

# The World Falls Away

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Summary: On the run after getting hold of Kryptonite and teaming up with Tempus, Lex Luthor navigates the treacherous events that cost him his freedom and sets his sights on revenge when faced with the revelation of who his enemy truly is. Conclusion to "Running With the Devil."

Story Size: 10,696 words (60Kb as text)

This story follows after the author's "[Running With the Devil.](#)"

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## Teaser

Lois Lane grimaced as she descended the steps into the sewer, feeling goosebumps rise up on her skin as the murky unknown came closer and closer. She found her bearings on a concrete slab and turned to her right where a dimly lit lantern hung on the wall, providing guidance on where to turn next. She turned her head to the left, flashing an uneasy smile to Clark who had his hand on her shoulder, giving it a gentle squeeze before following her to the damp walkway.

"It's a long fall from a penthouse in the sky," Clark commented, shaking his head as they reached the corner where a long corridor of what appeared to be some kind of workshop and possibly even living quarters was lit by three lanterns posted on the wall.

Lois grimaced, looking around as she heard a rustling noise come from the corner ledge they had just descended from and quickly turned on her heel. "What's that noise?"

Clark's arm reached over, gesturing to the trickling water nearby where a rat was scurrying across the narrow corner.

Lois felt her jaw tighten as she looked around the dark sewer, letting out a hissed, "I hate rats."

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The alleyway cats scurried across the pavement, and the sound of screeching followed by glass shattering echoed in the distance. Herbert George Wells ran a hand across his jacket, picking a stray hair off it and glancing at the pocket watch in his hand. Judging from the events he'd just witnessed in 2020, he could only conclude one individual as being responsible for the mayhem and destruction he'd witnessed.

Tempus.

He crossed the street to where a heavy grate was open, and a woman with short blonde hair and dressed in a leather jacket and matching black jeans stood waiting with her gun trained on the darkness below her. He pulled a small metal device from his pocket, tapping a few keys into it and then aimed it in the woman's direction.

A moment later, the woman was frozen in place, and Herbert George Wells let out a sigh, eying the alleyway behind him. He let out a heavy grunt, reaching over to carry the woman to the alleyway away from prying eyes.

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The scurrying of rodents slithering in the background echoed through the sewer. Clark peered over Lois' shoulder, where she was fanning through an open file folder with pictures of an intersection by the Metropolis bridge. Below the photos was a map of Metropolis with red marker outlining a path from the Metropolis Penitentiary to the courthouse. An 'x' was placed over the intersection of the Metropolis Bridge with a circle around it.

"Clark!" Lois tapped on the map with the 'x' in the center.

Clark nodded, following the route with his finger and commenting, "It starts here at the Metropolis Men's Prison...and ends at the courthouse."

"Of course," Lois breathed, putting the pieces together. "Bender got Vale a new hearing so he'd be right where they wanted him."

"Luthor's going to break Vale out of prison," Clark summarized, shaking his head, gathering up the evidence in front of them. "Come on, we've got to get this to the police."

Lois nodded her agreement, following him to the pathway they'd come from. If he left now, he could make it to the intersection and stop Luthor.

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Lex Luthor held the remote control to the explosives that had been planted along the street in his palm, salivating over the anticipated destruction that was to come. His thumb hovered over the red button, and he felt the intoxicating euphoria as his adrenaline pulsed, anticipating what was to come. He heard the sirens grow closer, and his thumb moved closer to the red trigger button.

"Steady... not too soon..." Nigel ordered as he held up a finger.

Lex looked over, seeing the police car and prison van roll over a manhole cover just a few feet away, and his thumb rested against the button. He looked at Nigel for confirmation.

"Now!"

Lex grinned as he jammed his thumb against the red button and felt a rumble from the explosion a few feet away. The patrol car flew up into the fiery inferno and sent the patrol car flying through the air as the prisoner van behind it crashed through a bench before smashing into a brick wall.

Lex quickly exited the van he and Nigel had been seated in and ran toward the crash, tucking the tranquilizer gun into his jacket as he tugged the ball cap over his face to prevent him from being recognized by passersby. Nigel approached on the other side of the van, aiming his own tranquilizer at the guard seated in the passenger seat. A simultaneous whistle escaped each tranquilizer gun as the guards were knocked out.

"He looked like he needed a rest," Lex remarked with a sly chuckle.

"Yes, he'll have an awful headache when he wakes up," Nigel agreed.

"And so, will you," an unfamiliar voice spoke up as he watched his trusted friend Nigel collapse to the ground.

"You imbecile! Do you have any idea what you've done!" Lex hissed out in fury.

"Saved you from falling into your own demise and eventual betrayal." The man stepped forward, smoothing a hand through his light brown hair.

"You're going to have me behind bars at this rate," Lex fumed as he made his way toward the back of the prisoner van.

"Ah, ah, ah," the man countered as he held up the tranquilizer in his hand and aimed it at the door.

Lex growled under his breath, jerking the door open.

"Who's the clown?" Rollie Vale asked, pointing to the man with the tranquilizer trained on him.

"Someone of no importance," Lex sneered.

"Indeed." The stranger let out a chuckle just before striking Vale in the chest with a tranquilizer.

Lex turned on the stranger, his dark eyes black with fury as he reached over to grab the stranger by the collar before he lit into him. "You have no idea who you're dealing with, you meddling fool. Do you have any idea what you've done? I needed Vale to take me to where he has stashed my supply of Kryptonite."

"Yes, the mysterious location of the Kryptonite does need to be revealed, doesn't it?" The stranger reached over to pull up

Vale's sleeve and opened a latch on the robotic arm. Inside, a familiar green glow emitted, and the stranger pulled the Kryptonite out of Vale's secret compartment.

"My Excalibur," Lex breathed out, staring at the stranger suspiciously. "Who are you? How did you...?"

"How did I know Vale was hiding the Kryptonite in his robotic arm?" The stranger gave a mocking laugh. "Please, Lex, I learned about that back in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. The history of robotics. Metallo's reign and the radioactive power supply were a snore, but I did pick up a few things."

"What are you babbling about?" Lex growled irritably.

"Well, I'm from the future, Lex. How else do you think I was able to predict the precise moment that you would step into the plans for betrayal and slip into your own demise? How else do you think I would know that Nigel over here was set to sell this Kryptonite..." he tossed the green meteorite in the air, "...to the highest bidder and leave you to your own devices?"

"Who are you?" Lex asked again, growing more and more irritable with the stranger and his evasiveness.

