

Investigate: Alternate Possibilities

By [Sara Kraft \(skfolc@gmail.com\)](mailto:skfolc@gmail.com)

Rated: PG-13

Submitted: June 2023

Summary: “[It’s] strange, you know, missing someone you’ve never even met. I tried to find her, but...it’s impossible.” Help from an unexpected source suddenly makes the impossible...very possible. A special vignette in the *Investigate* universe of Blueowl, intended to be read after *Investigate: Horizon (Act V)*.

Story Size: 11,028 words (62Kb as text)

Note: First things first — if you’re not caught up through *Investigate: Horizon (Act V)* and you don’t want ANY spoilers, you shouldn’t read this yet! If you’re not caught up and/or don’t care about spoilers, the prologue should provide enough context for you, I think? (Or you can check out the TOC on the MBs for a tiny bit more context under a spoiler tag:

<https://www.lcficmbs.com/ubb/ubbthreads.php/topics/296687/investigate-alternate-possibilities-by-ksarasara-complete#Post296687>)

Author’s Note: Given that *Investigate: Horizon* is now the fourth of the five stories in the series I’ve BR’d for Blueowl, I really shouldn’t be surprised that she keeps surprising me! But not only did the act’s main plot surprise me, so did the little “detour” she had planned for Kal on his way home to Lois. I surely squealed with delight when she told me! And likely gushed happily about how amazingly happy my dear altClark would be. Then, somewhere between me mentioning I would LOOOOVE to see the look on his face when he sees his Lois and then wondering about the fact that poor altClark might have trouble believing the news...well... I signed myself up to write this story! So I have to say a huge thank you to Blueowl for creating this situation AND then letting me write it.

Thanks to SuperBek and Blueowl both for their feedback, comments, and suggestions as I wrote!

Prologue

by Blueowl

...from *Investigate: Horizon (Act V)*

“When we arrive, it is imperative no one sees you. So wait above the clouds until her room is empty before going

in,” Wells said.

“What happened to Lois here?” Kal asked.

“A few years ago, she had tracked down some gun smugglers in the Congo. From there, I have only rough guesses, nothing concrete, other than that she was moved to the long-term care facility earlier this year after being relocated from a mission hospital in another country.”

“What are her injuries?” Kal asked.

“I suppose it is best I prepare you,” he said heavily, resigned. “Again, I don’t know how this happened, but her files state that when she was first brought into the hospital, she had internal injuries and third-degree burns on her body, including her face. Most of that damage has healed as well as can be expected, but the heart of the matter is the trauma to her skull and brain, which is why she’s in a coma. Truly, it’s a miracle she’s still here.”

Kal took a deep breath and brought his fist to his mouth.

“Alright there, my boy?” Wells asked.

He nodded stiffly. “Yeah. Just hard to imagine that happening to Lois. Any Lois.”

“Yes. It is distressing,” Wells agreed solemnly.

A moment later, they materialized in the alt-world.

Kal looked around. It was night, and they were in a field behind an outcrop of trees, away from prying eyes.

“The facility is that way, and her room should be on the third floor, west side. The name they have her under is Maria Hughes,” Wells said. “Long story that I’m still working out.”

“Alright. Any idea on how much time I may have?”

Kal asked.

“I can’t imagine more than an hour,” Wells estimated.

Kal nodded as another thought came to him. “That should be plenty of time.”

“I’ll wait here,” Wells stated.

“If at all possible, when I leave, Lois will be fully healed. I can’t imagine the consequences of that being small,” Kal said pointedly.

“I understand. I’ll address it if need be,” Wells said.

Kal stilled. He frankly doubted Wells truly understood, and Kal was hesitant to elaborate, simply because . . . this man did not fill him with much confidence.

If this Lois was as bad off as Wells had said, there would be lasting consequences for Lois once Kal healed her. Like Melissa, she might even obtain an aura of her own, which was anyone’s guess to what it could mean for her.

Kal couldn’t keep that knowledge from any Lois.

“Okay,” he told Wells, before disappearing into the sky.

He shot beyond the facility, seeking the nearest post office. Ignoring his conscience, he broke in after checking

for cameras, snatched a paper, pen, and necessary postage, and wrote the fastest letter he had ever penned before dropping it in the outgoing mailbox and leaving a few dollars on the register.

