lois actually recognized.

“I feel like Dorothy,” Lois said. “Only I don’t remember a tornado flying me off to Oz.”

“This is just Smallville,” Clark said.

A woman in a khaki uniform and sheriff’s hat hurried over to them. Her uniform was complete with a radio, pistol, and handcuffs. “Clark?”

“Rachel? When did you take over as sheriff?”

“Fordman retired,” Rachel explained. “But, don’t let the uniform fool you. I can still two-step and tush-push better than anybody in town.”

“I’m sure you can,” Clark agreed with a grin.

“But what are you doing in town?”

“Somebody told our boss that there might be a story in ‘Feds’ allegedly digging up Irig’s farm.”

“Really? ‘Cause as far as I know it’s Irig digging up his farm looking for meteorites and you know nobody from here would contact the media.”

Lois stepped closer, catching Clark’s attention. He introduced the two women.

Rachel looked Lois up and down. “So, when did you two...?”

“We haven’t!” Lois said too quickly. “We’re on assignment for the Daily Planet. We *work* together.”

“Really? Completely professional, huh?” Rachel said grinning. Her radio squawked. “Duty calls. Well, Lois, we’ll have to swap Clark stories later... Oh, Clark, remember you’re in Smallville.”

“I not forgetting,” he promised.

Clark looked around then pulled Lois toward one of the barbeque pits. “Maybe we can get an early taste of the local hospitality.”

Lois pulled away. “You go ahead. I’ll just kind of soak up the ‘atmosphere.’”

Clark stopped. “You know, Lois, what you can’t stand is how normal it is here.”

“Normal?” Lois asked. “The band is playing guitars without strings, amps or speakers. Besides, I’ve heard about small towns.” She pointed to the heavy-set man at the nearest barbeque pit. “See Mister Regular Joe flipping burgers? I’ll bet he’s really a cross-dresser.”

“Clark!” a woman called, hurrying up to him.

Clark turned and gave her a hug. “Mom.”

As they broke off, Martha looked Lois over then grinned. “You must be Lois.”

“That’s me. Hi... Mrs. Kent.”

“Martha, please,” Martha said. “Well, you sure are pretty.”

She looked to Clark. “It’s okay if I tell her that, isn’t it?”

Clark chuckled. “I don’t know. Ask Lois.”

“Thanks. *Martha*,” Lois managed to say

“You kids must be starved. Let’s get you something to eat at the barbeque pit.”

“I don’t know, Mom. Lois thinks the cook might be a cross-dresser.”

Martha’s eyes went wide. “Honey, that’s Clark’s *father*! And I can’t get him to buy *me* a dress, let alone one for himself.”

“I was just... illustrating a point,” Lois said, sounding miserable.

Jonathan turned from the barbeque holding a pair of tongs with grilled corn. “I feel like I know you already, Lois. Care for an ear?”

“Why do you ‘feel like you know me?’” Lois asked.

“Because Clark can’t stop talking about you. How good looking you are...”

“Dad!”

“And what a good writer,” Martha added.

“Mom!!” Clark rolled his eyes in embarrassment.

“Anyway, Lois, welcome to Smallville. We’ve got your room all ready.”

“My room? Oh, I wouldn’t think of putting you out. I’ll be staying in a motel.”

“Lois, this is Smallville. The nearest motel is at least an hour away and the B&B’s been booked up for months.” Jonathan said.

“Even if there *was* a room,” Martha added, “I wouldn’t hear of you staying anywhere else.”

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Lois was surprised at how ‘comfy’ the Kents’ home was, although the welding equipment in the kitchen seemed a bit out of the ordinary.

“My mom dabbles in art,” Clark explained without actually explaining anything.

“Uh, Mom, Lois and I need to receive a fax tomorrow,” Clark said after Martha had finished showing Lois around.

“A fax...” Martha repeated.