"I believe it's time to go." The stranger pointed to the bridge where several patrol cars were driving over to where Lex had the getaway van parked.

"Name," Lex demanded.

"Tempus." A grin washed over his face. "Now, about this plan for Lois Lane..."

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The sound of police and ambulance sirens approached from the distance. Clark knelt down on the pavement, looking over the shattered glass and debris outside the police van. He grimaced when he spotted a trail of blood dripping down the back bumper of the van.

"Superman?"

The voice came from behind him, and he looked over his shoulder at one of the patrol officers arriving on the scene. Clark pointed to the van, gesturing to the bullet shells littering the ground, unable to let the words escape his throat. He didn't dare x-ray the van for fear of the haunting images of what laid inside. The blood trickling down on the pavement spoke for itself.

"We've got bodies!" the officer called out as he opened the backdoor.

Clark clamped his eyes shut, but before he could, he caught a glimpse of the bloody scene Luthor had left in his wake. He took a heavy breath, mustering through the internal battle that was tumbling inside him. He approached the police van, recognizing both Rollie Vale and Nigel St. John amidst the carnage that had been left behind.

The scene quickly grew more chaotic as ambulances and more patrol officers arrived as everything became a blur of blue and white. It didn't make sense. Why would he go to all this trouble to break Vale out of jail only to kill him?

He cleared his throat, spotting the lead officer by his patrol car. "Is there anything I can do to help here, officer?"

"No." He shook his head. "It looks like these guys knew exactly what they were doing. Poor guys never had a chance."

"I'm sorry," Clark responded, unable to find the right words to reflect the guilt he felt for not stopping this carnage from occurring.

"It's not your fault, Superman." The officer scowled. "It's Luthor's."

"Yeah." Clark nodded, turning to leave.

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Lex stared at the digital print in front of him, revealing Clark Kent as Superman across the headline and a photo of the hero amidst other caped heroes wearing the familiar emblem. This was the future? It was hard to imagine a world where the man behind the cape was nothing more than a gliblet like Kent.

It had to be a trick.

A blue light emitted across the room, and he spied the man that had identified himself as Tempus stepping through a mirror-like doorway. He looked around the darkened room where the guards that had been securing the STAR Labs basement were knocked out cold.

It seemed they had some work to do.

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### Chapter 1: No Rest for the Wicked

A booming echo filled the newsroom as Perry bellowed for Jimmy. Every desk was filled with frantic phone calls and tapping keys as the television played the footage over and over again of the carnage from earlier. Lex Luthor was on the run, and no one knew where he would show up next.

Lois tore her eyes from the computer screen in front of her, unable to string even two words together as the many different scenarios of mayhem that could befall the city or herself pushed its way to the forefront of her mind. It was insane. Lex was supposed to be dead. She and everyone else who had been standing on the street that day had watched him plunge to his death.

How was any of this possible?

Her gaze shifted to the elevator doors as they pinged, wondering if she should start to worry over her partner's absence. She hadn't seen him since leaving Lex's lair in the sewer beneath the streets of Metropolis. Nearly two hours and not a word. Not a phone call. Not a message. Nothing.

An exhausted sigh escaped her lips as she leaned back in her chair, reaching over to take a sip from her mug of coffee. Her headspace had been cluttered with conflicting emotions and thoughts as she worked through the impossible task of comprehending the impossible events over the last forty-eight hours. It seemed even death wasn't permanent if you had enough control and grasp on people — case in point what had happened with Lex.

<<"I can't.">>

"You do feel something for me."

"No...I just feel maybe you've suffered enough.">>

She grimaced, swallowing past the guilt rising up within her. Had she caused this? If she had just called the police when given a chance, could all of this have been avoided? Or would he have even given her that chance? So many questions, and yet she had no answers to any of them.

The truth of the matter was she didn't really know Lex. Not the way she thought she had anyway. He was just another failed relationship to add to the list of men who had betrayed her and taken her trust for granted. She thought she did. She had fought tooth and nail against Clark to argue that very point only to be proven vehemently wrong when everything came tumbling down around her.

Clark.

How had so much changed in just six months?

A slow smile crept across her face, recalling the previous evening and their 'almost first date' at Butch Kenebrew's place across from the Metropolis marina. It had been easy to forget about the impending danger and the doubts and fears that had crept up over the last few days. Though she had her doubts and had second-guessed herself repeatedly over the last few days, knowing just what was at stake in taking this leap of faith and venturing into this foreign territory with Clark, she had found herself more and more at ease with the possibilities that were to come. Over the last two years they had grown closer and though she had tried to deny it in the beginning, the closer they became the stronger the magnetic pull that drew her to him became.

She wasn't used to this.

Friendships themselves were difficult for her to maintain.

Relationships were even more disastrous.

Yet, something was different about the way things felt almost natural with Clark.

He didn't push her and seemed to share the same fears and hesitancy she felt in this budding romance. A flash of heat crossed her cheeks as she recalled his silhouette undressing, rendering her incapable of tying two coherent words together in the aftermath. Hesitancy and doubts aside, she couldn't deny the emotions that had been simmering deep in the pit of her gut for the better half of a year.

"Pretty intense, huh?"

Lois jumped, startled by the intruding voice, and jerked her head up to see Jimmy's amused expression as he leaned against the glass pane separator above her desk. "Uh, wh...what?"

"The search for Luthor," Jimmy pointed to the television showing footage from the scene where Rollie Vale and Nigel had been found earlier.

"Yeah, it's...tragic," Lois agreed. "Hopefully, the police and Superman can find him and stop him before anyone else gets hurt."

"Yeah..." Jimmy commented, shaking his head in agreement, seeming to mull over his own internal thoughts and possible uncertainties over what Lex Luthor on the lam could mean. "You, uh, doing okay? I mean, with Luthor alive and taking out his old butler and him showing up like this? I know that's got to be putting your head in a spin. Especially with you and CK trying to..."

"Shhh," Lois hissed and held up a hand to motion for him to be quiet, "I'm *fine*." Lois responded sharper than necessary in an effort to get her well-meaning friend to stop talking before too much of her evolving relationship with Clark became public knowledge among the newsroom busy-bodies.

"Sorry." Jimmy gave her an apologetic smile, realizing his mistake.

Lois ran her fingertips through her dark locks, letting out a heavy sigh. "I'm trying not to think too hard about Lex Luthor if I can help it."