Hopefully it would make it to the States once things had settled enough and Lois had returned.

He shot back to the facility, and a minute later, Kal was waiting above the clouds over the room of this world's Lois Lane. Waiting for the nurse to leave.

And then Lois was alone in the room.

He shot down before he allowed himself to fully process what he was flying into.

The smell of sanitizer slammed into his nose as he softly shut and locked the room's door, but the sight of the fragile form on the bed struck the center of his heart far, **far**, harder when he turned around.

The scarring from the facial burn was in clear sight, and the hook-ups to the life monitoring and sustaining equipment were substantial, including a ventilator.

Without much conscious thought, he approached the bed and relaxed his aura, just enough, and expanded it around her as he took hold of her scarred hand.

It was Lois, but definitely not **his** Lois. However, as harmed as she was, she was still beautiful. Her life force sang, however distantly.

He slowly exhaled and peered deeper, both with his eye and his aura.

The trauma was worse than what Wells had summarized. A part of her liver had been removed as well as the kidney on that side, and he could sense the reduced blood flow to the rest of her liver slowly causing a decline in function. The bottom most lobe of her right lung had also been removed, and, from the shape of her ribs, it was clear they had been the reason such a surgery had been required. Burn scars covered her face, neck, and both hands, and the skull fractures, while now healed, had left her brain to cope with the aftermath, and it wasn't getting better.

He took a deep breath and braced himself as he knelt at her bedside. There was no time for hesitation.

He gently placed his left hand on her forehead with his right hand in her own, knowing skin-to-skin was best.

Distantly, he wondered if his alternate self would one day place his hand where he was, and if he would find as much joy in her as he did in his Lois. He hoped so. No one should have to live their life alone.

With that extra motivation, he allowed his aura to saturate her.

The pull from his center was intense, but not as severe as he had prepared himself for, though that may have been due to being distracted by her body healing and feeling how much her life force resembled Lois's.

Beeping from the machines began to sound, but he paid them little mind. His attention was fixed on Lois, oblivious to the sudden activity happening outside the room.

The old burns on her hands, face, and neck bled away, leaving behind baby-like, pink skin. The scar tissue from the surgeries evaporated, and arteries and capillaries grew and branched out, revitalizing choked areas of tissue and pockets of struggling brain matter. Slowly dying organs surged back to life and her partial liver grew to its former size, once again carrying out its full function. Her incomplete lung strengthened, and he had to react to her fighting the ventilator by abruptly removing the ventilation tube from her throat.

"The door is locked!" someone exclaimed.

"How could that have happened?! Who has the keys to this hall?" another shouted.

Kal forced himself to his feet, his vision swimming with emotion and exhaustion.

The IV lines that had been attached to Lois fell free, and he could feel her awareness scratching to the surface. The sound of a key entering a lock roared in his ears just as he managed to collect himself enough to locate the window.

He shot out and into the sky without a moment to spare.

"Kal! Good heavens, are you alright?" Wells asked as Kal landed heavily not far from the time machine.

He fell to his hands and knees, panting.

"That . . . that was pretty close," he gasped.

"But you did it? She's better and no one saw you?" Wells asked anxiously.

"Yes . . . and no one saw me," he agreed, his breathing still ragged. "But they'll have two mysteries: her recovery and . . . the locked door to her room. Argh, and the window."

"Given the alternatives, that's perfectly acceptable," Wells assured, even as he grew more concerned by Kal's state. "Are you okay?"

"I need sunlight. Get me home," Kal wheezed, climbing into the wicker chair of the time machine.

Wells quickly nodded, turning dials before pulling the lever. "Hold on!"

Chapter 1

Lois woke with a start — breathing fast and looking around, trying to get her bearings but failing. There was panicked shouting all around her, people rushing into the room she was in. A room she never remembered entering.

It looked...it looked like a hospital room. But not quite.

People in white coats and blue scrubs swarmed around her, clutching at wires and tubes that had fallen and

continuing to speak frantically, mostly to each other, while pressing buttons on machines, silencing their beeping. Their English was...accented, Spanish, maybe.