“Facsimile,” Lois chimed in. “It’s a machine. People in one place put a paper in and people in another place can get a copy if they have a fax machine, too. It’s sort of... technical.”

“No, I was just thinking I better check the paper if you’re expecting something,” Martha said, “unless you want to use the fax emulator in my office. It’s faster.”

“I didn’t mean... it’s just... I don’t even have a fax,” Lois said, embarrassed.

Martha chuckled. “Out here, you’ve got to have at least a fax these days.” She paused, thinking. “Now you’re in Clark’s room. Clark can take the couch or my office. Unless you two are...”

“No! We’re not...” Lois protested.

Martha chuckled again and started towards the kitchen. She cleared her throat when she saw Jonathan settling onto the couch. “Jonathan, why don’t you help me?”

He followed her with surprising alacrity, leaving Lois and Clark alone in the living room.

“Not exactly what you had in mind, huh?” Clark said.

“Let’s see. So far I’ve been given a glimpse of ritual crop worship, been treated as your girlfriend, and insulted your parents. No, I couldn’t have planned this.”

“You’re having a better time than you want to admit.”

“Oh?”

“Sure. You ate three hot dogs and one of Maisie’s caramel apples.”

“That shows how much you don’t know about me. I only eat like that when I’m miserable.”

“Come on. Let’s go outside and look at the stars. That’ll make you feel better.”

“Metropolis has stars,” Lois said.

“But not like you can see them here,” Clark told her, leading her to front porch.

Clark was right – the stars were amazing.

“Clark, why are people around here so surprised to see you here?”

“You noticed that?”

Lois nodded in the darkness.

“After I was done with school here, I basically ran away from home to see the world,” Clark said. “That’s something the people from here just don’t do.”

“Born here and die here?”

“Something like that. When I do come back to visit, it’s just to see my parents. I mean, I loved growing up here, but I can’t see myself living here.”

“So, why was Rachel reminding you that this is Smallville?”

“You saw the sign when we drove in,” Clark reminded her.

“Smallville is in the middle of a DOD reservation. Most of the

town is involved in government sponsored research. Classified research. And talking to the press is simply not done. The fact that someone made sure that Perry's curiosity was piqued enough to send the two of us here is very disturbing and I'm sure Rachel and her superiors are looking to track down the leak even as we speak. It doesn't help that I chose journalism as a career path and settled in Metropolis instead of coming back here."

"They don't trust you?"

"I'm sure they trust *me* fine," Clark said. "I was raised here. It's you they don't know well enough to predict. I fully expect a call from Perry tomorrow telling us he was pranked and for us to get back pronto. By day after tomorrow we should be back at work laughing about ritual crop worship in small town middle America."

"He's not going to like us coming back without a story," Lois reminded him.

"Lois, there *is* no story," Clark said. "Wayne Irig is looking for radioactive meteorites that may or may not even exist."

"The meteorites exist," Jonathan said, coming onto the porch. "He found a couple samples after the last big storm. Gave most of them to Dix over at the geology lab. I think one specimen was sent to the Global Dynamics labs in Oregon."

"Anything else about them?" Clark asked.

"Not of Earthly origin, naturally. Periodic element 126. Emits an extremely high band radiation that doesn't seem to affect anything it was tested on," Jonathan said. "Of course we haven't had the specimens long enough to evaluate long-term exposure effects."

"Just out of curiosity, Mister Kent, what sort of stuff are you involved in?" Lois asked.

"The Kents have been farming this land since the Civil War," Jonathan said. "But my degree is in botany and my specialty is food grain. I'm working on developing a high protein grain that will thrive in marginal areas."

"And Mrs. Kent?"

Jonathan chuckled. "Martha is a highly respected biologist with a knack for cross-discipline investigations."

"Are you disappointed that Clark didn't come back here to live?" Lois asked.

Jonathan chuckled again then went on more seriously. "Most of the kids don't come back here to live once they're done with school. Clark was just a little more theatrical than most. And there were special circumstances in his case."