Jimmy nodded his understanding as she turned her head toward the elevator doors, spotting Clark descending the stairs and heading toward her and Jimmy. "Yeah, I guess it can't be easy with them playing everything on the twenty-four-hour circuit."

Lois flashed Jimmy a weak smile. "Hence the whole trying not to think about it."

"Hey, CK." Jimmy nodded in Clark's direction as Clark approached her desk with a notepad in hand and a weary expression across his face.

Clark pulled up a chair and took a seat, handing her the notepad for inspection.

"I'm guessing from the look on your face, there are no new leads on Lex?" Lois prompted, looking at him curiously.

"The police have a detail outside the sewer entrance we followed Remy into, but no one's seen or heard anything from him since his handiwork was discovered earlier this afternoon," Clark explained, shaking his head in dismay. "Not even Superman can find him."

"Where do you go in a city this large with no money and no resources?" Jimmy wondered aloud.

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A loud hum emitted from the retinal scanner as Lex leaned forward, allowing his retina to be examined. Then, he stepped back and looked to the left where Tempus was holding his hand out for the contact lenses he'd given him. Lex let out a low grumble as he leaned forward, peeled off the retina clone contacts, and handed them back to Tempus.

He didn't trust this mysterious Tempus as he called himself, but he still found himself intrigued by the story he had unveiled of being from the future. There were many things he shouldn't have known but did. Whether he was crazy or lucky was still yet to be determined, but the gem of Superman's identity being his other nemesis, Clark Kent, had piqued his interest.

He wasn't one to take something like this at face value, and he certainly had no reason to trust Tempus, but the theory was far enough out there that it just might hold some truth to it.

Possibly.

Tempus tapped on the steel frame of the door that slid open with ease and chuckled. "After you..."

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Lois stole a glance toward the television set, spotting the same anchor and another playback of the police chief's statement to the press regarding Lex Luthor's reign of terror on Metropolis. It had been hours and still no sign of where he might have disappeared to. Clark had disappeared a few hours ago to try and find Superman, but judging from the late hour, she guessed he had already given up and gone home. Her gaze shifted to the empty desks that her fellow journalists had left abandoned around her. By now, she'd be joining them and headed home, but she couldn't seem to muster up the strength to leave.

What if there was another lead?

What if she missed it?

<<"I've fallen from grace. I can see it in your eyes, but surely a creature of such abundant benevolence would allow me the chance to redeem myself."

"I... I don't have those feelings for you anymore."

"I don't believe you.">>

She blanched slightly, feeling the guilt swimming around in the deep pit of her gut, reminding her of her part in the disaster that had been Lex Luthor's downfall. Had she not been so blind to his true nature things might have worked in everyone's favor and not resulted in bloodshed in order to take Lex Luthor down.

<<"Lex, how could you expect... after everything you've done?"

"Yes, I've done terrible things, but I did them for you.

Provoked by the blinding light of your beauty. But If you can't forgive me... then here. Call the police..."

"You do feel something for me."

"No...I just feel maybe you've suffered enough.">>

She had been so blind back then.

Waiting until she was standing at the altar to begin to think of the consequences and everything that was at stake before really analyzing her relationship with Lex. Was she truly that naïve? A long breath escaped her throat, recalling the events over the last few days with a shudder. It seemed his fall from grace was recalled with little details on that memory, though. Lex made it clear the last time she'd seen him, he had no remorse for his actions and still acted as if there was hope to resume their relationship – if it could even be called that – as if he hadn't tried to destroy everyone and everything she held dear.

"Lois, honey, what are you still doing here?"

She turned to see Perry standing with his coat and hat in hand, peering across the newsroom at her in concern. "I, um..." She pointed to the television. "Just waiting to see if we get any new leads."

Perry wagged his finger at her. "Lois, come on, the paper's been put to bed a half-hour ago. Go on home. If anything breaks, you and Clark will be my first call."

Lois nodded weakly, taking the hint as she gathered her things without argument, taking solace in the company of her editor as he escorted her down to the parking garage, making sure she made it to her Jeep safely. She waved goodbye and let out a shaky breath as she turned the ignition to start the car and numbly drove out of the parking garage and onto the dark streets to head home.

<<"I can't.">>

Her mind kept replaying the events of the day, trying to process the complexity of her current state of mind, wondering if it was even safe to return to her apartment. The police had yet to find Lex. He had killed someone she'd once heard him describe as

a second brother in cold blood and escaped the jaws of death and all basic laws of life and death as she knew it. Nothing was beyond impossible.

<< "I mean, after all, you *did* ask me, and I did worry a lot about my answer, and I wouldn't want all that effort to be for nothing... I mean...I'm babbling, aren't I?">>

<< "Yes, I've done terrible things, but I did them for you. Provoked by the blinding light of your beauty. But If you can't forgive me... then here. Call the police..."

"You do feel something for me."

"No...I just feel maybe you've suffered enough.">>

Tears trickled down her cheeks as she turned down a familiar street, realizing she had completely missed the turn for the block her apartment complex was located on. She let out a heavy sob, looking over to the familiar street sign that read Clinton Street.

<< "What I'm trying to say is, I'm afraid things will change if we start going out."

"Well, if it makes you feel any better, Lois, I'm afraid too.">>

<< "To our almost-first date.">>

A hard knock against the glass of her driver's side window caught her attention, and she looked over to see a man motioning for her to roll the window down. She sighed, letting out a heavy breath as she rolled the window just far enough down to make out what he was trying to say.

"Hey, lady, you going to sit here all night or you gonna park?"

"I..." She bit her lower lip, glancing toward the 300 building around the corner and nodded. "Sorry. I'll be out of your way in a minute."

After mulling over whether to stay or go for a moment, she finally found herself a parking space on the familiar block and parked her car. Thunder rumbled above, and she let out a muttered curse as she turned the car off and raced up the steps to apartment 344, knocking on the door as the rain began to fall.

She heard a loud thud, and a moment later, the door opened with Clark standing on the other side looking at her in concern. "Lois?"

"Hi," she breathed out, uncertain what else to say.

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Lex stared at the polished green stones that glowed all around him. A machine stood on the side next to a thick notebook filled with results from tests that had been performed on the stones. Lex flipped through the notebook curiously, noting the name Bernard Klein on the header with several experiments on a 'Project X' which remained undisclosed.

"Ever hear of a Bernard Klein from your future?" Lex asked, not expecting much of an answer.

"He was the scientist that worked as Superman's doctor and helped discover the vaccine which eventually rendered Kryptonite harmless against the Man of Steel and his descendants," Tempus replied nonchalantly.