When the chaos finally died down, they all looked at her with alarm and confusion and then began firing so many questions at her all at once. She couldn't seem to keep up or understand or fully grasp their complete sentences, only a word here or there: how... what...miracle...no scars...breathing...magic... impossible.

Lois had hardly caught her breath, and her mind was still reeling. They were calling her Maria — Ms. Hughes — and it suddenly all came back to her with an intense flood of memories.

Gun smugglers. Discovered. Captured. Tortured. Escape. And then...on the run. By foot. Then in a vehicle. And the ill-fated trip through a minefield. Explosions. Then blackness.

“Where am I?” she finally asked.

The cacophony of voices fell to a hush at her words, and one of them answered, a woman in well-fitted scrubs with a name tag that read Jessica. “You’re in Lisbon, Portugal.”

Faint, indistinct images and sensations tugged at the edge of her consciousness, not quite a dream, but maybe memories. A crushing weight against her skull and chest, sharp, stabbing pains throughout her body. Then a sense of relief that must have been the point at which she’d lost consciousness.

How had...? She was alive and felt...fine. Better than fine. If it weren't for the confused and anxious medical staff circling what was clearly a hospital bed, and her decided disbelief in some sort of afterlife, Lois might have assumed she was somewhere otherworldly.

They all hovered, now apparently all out of words, speechless, as if they couldn't even figure out what questions to ask her. An image flashed in her mind, and she exhaled slowly — scars covering her face and a breathing tube down her throat. A pulse of anguish came with it, and she had to bite back a whimper.

Well, she had questions if they didn't. “I was...hurt?”

Heads nodded and eyes shifted from each other and then back to Lois.

“And...now I'm better?”

More nodding, but hesitant, still looking bewildered. The woman, Jessica, shuffled her feet, her eyes darting to the open window and then the door, her brow creasing in confusion or worry. “M-much im-improved...” She glanced down at her shoes and back up again. “Ms. Hughes? Was...was there anyone in the room with you?”

Lois shook her head automatically, unsure of her answer but less sure she could trust these people. She also

decided it would be unwise to correct the assumption about her identity until she knew more about where she was and what had happened since the off-road Jeep had exploded with her inside it. She swallowed thickly as she wondered what had become of the other passengers and the driver, and if he had perhaps steered them all into the minefield knowingly.

If she was twice-escaped already, she needed to be careful. “I...am I cleared to go home?”

The staff eyed each other again, and a bespectacled man in a white coat nodded to a woman in a white coat, who responded with a short nod of her own as she removed the stethoscope from her neck and approached Lois.

Lois sat nervously, trying to breathe in and out normally while the doctor — Dr. Silva according to the name stitched into her white coat — poked and prodded and shined lights in her eyes, reporting to the team in rapid-fire Portuguese. Finally finished, Dr. Silva stepped back and conferred in hushed tones with the others, who cast anxious glances at Lois every so often.

Sadly no stranger to being captured and held by those she was trying to put away, Lois stayed quiet for the moment, just eyeing them. This situation was definitely the most unusual one she'd ever been in — and more concerning was her lack of short-term memories. She had no idea if these people were her rescuers or her captors. Until she figured that out, she needed to play nice, feign innocence of all investigative cri — activities, and hope they'd offer more information during the course of their conversation.

Dr. Silva stepped forward once again and faced Lois. “Ms. Hughes...you were nonresponsive...in a persistent vegetative state for — ”

“You mean in a coma?” That...didn't seem right. “For how long?” she asked. Though having been in a coma would explain having no memory of time that had passed since the explosion.

Eyes cast about the room again, and no one answered immediately. The doctor's hesitancy unnerved Lois.

“What aren't you telling me?”

“Your condition has been steadily declining for the past few weeks. We...hadn't expected...” Dr. Silva trailed off as though she was searching for the right word. “...this.” She nodded in Lois's direction.

“What does that mean?” And why were they being so evasive, so suspicious?

“You — you...” One of the other doctors tried to speak.