"What sort of circumstances?"

Jonathan laughed and went back inside the house.

"What sort of circumstances?" Lois repeated to Clark.

"Lois, I'm adopted. More to the point, I'm a founding in a town where everybody knows everybody else's business and strangers don't just drive in without being noticed."

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"Well, you were right," Lois said the next morning, showing him the fax that had come in from the EPA. "Smallville is not on the list of their clean-up sites and when I called to ask about it, the person on the other end got *very* suspicious of me."

"Makes you wonder exactly what Perry's source told him that convinced him there was a story here," Clark said, pouring himself another cup of coffee.

"So, people around here think you're some sort of experiment?" Lois asked.

"Pretty much," Clark said. "And experimental animals aren't supposed to go wandering off the reservation. They certainly aren't supposed to move to Metropolis and get jobs at the Daily Planet."

"Clark, are you okay?" Lois had taken notice of the fact that Clark's hands were trembling and he actually looked pale.

"This is the first time that I can remember actually being sick," Clark admitted. "Weirded Mom out pretty badly."

"Why? People do get sick. All the time."

"Not me."

They heard a truck drive up and stop. Within a few moments, Jonathan and Martha appeared.

"The good news is, without further exposure you should recover in a day or so," Martha announced. "The bad news is, we have no idea how or why the radiation from one of Wayne's meteorites had this effect on you. I've asked Dix to make sure all his samples are inside radiation containment and all his people take proper precautions around the samples. We don't want any more people to get sick." At this she glared at Jonathan.

"How was I to know it would make Clark sick?" Jonathan asked. "You did let GD know about this development, didn't you?"

"Not the details, but yes, I sent them a note letting them know it was more radioactive than their tests might indicate and they should take all necessary precautions."

"With any luck they'll actually listen this time," Jonathan grouched.

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Jonathan and Martha had work to do with the Festival and so left Lois and Clark at the diner.

Like the rest of the town, the diner looked typical small-town until you noticed the details. There were red vinyl covered booths with Formica topped tables, complete with sugar shakers and ketchup bottles. But there was an imported espresso machine on the counter and Lois couldn't see a cash register. There were also no menus although the daily special was written on a chalk board by the entrance. Today's lunch special was bison burgers with garlic aioli and goat cheese served with Yukon potatoes seasoned with Himalayan salt and truffle oil.

"What happened to regular cheese burgers?" Lois asked.

"You can have a regular cheese burger if you want," Clark said. "Just don't ask for American cheese on it."

"Why not?"

"I don't want to sit through Maisie's lecture on how American process cheese is an insult and crime against multiple millennia of cheese makers and milk producers."

Clark was interrupted by the arrival of the aforesaid Maisie, a cheerful middle-aged woman in a waitress uniform. "Clark Kent! Your mom said you were here for the Daily Planet. So this must be Lois," she said, setting glasses of ice water on the table. She turned to Lois. "I'm Maisie. How's the writing coming? I love to read a good romance novel."

Lois glared at Clark.

"I must have accidentally mentioned it to my mother. She may have..."

"...accidentally told the whole town," Lois finished for him.

"Oh, that's just Smallville for you. Everybody knows everything about everybody else," Maisie said, grinning.

"So why haven't I heard any dirt on Clark?" Lois asked.

"With Clark, what you see is what you get," Maisie said. "Any idea what you want?"

"I'll have the daily special with a lemonade," Clark said.

"And how about you, Lois?"

"I haven't seen a menu yet."

"Lois, they don't have menus," Clark said. "Just order something."

"Turkey and Swiss on rye and a small Caesar salad... and a lemonade?"

"Do you want the sandwich cold, hot or just toasted?"

"Toasted would be nice," Lois said. "If it's not too much trouble."

"No trouble," Maisie said as she took off toward the counter.

"They don't have menus here?" Lois asked.