Lex felt the hair on his arms stand up at the mention of the implications he could possibly be looking at, then did a double-take at the mention of 'descendants' Tempus had referred to. "Did you just say, descendants?"

"Offspring, generational do-gooders from the boy scout..." Tempus yawned with a smirk. "I don't have to explain the birds and the bees to you, do I, Lex?"

"No!" Lex growled back adamantly.

"Anything else you'd like to know about the future?" Tempus asked with a shrug. "History of LexCorp, perhaps? Or maybe the family tree of the Kents? I must warn you it might take some time..."

"That's quite all right," Lex growled. "I don't need to know anything about that gliblet."

"Yet, you want to destroy Superman." Tempus smirked at

him. "Killing Clark Kent is how you kill Superman."

"Why should I believe you?"

"Why shouldn't you?" Tempus challenged him. "You have your doubts I see. Okay, you want proof. I'll give you proof."

"How?" Lex challenged. "Another tabloid that could easily have been doctored?" Lex gestured to the paper Tempus had presented him.

Tempus laughed. "I knew you were stubborn, Lex, but if it's proof you require I shall deliver."

Lex watched in fascination as Tempus pressed a microscopic button on a small device he had in his hand. A light green light emitted from the round ring of the device as he hooked it up to the telephone located in the lab they were in.

Tempus chuckled aloud as he explained to Lex, "With this device, I can implant subliminal messages into the feeble minds of the masses, thereby controlling the collective will." A smirk crossed his face. "And with this Kryptonite, it even works on those of the Kryptonian nature."

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## Chapter 2: Unsteady

Lois ran a hand through her hair, feeling the dampness from the rain. She reached over to take the hot mug offered to her, nodding her thanks to Clark as he took a seat next to her on the living room sofa. She took a deep breath, inhaling the steam before taking a sip from the rim of her mug.

The warmth from the hot liquid immediately resonated through her, and she smiled against the rim of the mug in her hands. Her eyes darted across the rim of the mug to Clark, who was watching her with an intense stare that tickled her insides. She cleared her throat, setting the mug down on the table in front of her and turned to him, trying to find a way to articulate the mixed emotions that were tumbling through her mind.

How something so simple as a cup of tea could push the flood of emotions back behind the dam that had been threatening to overtake her. Every choice. Every decision. Everything was called into question as she struggled to come to terms with the hard truth of how faulty her judgment was and how close she'd come to making a deadly decision.

Clark finally broke the silence, "You want to talk about it?"

"What's to talk about?" Lois asked nonchalantly, running a hand through the loose strands of her hair. "I make horrible decisions and am now afraid to go home because a murdering psychopath—whom I was too dumb and blind to see the truth about—is on the run for killing his partner." She shook her head, reaching for the mug she'd just placed down for comfort.

Clark's mouth twisted into a tight line, and she looked down into the dark liquid, seeking solace as Clark finally spoke up, "You're not dumb."

"I was the only one that couldn't see it," Lois argued half-heartedly. "You, Perry, Jimmy...even Jack knew better than me."

"Jack was being framed by Luthor. Jimmy didn't see the truth until after the bombing, and Perry's got us both beat on his tenure as an investigative reporter." Clark argued his point with a raised eyebrow before imitating Perry with his best southern accent, "I didn't become Editor-in-Chief because I can yodel."

Lois chuckled, setting her mug down, feeling the corners of her mouth twitch as she looked back at him. How was it he always knew just what to say? Her mouth spread into a full grin as she added, "You forgot the Elvis twang."

"I'm not doing Elvis impressions. Those are reserved strictly for the Chief." Clark grinned back at her.

"Probably best," Lois added, meeting his gaze for a brief moment before turning away. "After everything came out about what he did. I knew he was behind the bombing and the framing of Jack, but I never imagined him capable of killing someone like that. I know it sounds crazy."

"He put on a good act and had this entire city convinced he

was just another businessman trying to do his part,” Clark acknowledged with a shrug. “Until he wasn’t.”

“Do you think I’m a bad judge of character?” Lois asked, darting her eyes toward his with a shaky breath.

“No, of course not.”

“This is all my fault.” Lois shook her head, feeling guilt swell up in her chest as the floodgate erupted, hitting her like a tidal wave. “I had every opportunity to call the police and turn him in, and I didn’t. I just froze like an idiot and let a murderer continue to walk the streets.” She leaned her head down, rubbing her temple with her palm. “What’s wrong with me?”

“Nothing,” Clark answered, reaching across the couch to take her hand in his. “Lois, you’re the smartest person I know... and the most cynical, but Luthor is a dangerous criminal that could have easily hurt you or worse if you’d tried to turn him in. This is not your fault. He’s a sociopath and a master of disguise. He was doing this long before anyone knew who he was. He had everyone fooled.”

“Except you.”

“I just didn’t like him,” Clark admitted sheepishly. “He always talked down to everyone around him, which didn’t jive very well to the new guy trying to prove himself on his first assignment at the Planet.”

Lois smirked at his admission. “Really?”

“Really,” Clark replied with a nod, reaching his hand over to brush a loose strand of hair out of her face. “I just got lucky and found something on him eventually.” His eyes held hers for what felt like an eternity. The intensity of his stare sent butterflies through her, and she felt as if she would melt beneath his stare before he tore himself away, clearing his throat and pointing toward the bedroom. “Um, if you really don’t want to go home...”

“Oh, no, I don’t want to put you out...”

“It’s no problem, really.”

“I...” She stopped mid-sentence collecting her thoughts and then uttered, “I guess I thought things would be different after...” She felt a crimson blush cross her face, and he reached his hand out to cup her cheek.

“Lois, you’re my friend, first and foremost,” Clark whispered, brushing his thumb against her jaw. “No matter what changes between us, that will never change.”

A breath of relief escaped her lips, and she grinned at him. “I can’t tell you how relieved I am to hear you say that. I don’t know what I’d do if I lost you.”

“You could never lose me, Lois,” he promised solemnly.

Unshed tears glimmered in her eyes as she stared into the intense mocha brown eyes staring back at her. A flutter ran through her, and her lips parted ever so slightly as she felt herself drawn to him. Her questioning gaze met his tender eyes as she uttered a whisper of a question. “Really?”

The tender touch of his hand against her face sent a shockwave through her as his thumb brushed against her cheek with a warm caress. The small space between them felt almost unbearable as she stared into his eyes, waiting for him to respond. She focused on his lips as they parted and answered her with a nod of his head.