Jessica spoke up, taking a few steps past the doctor and toward Lois's bed. “You've been in a coma for two years now, Ms. Hughes. Until a few weeks ago, your condition

never changed. We thought that — ”

“Two years?!” Lois exclaimed, her heart beginning to race. “How did I even get here, get to Portugal?” The last thing she remembered before the Jeep...she’d still been in Africa.

“The Mission Internationale Mont-Sinaï near Brazzaville — sometimes they get overloaded with patients...given, uh...well, you realized, I’m sure, the dangers of the country... In any case, you were brought here earlier this year, and...”

“I just woke up? And...” She turned her head to look at Dr. Silva. “I’m fine now, right? Cleared to go?”

It wasn’t until several hours later that she was actually cleared to leave. They’d insisted on running a battery of tests — and after they’d told her about the severity of her injuries, she’d agreed. The doctors and staff were still left scratching their heads after they’d run every test and scan they could think of. Nothing could explain why or how she’d woken up without any of her previous scars or injuries.

But Lois had the answers she needed — she was leaving with a clean bill of health...somehow even healthier than when she’d left Metropolis so many years ago, save for two things. Some emergency surgery performed at the mission hospital had apparently required the removal of a small part of her right lung, which didn’t seem to have regenerated as the rest of her body had healed. And she was still missing her right kidney from having donated it to Lucy ten years ago. But other than that, she was fine. Better than fine. So fine, in fact, that her scar from the kidney removal was...gone. And so was the scarring on her left leg from the time she’d broken it freshman year of high school.

She had plenty of time to be baffled, scared even, at how she’d managed to escape near-death and come out better off. When she got home, she could have all the feelings she wanted.

Home first. Feelings later.

The following morning, she found herself standing in front of several very bewildered-looking officials at the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon as she explained, not so patiently, that she was indeed the Lois Lane who had gone missing four years prior.

After a year held prisoner, almost a year on the run, and apparently two years in a coma, Lois was finding it near-impossible to wait as long as this process was taking. It’d taken a call to no fewer than five U.S. government officials and one stunned and verklempt Perry White — who she’d heard bark a loud “Judas Priest” through the phone, startling the ambassador. Then, finally, she’d secured her way home.

She’d lucked out; there’d been a single seat left on the

last trans-Atlantic flight of the day. Luck. Or a miracle. And it had to have been the former, because her return from the brink of death could have only been a miracle, and miracles didn’t happen twice in one day.

Chapter 2

Clark was exhausted. Not physically exhausted — he’d only been awake for thirty-seven hours and had spent a few hours less than that rescuing people and securing structures in Jakarta. And as he cleared debris and rubble from the roadways of a small village in a more rural part of Indonesia — the more immediate threat to life now gone — his thoughts and emotions finally caught up with him.

The last few weeks had been...beyond painful. Wonderful and bittersweet and rewarding and... excruciatingly heartrending.

When Wells had shown up two weeks ago, his foolish heart had leapt at the idea that maybe Wells had found her — his Lois. But instead, it had been distressing news from *her* universe. Tempus and time windows and mind control, and worse, her Superman had gone missing.

He wanted to pretend he hadn’t spent every day since she’d left thinking about her, the woman who had changed his life so drastically. That he hadn’t scoured the planet looking for her likeness, hoping beyond hope that *his* Lois was still just lost — not dead. He wanted to pretend that being Superman, being the hero she’d wanted him to be, was enough. That he didn’t need love, that he didn’t need *her* — his Lois.

He wanted to pretend his reasons for agreeing to help Wells, help the other Lois, were altruistic. That his once again foolish heart didn’t just want one more chance to see her, to be near her.

But he couldn’t pretend his motivations had been entirely selfless.

Had he known, though...had he known how agonizing it would be to see her again — married and missing her husband who was not him, how unbearably hard it would be to meet them, *his* parents — alive and missing their son who was not him...

His breath hitched, that constant, dull ache in his chest piercing him again with the intensity of his losses. He didn’t want to feel anymore.

Wells had brought him home more than a week ago, spouting off optimistic vagaries like “I never say ‘impossible’” and leaving Clark waiting for answers. The hope Wells had left him with made Clark furious all over again, and he took his anger out on a giant, ragged boulder that was blocking one of the main paths to the river where the villagers got their water.