"Nope, you order what you want and they'll let you know if they have everything and how much time it will take if it's not

something they have ready to go. Like *boeuf bourguignon*, roast turkey with dressing...”

“*Boeuf bourguignon*?”

Clark nodded as he pulled out his notepad. He flipped to a clean page then yelped. He stared at his now bleeding finger. “I’m bleeding.”

“Haven’t you ever had a paper cut before?”

“Not that I remember,” Clark admitted.

“Like you’ve never been sick until today?”

“Uh, yeah...”

Maisie hurried over to their table with a small spray bottle. “Here, let me see that,” she ordered, taking his hand and inspecting his finger. She wiped off the blood with a towelette and sprayed the wound. “Does your Mom know about this?”

“I started feeling under the weather last night,” Clark told her. “She ran some tests, thinks I should be fine in a day or so.”

“Make sure to tell her about this,” Maisie ordered. “She may want to run more tests.”

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“Does everybody in town know you’re an ‘experiment’?” Lois asked as they ‘mingled’ in the Corn Festival activities.

“It’s a very small, very insulated, town full of scientists and busybodies,” Clark said. “Although what they ‘know’ is that where other kids got check-ups once a year, I got them once a month at the bio lab instead of the regular clinic. So they figure I was being treated for some rare medical disorder or there was something else going on. Knowing my Mom’s reputation in her field, ‘something else’ was a lot more likely.”

They walked over to the dance area. The band was playing something with a strong steady beat, suitable for dancing while a small crowd arrayed itself into a line-dance.

“Give it a whirl?” Lois asked.

“You’re kidding?”

Lois dragged him toward the line. “No, I’m not kidding. I’d do *like* to dance. If you promise never to breathe one word about this to anybody at the Planet.”

They took their places in the line.

“You actually know how to do this?” Clark asked. It was obvious that Lois knew as much as he did.

“Last year I had a girlfriend convince me it was a great way to meet guys,” Lois explained.

“Was it?”

“Define ‘guys.’”

Before the next set began, Clark spotted Rachel waving to them and hurried over to her, Lois in tow.

“We found the leak,” Rachel started without preamble. “And you’re not going to like it.”

“I already don’t like it,” Clark stated.

“Jason Trask.”

“Trask?” Lois sputtered. “That guy threw us out of an airplane, without parachutes!”

“I heard about that,” Rachel said. “Lucky for you guys Superman was around.”

“The man is a lunatic,” Lois insisted.

Rachel shrugged. “Well, apparently he managed to convince *somebody* that his boss’s death was a tragic accident and that Clark was either a dangerous invading alien or a genetically enhanced super-soldier who went off the reservation and needs to be forced back into line. I got word from Area 51 this morning that they lost track of him a couple days ago and they didn’t bother to tell anyone.”

“What?”

“Don’t worry,” Rachel assured him. “Once we catch him, and we will, he’ll end up in a padded cell in a sub-basement in a high security facility nobody’s ever heard of. You grew up here and we don’t like people who make threats against our people.”

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“So which are you, alien or super-soldier?” Lois asked as they walked through the carnival area. They stopped at the strongman game booth and Lois handed the barker a ticket.

“Well, it makes absolutely no sense to design a super-soldier with free will and that grows at the same rate as a normal human and requires the same outlay of resources to bring to maturity with no guarantee of good results. It’s a lot cheaper to just recruit, maybe enhance, regular humans,” Clark said.

Clark hefted the hammer and brought it down on the lever. The puck stopped at three-quarters of the way up. He tried again – closer to the top this time. Third time and the bell rang.

The barker held out two prizes, a Superman doll and a teddy bear. “You get your choice.”

To Clark’s surprise, Lois chose the teddy bear.

“So, if you’re not a super-soldier, then you must be an alien,” Lois reasoned as they headed back to the barbeque area where Jonathan and Martha were. She stopped as though something finally clicked. “Superman...”