“Really.”

A smile spread across her lips, and she leaned another inch toward him, so there was only a mere millimeter of space between them. Her eyes sparkled as her face tilted up, closing the distance and capturing his lips with hers with a fiery intensity that threatened to bubble over as his hands moved into her hair. His lips pressed against hers, devouring her as he sank back against the couch, allowing her to continue the embrace at whatever pace she wanted.

Her lips parted, and a low moan escaped her throat as he pulled away. It took her a brief moment to realize the phone on the side table was ringing. He let out a shallow breath and reached his

arm over to answer the phone, still keeping his other hand on her hip as he greeted the caller.

“Hello?”

That was all it took before a painful groan escaped his throat, and he fell over, writhing in pain.

“Clark!”

Lois’ hand clamped over her mouth as she watched Clark writhe in pain, uncertain what to do as the phone that had been cradled against Clark’s ear fell on the floor, and he quickly followed, slumping down into a hump, groaning in pain.

The phone switched to speaker, and a haunting voice emitted from the speaker of the handset. “Well, Superman, now that I have your undivided attention, it’s time to get down to business...”

“I’m not...” Clark was barely able to protest before another painful groan escaped his throat as the mysterious caller taunted him.

“Tsk, ts, tsk... Superman, really, I’m insulted. Are you really going to resort to lying? It’s very un-super-manly...”

Lois let out a sharp breath, trying to process the bombshell that had just been revealed by the mysterious caller. Before she could voice her own shock at who the mystery caller had accused Clark of being, the menacing voice taunted him once more.

“Now, do as I say, and you just might live through this. There’s much more where that came from. You will stop this charade and admit to the world the truth. You have until noon tomorrow.”

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Tempus glanced toward the stewing Lex Luthor, who was carefully eying him from the open vault where the plethora of Kryptonite was at their disposal in planning the Man of Steel’s demise. Though he would love nothing more than to see Superman die a slow and painful death, thereby ridding the world of its grotesque future of nauseating bliss, he had a much bigger plan in mind. Ridding the world of Superman was easy, but declaring its hero a liar in a public forum where all the good he’d accomplished would be nothing more than a blemished footnote in history was what he really needed.

Tempus leaned into the speaker, dialing the number as a heartfelt chuckle escaped his throat. After the second ring, a heavy breathed response came, “Hello?”

Tempus pressed a button on the device he had hooked into the phone and a green light emitted as he laughed. “I’d say I’m sorry to interrupt, but well, we both know that’s not true, is it, Clark?”

Lex arched an eyebrow as he walked over, hearing the painful groans that escaped the speakers and standing a few feet away as he listened intently to the conversation taking place.

Tempus taunted Clark on the other end. “Well, Superman, now that I have your undivided attention, it’s time to get down to business...”

“I’m not...”

“Tsk, ts, tsk... Superman, really, I’m insulted. Are you really going to resort to lying? It’s very un-super-manly.” He pressed the button on the side again and another painful groan escaped the speakers. “Now, do as I say, and you just might live through this.”

He pressed a button on the side of the table, revealing a monitor that showed Clark Kent’s apartment and Lois Lane hovering over Clark Kent’s writhing body as he pressed the button again, watching the expression on Lex Luthor’s face switch from disinterest and hesitancy to awe and rage. Confident that he’d proven his point, Tempus released the button, watching as the excruciating pain he’d just subjected Superman to subsided on the screen in front of him.

“There’s much more where that came from. You will stop this charade and admit to the world the truth. You have until noon tomorrow.”

With that, Tempus pressed the end button, and the connection was lost, terminating the image on the screen to a black screen with digital ‘no signal’ block letters across the top. He let out a chuckle, and Lex fumed at him with a boiling rage as he quickly turned on him.

“That’s it? Admit to the world your lies, and you just let him off to continue his menacing ways?” Lex pounded his fist across the table, causing the table’s contents to shake and tremble.

“Lex, please, surely you think more of me than that,” Tempus admonished, insulted at the insinuation that exposing Superman to the world as a liar was all he had up his sleeve.

“This pathetic excuse of a hero is nothing more than a con-artist who played a dangerous game and is now about to pay the price,” Lex raged, slamming his fist down on the table in front of him again. “You get your little show, but I want his head on a platter, and I want Lois Lane brought to me....”

“Careful, Lex, she’s the key to your undoing,” Tempus warned.

Lex pulled out a gun and pressed the barrel to Tempus’ temple. “Future or not, you can’t reap the fruits of your labor with a bullet in your brain.”

Tempus laughed and pushed the barrel of the gun away. “Oh, Lex, you are ruthless, aren’t you? I knew I looked up to you for a reason.”

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Superman.

Clark was Superman.

The revelation felt like a cold hard blow as she sat on the floor numb from shock as she tried to process what had just happened. So many emotions raced through her, but she couldn’t focus on a single one as her mind clung to the looming threat that threatened to destroy everything.

“Clark?” her voice cracked into a light croak as she reached over to press her hand against his chest, trying to jostle him awake.

Nothing.

“Clark?” She shook him again as a faint knock came from the front door, and she jumped, startled by the sound. She quickly jumped up, noting the bewildered expression on Clark’s face as he began to come to. “Hey.”

“Ow...” he groaned.

Another knock came from the other side of the door.

“Don’t move,” she instructed, walking toward the door, then stopping to try and see who it was only to find the peephole missing. ‘Why would he need one?’ she thought with a grimace. Bracing herself, she jerked the door open and found a man in a bowler hat and trench coat on the other side of the door.

“Hi?” Lois glanced at the man standing outside Clark’s door.

“Yes, quite, Ms. Lane, I apologize for my tardiness, but the events of this time appear to have changed from the original timeline, and ...” he smiled, tipping his hat. “My apologies. I’m here to see Superman.”

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### Chapter 3: Hang On

Lois dipped the tea bag inside the steaming cup of hot water, watching as the color from the teabag circled around the cup. The faint pigments swirled around the cup, and she frowned, taking a deep breath as she carried the cup with her to the living room where Clark was seated on the corner of the couch across from the mysterious visitor who had shown up less than an hour ago.

Her mind was racing, and her heart hammered in her chest as she struggled to rationalize the chaos that had unfolded within a blink of an eye. Clark was Superman. The revelation had come from not one but two strangers she’d never seen or heard of before. Though it had been just words, Clark’s reaction to the mysterious caller and whatever torture the caller had subjected him to appeared to confirm the accusation.

He didn’t deny it.