Before Wells had shown up, Clark had convinced himself that he was just fine living out his lonely existence,

content with being the best superhero he could be. Because it was good — finally being able to be himself, not having to hide or be ashamed of his powers, being able to use his gifts to help people.

He had been just fine, indeed. Clark scoffed at himself as he cleared a fallen tree, taking a moment to cut it into usable firewood and kindling.

He couldn't help but wonder if seeing...*them*, seeing what his alternate self and his Lois shared, had made it hurt all the more. It was one thing to know what you were missing, to feel the ache and the loneliness of it, but it was another thing altogether to see it.

In his characteristic overly cheerful tone, Wells had said that if he could find this universe's Lois, he'd be back in two days — because time travel could work that way, even if Wells spent weeks searching, as long as he didn't cross his own timeline. But it'd been nine days now. And that little ember of hope had died out far more painfully than anything he'd felt.

Clark took a deep breath and tried to focus instead on what was in front of him; it seemed to be all he had anyway — his work as Superman. The emergency personnel and those whom he'd rescued in Jakarta had been grateful for his presence, his help. But he couldn't deny that he got more out of helping here in the smaller villages, that his heart healed just a bit more.

Around him, the village leaders were hard at work, setting up an aid station for their community. One of the matrons, Mentari, caught his eye and gave him a grateful nod, and he dipped his head back in response. He paused to feel the brief surge of joy that went through him — it was the same every time someone thanked Superman. He was meant to be doing this — helping. It filled his soul in a way he hadn't thought possible, gave purpose to the way his life had played out, and it helped dull the hurt of his loneliness.

Maybe it was fanciful or a bit of revisionist history, a romanticized interpretation of the meaning of his life — why he'd been orphaned twice over and left to an existence that had always made him feel less than, despite how much Lana had claimed to love him. If this was the path he'd needed to take to become the man, the Superman he was today, then it somehow felt worth all the pain of his past.

And yet, he knew firsthand that his life could have been far, far different. A *full*, idyllic childhood, a fulfilling career — two, in fact — and a woman who loved him for whom he was, who made him complete.

Still, as much as it hurt to know what he would never have — that his childhood will always have been the way it was and that the one person he was destined to meet would exist only in his memories, an inexact copy of his

happily never after — he wouldn't change things now. He wouldn't wish to have never met Lois Lane. For all the heartache and loneliness he'd gained, he would still rather have this, have people like Mentari and her husband grateful to have him here, using his gifts to help them.

Eventually, Clark found himself with less and less to do, and he admitted to himself it was time to go home. He stopped at his apartment for a shower and a change of clothes — opting for jeans and a black t-shirt, since he never had been terribly comfortable at the Planet in the Superman suit, nor did he prefer his tailored suits, not anymore. He was really only a token reporter nowadays, though Perry took him to task every time he referred to himself as such.

Already writing up the events of the earthquake and its aftermath in his head, Clark flew over to the Planet building and landed on the roof, then headed downstairs to the seventh floor. For the first time in...more than a year, he actually felt that little jolt of excitement again when he entered the bustling newsroom floor. That fluttering in his chest that told him he was right where he was meant to be.

Of all the things he missed about his former life, he missed being a journalist the most. He swallowed hard and hurried over to his desk along the north windows, away from the rest of the bullpen. He did wish that he didn't need to be a bit isolated from the other reporters, but things tended to run more smoothly when he wasn't right there in the thick of things. Both Mr. Olsen and Perry both had tried to assure him otherwise, but he knew it was true.

All the same, Clark was grateful that they'd let him stay on staff and still write, and he was even more grateful that Perry — after his year as mayor — had decided he belonged back in the newsroom, as Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Planet, not in politics.

In Clark's three years at the Planet before the other Lois had shown up, he and Perry hadn't been terribly close, but Clark had respected him as his boss and mentor.

After Lois...

It had been a tough conversation with Perry when he'd tried to explain that Lois was...just gone. The gruff old editor wouldn't accept it, not after he'd seen her with his own two eyes, he'd said, not after he'd spent years agonizing over what he could have done differently, how he could have stopped Lois from going to the Congo in the first place. So Clark had told Perry everything; it'd seemed the simplest solution, though it'd been almost impossible to explain.

