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By [Deadly Chakram](#) <dwelf82@yahoo.com>

Rated: G

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Summary: Unbeknownst to Clark, his little one-on-one baseball game is witnessed...

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Author's Note: This is in response to the 2021 Kerth Challenge #5, which asked authors to imagine that someone had witnessed Clark's one on one baseball game in the episode Requiem for a Superhero. Who are they and what do they do with the information?

I hate it here. It's loud. And busy. Too full of people. And it absolutely *reeks*. How do these people *live* here? I can't understand it. The tall buildings all around seem to press in on you. They block out the sunlight for too many hours of the day. They obscure the blue sky. The sky. Never in my life have I seen such a sight before. The beauty of it. The brightness. The wisps of white clouds sailing past on what looks for all the world like a heavenly ocean. The golden shafts of sunlight, caressing all who walk on this Earth with a warm glow.

But the people seem so...oblivious. They are too busy looking groundward when they should be marveling at the hints of nature all around. I can hardly stand their stupidity, their arrogance, as they bask in their own sense of importance, as they live in their own little worlds, worrying about things that don't matter in the long run. But I guess we're all guilty of that once in a while. If I want to be honest with myself, I know I've sometimes gotten too wrapped up in my own thoughts to bother much with the world around me. Only the young seem to be constantly aware of their surroundings. I see them pointing at birds and trees and the way the sunlight reflects off vehicles. Their eagerness and innocence touches me more than I thought it would.

I can see some trees just ahead. Hmmm. There's a park of some kind here. The greenery calls to me and I abandon the streets to bask in a less populated, much quieter area for a time. My mission can wait for a while. I've been searching for years; another few minutes or hours or even days won't make much of a difference at this point. And now that I'm certain my target calls this cesspool of a city "home," I can afford a few moments of peace, where I lay my task aside and simply do things for the pleasure of it. So I walk beneath the trees for a time, losing myself on the winding park paths. Birds and small, furry creatures chirp and chitter at me as I pass, all of them unhappy with the intruder in their midst. Insolent little beasts that I chose to ignore.

This respite is much needed. As I stroll along, feeling the sun bathing my skin, breathing in the somewhat less tainted air of the park – that which I inhaled on the streets tasted of bus fumes – I feel like my very soul is being recharged. True, my quest is not yet over, but I'm feeling more optimistic than I have in a long time. Some of my cynicism slips away. I even find myself marveling a little at this city. It's cruder than other places I've seen, to be sure, and yet a lot grander than others I've laid my aging eyes on. The buildings look sturdy enough to withstand almost anything this

world can throw at them, yet they lack the elegance I'm used to seeing in such architecture. In short, what these people have accomplished here...well...it isn't home, but I find myself appreciating why he's chosen to settle here.

If my information is correct.

If I can still locate him amongst the millions who live and work in Metropolis.

If he...

No.

I'm not going down that path. I've worked too hard for too long to find him. And I *will* find him. It's just a matter of time. After all, he should not be too hard to identify.

There's a baseball field coming up on my right. I recognize the distinctive shape and can just make out the white spots that mark the bases. No one can say that I didn't do my homework before arriving in this country. As I approach, partially screened by a line of leafy trees and thick hedges, I see a solitary man approaching the pitcher's mound. I blink, and he's holding a bat over his shoulder at the home plate. I blink again and he's behind the plate, squatting down, holding a few fingers down near his groin.

Fascinated, and with my heart racing, I hurry to close the distance between the screen of trees and myself, taking every precaution to keep myself hidden from view. I don't want this man to know I'm here. I want to see what he's about to do. Could this be the very man I was sent by my superiors to locate? Surely, it can't be *this* easy, can it?

By the time I'm well-cloaked in the shadows, squatting down behind a hedge, and peeking through the gaps in the branches, the man is back on the pitcher's mound. He nods, as if confirming the mystifying hand signal from a few seconds ago, then he winds up and releases the ball in his hand. I watch in rapt attention as he races it back to the home plate, picks up the discarded bat, and swings. The wooden bat connects with the ball with a resounding *crack!* and sends it sailing into the vast blue sky. For a few heartbeats, I assume that it will be lost. The power of the swing was too great. Surely it will go screaming into the stratosphere, never to be retrieved.

But no!

The man jumps, catches the errant ball with a gloved hand, and hangs for a moment in midair, like a still-life painting or a moment caught in time in a photograph. He's flying. And I nearly weep from relief and from the absurdity of it all. I've found him.

"And it's all over! Kent wins the game!" he cheers, mocking the voice of a sports announcer.

Kent.

I've heard that name before.

Yes, it's on all those posters I've seen as I've wandered around this city.

Lane and Kent. The hottest team in town, if I'm remembering the slogan correctly. I recall noting the attractive man and woman pictured between the words – Lane and Kent above their heads and the rest below their cut-off torsos.

Clark Kent. Reporter for the Daily Planet newspaper.

He is this so-called Superman that I've been hunting.

Superman. That was the only lead I had that led me here.

And now, there he is, in plain clothes, looking more like a vagabond than any kind of professional or hero.

Excitement bubbles up in my chest and I can hardly contain my shout of glee. But I bite it back at the last second. My orders were to find him, not to engage him. That is up to my superiors. And honestly? I'm glad the dirty work doesn't fall on my shoulders for a change. Still, I have to be careful. Even if I were to contact my people right at this very moment, it will be a long, slow process for them to get here. And this Clark Kent is a *literal* flight-risk. I must exercise every caution so that I don't give myself away.

I wait, silent as a shadow, until he's made his way out of the ballfield. Then I make all haste back to my transport. Once safely inside, I quickly check my supplies. I have enough for the return trip home, thanks to a bit of scavenging I've done here and there. Food, in particular, I've been stashing away whenever I can, even such subpar fare as can be found here. I start the engine and set my coordinates. Finally, after years of searching, my quest is over. I can finally go home.

But I will not show up unannounced. I must let my superiors know that I have located him. Checking the autopilot once more, I leave the cramped cockpit for the larger living space beyond. I touch a button on my wrist and the screen on the far wall shimmers into life. I wait patiently rocking on my heels as I wait for the connection to be established, my hands clasped behind my back in an attentive, but relaxed manner.

Within seconds, the faces of a man and a woman appear on the screen. They hail me with a hand gesture that I return.

"Lieutenant Waze," the woman greets me. "It has been some time since we've last heard from you. How is your mission going?"

I smile. "My Lady Zara," I say reverently, putting a hand to my heart in deference. "I have good news."

"Oh?" she asks, her eyebrows raised in intrigue. "Do go on."

I nod. "After searching countless planets and star systems, I have located your husband. He's here, on Earth, in this city of Metropolis. I have found him, my Lady. He goes by the name of Clark Kent here, but I have found missing Lord Kal-El."

THE END