Though he was barely making conversation after the caller had ordered him to ‘stop this charade and admit to the world the truth.’ After the second stranger had shown up asking to see ‘Superman,’ it was hard to deny the evidence staring her in the face. Every disappearance and lame excuse came rushing back along with each rescue she’d either reported on or interaction she’d had with Superman. It was him. The entire time it was him. Her partner. Her friend. Her...what?

Clark.

It had always been him.

She placed the tea in front of the strange man, watching as he reached over to stir the light pigmented liquid with a spoon. “Ah, thank you, Miss Lane.”

Lois bit her lower lip, uncertain how much longer she could sit here without bursting with the questions racing through her mind. “You said you knew who this mystery caller was, mister...?”

The man cleared his throat and nodded. “Yes, quite, I hope you’ll forgive my evasiveness, but I beg you, please try to keep an open mind. Time is of the essence, and Tempus will stop at nothing to destroy Superman.”

Clark’s head jerked up, seeming to come out of the disoriented daze he’d been in, and he eyed the man in front of him warily. “What does this have to do with Superman?”

“Well, you are Superman, aren’t you?” Lois ventured cautiously.

“No, no, no.” Clark shook his head. “I... I have to go.”

“No, no, we can’t have you leaving until we know exactly what Tempus is up to.” The man stood up, placing a hand on Clark’s shoulder, preventing him from standing up with a firm grasp.

“Who’s Tempus?” Lois asked.

The man bit his lower lip. “I beg you to remember you live in a city where a man can fly.” Before she could respond, he quickly added, “I’m Herbert George Wells. A time traveler and I’ve come to help stop Tempus – a fiend from the future – who will stop at nothing to destroy Superman.” He held up a hand when she opened her mouth to respond. “Yes, I know you don’t believe me. I know you don’t believe in time travel and will probably try and dismiss this claim with a joke or try to order me into a nuthouse. I don’t have time to prove myself. The timeline is changing every minute Tempus is teamed up with Lex Luthor, and I fear what this will mean for the future.”

Lois blinked, processing the revelation from the man in front of her claiming to be the very deceased science fiction author from the nineteenth century. Her lips parted as she searched for a response to the revelations made to her in the short span of her asking one simple question.

“Time travel?”

“Yes, Ms. Lane.”

“Why does he want to hurt Superman?”

“To stop the Utopian future he and his descendants helped found,” H.G. Wells explained.

“Luthor.” Clark grabbed hold of the name, frowning with disdain.

“What’s wrong with him?” Lois asked, looking at H.G. Wells for an answer. “He hasn’t been the same since...”

“Yes, well, according to what I’ve been able to discover, a device was extracted from the Superman museum in 2293. A former weapon used to assassinate leaders by ordering them to put themselves in harm’s way. Once a target has been established, the subject is helpless to do anything but respond and follow the orders given. That mixed with the missing Kryptonite...”

“Kryptonite?” Lois gasped in surprise.

“Silver Kryptonite to be exact,” H.G. Wells explained.

“Silver...wh-what?” Lois gasped in surprise.

“A disastrous experiment on the road to developing a cure for the deadly effects the green variation has on Superman,” H.G. Wells explained with a frown. “I’m afraid, combined the results are extremely dangerous.”

“I have to stop Luthor,” Clark interrupted, seeming to be unaware of the conversation taking place. Something clicked inside him, and then he added, “before the press conference.”

“What press conference?” H.G. Wells asked.

“The one he was ordered to call so he can stop lying to the world,” Lois explained with a bite in her tone.

“Noon tomorrow,” Clark answered in a monotone voice.

“Oh, dear...”

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The hint of silver pigments mixed with green light emitting from the device in front of him cast a light green hue across Tempus’ face as he set his folded arms against the tabletop. He eyed the radiating glow that emitted from the small ring he had hooked up to the phone he’d leveraged to send the subliminal messages through, and, thanks to the 22<sup>nd</sup> century’s technology, developed to assassinate threats through the audio waves, and he’d enhanced it with Kryptonite to ensure it would work on Superman. Everything was falling into place. He tapped his hand across the ring, smiling gleefully as he eyed the powerful weapon he’d confiscated from a rogue government agency from the future. It was always fear that did mankind in, and he was all the willing to take advantage.

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Lois ran a hand through her hair as she looked behind her to Clark who had unwillingly come along with her and H.G. Wells to STAR Labs where Jimmy had been able to trace the caller from. Was it really that simple? Probably not. Her experience with Lex and other criminals who had come out of the woodwork over the last year told her nothing was that simple.

She readjusted the ballcap on her head and turned to Clark, who was standing a few feet from her, hoping to see some sign of normalcy from him. “Clark?”

“This is a bad idea. We should just call the police....” H.G. Wells hissed in a harsh whisper.

“Well, I don’t think they’ll take my call seriously,” Lois snapped back as they snuck past the sleeping guard that was on duty. She reached over the desk and grabbed a visitor’s badge to scan the entry door with. “Let’s hope this works.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of....”

Lois let out a huff as they turned the corner and reached the elevator doors at the end of the hallway. She pressed the call button, noting the dirty thumbprint on the panel. “They went this way.”

“How can you be sure?” Wells asked.

She pointed to the panel, and he nodded his understanding. She looked over to Clark, who was growing more and more antsy standing there waiting. “He’s getting worse.”

“You’re forcing him to go against the order. It’s a natural reaction,” Wells explained. “He has to recognize the order is wrong, and not his own internal thoughts but something more sinister in order to break the hold Tempus has on him.”

Clark glanced at the clock in the hallway. “I should really talk to my parents before the press conference....”

“Yes, but we have to stop Luthor and Tempus first,” Lois explained, recalling the clear-minded focus he had earlier when Lex’s name was mentioned.

“Right, Luthor.” Clark’s features hardened. “He has to be stopped.”

“Right.” Lois flashed him a weak smile.

“Then, the press conference.”

The elevator doors opened, and inside they found an unconscious guard. Lois yelped in surprise, quickly covering her mouth in shock when she saw the slumped body in the corner of

the elevator. “Oh, my God!”

“They’ve been here.” Wells summarized with a disappointed frown.

Clark knelt down next to the man and nodded. “He’s still breathing.”

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The monitors began blaring, drawing Lex’s attention to them. He quickly turned to see three figures on the screen, scowling when he saw Lois with Clark Kent and a mysterious stranger dressed in a trench coat and bowler hat. “What is this?”