“Clark!” Martha’s voice interrupted. “Look who’s here...”

Clark looked over to see a middle-aged black man wearing a brightly colored shirt and a beret standing with Jonathan and Martha. He grinned broadly as he waved at Clark.

“Doctor Deacon?”

“My, how you have grown...” Deacon said. “You were what, this tall the last time I saw you?” He measured out a height of about four feet above the ground.

“That’s Henry Deacon,” Lois whispered. “He took over EPRAD after Toni Baines was killed.”

“Yeah, I know,” Clark whispered back.

“You know Henry Deacon and you didn’t tell me?”

“Well, you haven’t given me a list of everybody *you* know,” Clark responded. “Besides, I haven’t seen him in years.” He moved to shake Deacon’s hand.

“Your Mom tells me you’ve settled in Metropolis, working for the Daily Planet,” Deacon said, still grinning. “Good job.”

“I’m Lois Lane, I work with Clark,” Lois intruded.

“I’ve read your work,” Deacon said graciously. “So, what does it feel like, flying with Superman?”

“Super.”

“So, when you get in?” Jonathan asked.

“Not long ago,” Deacon said. “I got word of Martha’s warning about the meteorite sample. Decided to check it out myself.”

“He’s recovering,” Martha said.

“I got a paper cut,” Clark volunteered, holding up his injured finger.

Deacon inspected the wound seriously. “Looks like you’re healing up nicely.”

He turned to Jonathan and Martha. “I also wanted you to know I think you’ve done a marvelous job. Not many people would have stepped up the way you did...”

“Not many people would have given us the chance that you did,” Jonathan said seriously.

“Well, you’ve raised a fine young man, here. I predict the world is going to see great things from him.”

There was a commotion at the far end of the square – the ‘pop pop pop’ of gunfire, people scattering, running away from whatever it was.

“I want Superman!” a man started yelling.

Trask. He had a semi-automatic machine gun and was firing it, seemingly at random.

“And what makes you think he’ll come when you call?” someone asked. “He’s in Metropolis, for Pete’s sake.”

“Trask, what do you think you’re doing?” Rachel demanded.

“Superman landed here during that meteor storm. He’s been hiding here, waiting, planning, softening us up for an invasion,” Trask stated. “And you people have a way to stop him but you won’t use it. You’ve been shielding him! You have Kryptonite and

you won't use it!"

"Trask," Deacon said, "If you had bothered to read *any* of the reports you were sent, you would know that Superman isn't an invader, he's a refugee."

"That's what *he* says."

"No, that's what *I* say since I'm the one who was contacted by the Kryptonians and I'm the one who tracked his life pod to Earth," Deacon stated loudly. "Think about it, Trask. You've seen the spacecraft he came to Earth in. The one you stole from the lab that was studying it? The one you killed three people to steal? What size of being could possibly have been in that craft?"

"You're one of the people who let the invaders come to Earth?" Trask asked dangerously. He aimed his gun at Deacon. "That makes you a collaborator, just as bad as the aliens that want to steal our planet, make slaves of us all."

Clark could see Trask start to pull the trigger. He pushed Deacon and his parents down as a shot rang out. He expected to feel searing pain, but there was nothing.

"Clark, are you okay?" Deacon asked, pushing Clark up and off of him. Clark nodded, looking over to where Trask lay on the grass. The center of Trask's chest was stained with red. Rachel had her gun out and looked surprised at what had just happened. One of her deputies ran over to Trask and kicked his gun away. Not that Trask was a threat to anyone anymore.

Clark helped Deacon to his feet.

"We finally have a story, but I'm betting it's classified like everything else around here," Lois said forlornly.

"I'm sure we can come up with something for you," Martha promised.

THE END

"*The Green, Green Glow of Home*" was written by Bryce Zabel.

'Eureka' (AKA 'A Town Called Eureka') was created by Andrew Cosby and Jaime Paglia.