“Well, it appears we’ve got company,” Tempus said, reaching for the green glowing device on the table. “I believe Superman needs to be reminded of just what the consequences are for not doing as he is told.”

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#### Chapter 4: Eyes of the Devil

Lois looked around the hallway, eying the dirty handprints and stopping when she found yet another guard that had been knocked unconscious. She gave a pleading look to Clark, hoping to grasp some recognition from him or a response of some kind, but found nothing. He seemed to be in a daze, not quite present in the dangerous situation they were in and unable to recognize that he was putting himself and everyone he cared about in danger with this order to confess to the world.

“Looks like they’ve been here.”

“Yes, quite,” Wells agreed with a grim expression.

“Luthor must be stopped,” Clark advised, looking around the corridor with a determined scowl. “He must be brought to justice.”

“Yes, yes, of course, he does,” Wells agreed, reaching over to pat him on the shoulder.

They reached the end of the corridor and approached a large steel door with a lock and a monitor where a retinal scanner was set up to grant access. “Oh ...” Lois gasped out, “I think this is the end of the line.”

“Not quite, is it, Superman?” Wells asked, looking to Clark for confirmation.

Clark nodded, understanding what Wells was referring to. Lois watched in amazement as Clark removed his glasses and positioned himself to be scanned, and the doors and alarms ceased their warnings before the steel door in front of them slid open. She smiled, eying the hallway in front of them. “Makes you wonder just what they did to get in here.”

They walked down the hallway, and Lois stopped in front of a large vault with an entry that was as tall as Clark. A caution sign was taped outside the massive metal spoke that held the vault door closed. “Is that what I think it is?”

“It’s best if we just keep walking...” Wells pointed to the anxious expression on Clark’s face.

“Oh, Herb, please stay a while. It’s been so long since we’ve caught up,” a voice said from behind them.

Lois whipped her head around, finding herself face to face with Lex holding a weapon on her with a glint in his eye. He stood next to the mysterious man she could only guess was Tempus.

“Lois, when will you ever learn I always get what I want?” Lex growled, keeping the gun trained on her.

“Tempus,” Wells responded vehemently. “I believe you’ve caused quite enough trouble in the twentieth century.”

“Oh, but I’m just getting started.” Tempus grinned impishly, keeping his weapon trained on Clark as he pressed a button and ordered, “Open the Kryptonite vault and step inside.”

“No!” Lois screamed, reaching her hand out to stop Clark from moving toward the vault he was being directed toward, but she found him an immovable force as he pushed past her to open the deadly entrance.

She fumbled to her feet only to find herself faced with the cold metal barrel of the gun Lex was holding on her. Her eyes shifted to the left, where Wells was in an equally precarious

situation with Tempus holding a gun to Wells' temple.

"You won't get away with this. The police know where we are," Lois warned, feigning a boldness she didn't feel at that moment.

"Ah, that famous Lois Lane spunk," Tempus chuckled, looking at her with a twinkle in his eye before turning back to Wells. "Don't you ever get tired of this game, Herb? You try to one-up me. I capture you and Superman, then you find a way to escape, and then comes the big blue boy scout here to save the day and whisk me off to prison..." He let out a deep sigh. "How about we cut to the chase and put an end to this charade once and for all?"

"You're an incomprehensible fiend beyond redemption," Wells growled out at him. "You cannot stop a future that is destined to happen."

"No?" Tempus looped his arm around Wells' neck and grabbed him by the collar, "But I'm going to give it my best shot."

"Where are we going?" Wells demanded.

Tempus ignored the question and gestured to Lex, grinning from ear to ear. "See to it she doesn't get in the way of Superman's press conference. I want her to have a front-row seat."

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11:45 a.m.

The television monitor flashed a quick image of the empty podium in front of City Hall. The sound of the newscaster's voice filled the room, detailing the coverage. "A press conference has been called by Superman, promising answers to the burning question: Just who is the Man of Steel?"

Clark's head jerked up, and he looked around, recognizing the apartment and everything in it as his own. A flood of images rushed through his mind in a jagged puzzle, not quite fitting into place. He looked to the television in confusion and down at the Superman suit he was in.

What had happened?

A man.

A threat.

A revelation.

They all jumbled together in chaos as he struggled to process each piece.

The phone on the side table rang, and just as he had before, he found himself unable to stop himself from reaching for the phone. He winced in dreaded apprehension, wondering if pain was what greeted him on the other end of the phone.

"Hello?"

"CK?"

Clark sighed in relief when he heard his friend's voice on the other end of the phone. "Hey, Jimmy, what's up?"

"Not much, I guess. Listen, I'm logging the research from last night – the phone records Lois requested – and wanted to see what story you wanted me to file that under," Jimmy prompted nonchalantly.

The flood of images came back to him, and he recalled the call Lois had made to Jimmy last night asking for a trace on the call they'd received earlier. He remembered the mind-numbing pain that had taken over him during the call and the order he'd been given.

Lois.

She was still at STAR Labs.

Or was she?

He reached into his mind, searching for a memory of how he got here but found nothing. Realizing Jimmy was still waiting for a response, he cleared his throat and quickly said, "Luthor. You can put it under the Luthor story."

"Okay, thanks, CK... everything, okay?" Jimmy asked.

"I don't know. Hey, see if you can get ahold of Bill Henderson? I think there might be something going on at STAR Labs."

"Like what?"

"I don't know." Clark sighed, realizing how it sounded. "I just think there might be something there connected to Luthor."

"Yeah, sure, I'll give him a call."

"Thanks, Jimmy."

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11: 55 a.m.

Lois struggled against the binds that held her in the wobbly steel chair she was tied to. Her tired muscles ached as she looked across the room at Tempus and Lex. The villainous duo stood by the monitor watching the press conference's coverage where a crowd full of reporters stood outside of City Hall waiting for Superman. It had been hours since she'd been tied up by Lex, listening to them taunt her about how the destruction of Superman would somehow make things right in their world.

After Clark had been sealed in the Kryptonite vault, Tempus had released him and knocked him unconscious with a stun gun, then disappeared for a few hours. She'd been tied to this painfully uncomfortable chair for hours waiting for a sign or word from somewhere, telling her that Clark was indeed okay. All she had left was this empty monitor of the news cycling between different journalists, theorizing on what Superman's big announcement was.

The clock ticked closer and closer to noon, and Lois shook her head, looking at Wells. "He's still not there. Maybe he's found a way to fight it?"

"Let's hope so, Ms. Lane."

A loud tapping came from the other side of the room, and she jerked her tired muscles to where Lex was tapping against the screen, demanding from Tempus, "Where is he? You and your big plans, hmm? He's a no-show and in the wind..." He released the safety on his gun and hissed out, "I'm done letting you take the lead. It's time I take care of Superman once and for all..."

A loud crash came from up above them, and Lois screeched out a sharp gasp as the ceiling tiles above them came crashing down. White dust from the ceiling tiles covered the lab, and she could feel the dust inside her nose. Carefully, she peeled her eyes opened and saw Clark standing in the blue and red spandex with his cape billowing behind him.

"Why Superman, you're late for your debut," Tempus admonished, scolding him as he walked toward Clark.

"Yes, your long overdue debut – the key to your destruction, Superman," Lex taunted him.

Clark was frozen in place, seeming to be fighting an internal battle as Lois felt the binds give way. She let out a sharp breath feeling instant relief as the tension in her tired muscles released. She stumbled to the ground, crawling her way to where Wells was still tied up, and helped free him. Her attention moved to Clark, who was frozen in place as Tempus taunted him.

"You are unbelievably stubborn, aren't you, Clark, but you can't fight it. Even with all your powers, you can't fight the unyielding desire to unburden yourself and..."

With a loud yelp, Lois swung her leg around, knocking Tempus to the ground as Lex stormed toward her. She reached her hand out to grab the device Tempus had been holding and tossed it to Wells. "Run!"

With the binds freed and their limbs no longer hindered, they both soared toward the doorframe that was half-cracked from Clark crashing through it. She stopped when she reached the hallway and found two locked doors with retina scanners keeping her from leaving.

"Oh, dear..." Wells looked back at her in dismay.

Lois reached her hand over to take the device from him and dropped it on the floor. "One thing about delicate technology is it can't always take a hard blow." With that she stepped on the illuminating ring and silver square in the center that had the yellow blinking light squashed beneath her heel.

"If you think that's all it takes to..."

Tempus stopped mid-sentence when Clark stormed past him, approaching Lois with a smile as he reached down to pick up the device. “Need a hand?”

She smiled, looking back where a long metal beam was wrapped around Lex, holding him in place and keeping him from escaping.

“Always,” she responded warmly.

He picked the device up and held it up for examination. “There’s something in there.”

“Kryptonite,” Tempus responded coldly.

“Something different from what we found in Smallville,” Clark answered, turning to Lois. “It’s silver.”

“Yes, a freak accident that created a... delightful effect on Kryptonians.” Tempus cheered. “Give it a blast and see what happens.”

“Don’t touch it, Superman,” Wells warned.

Clark looked pleadingly at Lois, and she took it from him as he cowered down in pain. Tempus laughed, circling around him in laughter. “A vain attempt to stop the effects of Kryptonite ended with a weapon that drove the Man of Steel mad. Ironic, isn’t it?”

Before Clark could respond, Lois knocked the weapon in his hand to the ground and kicked it across the hallway. Her knee pressed into his back, holding him in place. She looked to Wells, “Is he okay?”

Wells picked up the device and tapped on the side with a white ring illuminating in gold. “Yes, he’ll be fine in just a moment.” He looked to Tempus. “Are you really that naive, Tempus? You aren’t the only one that came prepared.”

“What is that?” Lois asked.

“The antidote Dr. Klein developed for Silver Kryptonite poisoning,” Wells advised as Clark’s face relaxed from the slumped over position he was in.

“Always so smug,” Tempus growled from the floor.

Clark staggered to his feet, looking at Wells. “Do I want to know?”

“Best not to know too much yet, my boy,” Wells smiled back to him. He pointed to Tempus. “I think it’s time we take our annual visit back home, hmm, Tempus?”

“What are you going to do with him?” Clark asked.

“Wasteless prison of boredom and self-loathing,” Tempus grumbled, staring back at Clark in disgust. “Are you even sorry about the torturous world you’ve built? No crime. No guns. A world so boring you’d blow your brains out, but there are no guns...”

Clark frowned. “I’m sorry you feel that way. Perhaps you should find a hobby... that doesn’t involve guns.” His eyes narrowed as he headed back to where Luthor was tied up. “Maybe you both could do with a change of scenery.”

“You won’t get away with this!” Lex howled. “I’ll tell the world your little secret... If you won’t tell them, I will, and everything you care about will be destroyed. The lying hero.”

“I’m not sure how much faith they’ll put into a hardened criminal,” Lois shot back as the door to the left opened, revealing the SWAT Team with Bill Henderson leading the charge.

“Superman! We got word that Lex Luthor was hiding out here,” Henderson explained.

“In here.” Clark gestured to Luthor and watched as the SWAT Team worked to free him.

Wells chuckled to himself. “I suppose that’s our cue.”

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Lois tugged on the heavy knit blanket wrapped around her as she waited outside STAR Labs. H.G. Wells had disappeared with Tempus with a plan on just what to do with him, while Clark helped the SWAT Team take Luthor into custody. She felt a heavy weight on her shoulders as she looked around, trying to process everything that had happened. Even after everything that had happened, she couldn’t bring herself to address the mixed

emotions she was feeling over the revelation and how close they’d all been to him admitting his identity to the world. How dangerous that identity was. No matter what happened, she promised herself she would keep his confidence. The world needed Clark and Superman.

Lois looked over at Clark as he appeared around the corner with a smile, humming to herself as she took in the sight of him in the red and blue suit. How had she not seen it? The same eyes, jaw, and features were all there. Then of course, he seemed to show up when she needed him. It all made sense.

“Is this going to feel as weird to you as it does to me? Knowing you’re Superman from now on?” Lois asked, toying with the end of her blouse as she walked with him out of the STAR Labs vault.

A clearing of the throat came from behind them before Clark could respond, and they both turned to see HG Wells shaking his head. “Oh, I’m afraid that can’t be, Ms. Lane.” A knowing smile crossed his lips, and he added with a wink. “Not just yet, anyway. We’ve tampered with history enough.”

“Well, it’s a little late... don’t you think?” Clark asked with a raised brow.

“Not at all.” HG Wells responded. “I’ll simply drop each of you back before Tempus ever showed up. You’ll both remember nothing, and none of this will have ever happened.”

“I don’t know. Sounds like a bad Sci-Fi movie to me,” Lois commented.

“Perhaps, but it’s worked before,” H.G. Wells commented with a wink.

“Before?” Lois asked with a curious gaze. “How many times exactly?”

“Just a few.”

THE END