Then he'd told Perry he'd look for her, for this universe's Lois. He'd argued that they hadn't exhausted all possible resources yet, that Superman could still go over there and look for her personally. After all, if Superman couldn't find her, then no one could. So foolishly

confident, hopeful. Clark hadn't forgiven himself, but Perry had. Somehow.

After that, and after a year of working closely — Superman in partnership with the Mayor's office to reduce crime — Clark felt he could count Perry as a friend and confidant. Pretty much his only friend. And with Perry back in the editor's office, Clark could at least pretend he was a journalist again sometimes.

As he settled into his office chair and waited for his computer to boot up, he glanced in the direction of Perry's office. The blinds were drawn, which didn't happen often, and Clark had an unusually strong urge to X-ray through them and see who was in there with Perry that required such privacy. But Superman didn't do that sort of thing.

His computer screen was a bit too bright, and the cursor blinked at him for his password. He needed to get his article written up anyway, before too much of it was old news. Before he could open a new file, though, his interoffice messages flashed loudly from the top left corner of his screen. He frowned slightly. No one sent him messages.

<<Clark, come see me right away when you get back from Indonesia. — Perry>>

Clark glanced back at Perry's office and the closed blinds and frowned, wondering if he should interrupt him. But the message had said "right away," and Perry rarely messaged him. He hesitated for a moment, wondering if he should take two minutes and write up his article first or not, but then with a sigh, he signed back out of his computer and got up to head to Perry's office.

Once he approached the door, he knocked softly and extended his hearing just a bit.

"Clark, if that's you, c'mon in," Perry said.

He swung the door open slowly and came eye to eye with his boss. "Chief, you wanted to see me?"

It was only when Perry didn't answer right away that Clark noticed the older man holding his breath, his eyes a bit worried as they seemed to appraise him, as though assessing his mood.

"I'm fine, Perry. It was a relatively small earthquake. I'm... I helped a lot. I'm okay."

The shake of the older man's head was almost imperceptible, but his brow furrowed and his eyes shifted to the opposite side of his office.

Clark's eyes followed, stopping as he met the curious gaze of a young woman about his age, with dark hair that fell almost to her shoulders and deep brown eyes that looked...so familiar and yet...different. He inhaled sharply.

It was her.

It...couldn't...it couldn't be her. It couldn't.

He looked back at Perry and saw the shine in the older

man's eyes as he nodded this time, ever so slightly. But Perry had been fooled before — he'd believed the other Lois and his long lost reporter to be one and the same, misled by that thread of hope he'd held for so many years and the impossibility of an exact double from another universe. Could Perry be so sure?

Could Clark be so sure? What if she was just...another Lois? But why? And where was Wells? When there was Lois, there was Wells. Why wasn't he here?

"H-hi, I'm Lois...Lois Lane." Her hesitant yet not timid voice pulled his attention back to her. She stood, tugging slightly at the hem of her T-shirt to straighten it out, and she put her hand out. "You're Clark Kent?"

"I..." He nodded dumbly, still not sure if he was breathing. "Yeah, Clark Kent." Not quite taking his eyes off hers, he reached out, his fingers lightly brushing hers as he took hold of her hand.

A strong surge of tingling and warmth and energy instantly flooded him, almost knocking him off balance. Time seemed to freeze as uncertainty and relief and hope rushed at him. To him? Within him? Into him? And a blanket of what he could only define as power more potent than the heat from the sun coursed across his skin and, while it was unlike anything he had ever experienced before, it almost felt...familiar.

Lois gasped softly, and his eyes snapped back to hers. He hadn't even realized he'd looked away. Her eyes were wide with some sort of surprise and understanding, but they were also brown and deep, and he found himself lost in them.

Clark was suddenly out of breath, overloaded with too much emotion, too much feedback, and he nearly stumbled back as time finally returned to normal.

"It's you," they whispered simultaneously.

Chapter 3

Lois sat on the couch in Perry's office next to Clark Kent, who was at the opposite end of the couch, listening intently as Perry filled him in on all the details of her ordeal in the Congo and in Lisbon and then her trip home. She was glad for the reprieve from talking; she hadn't realized how emotional it would be to relay all the gruesome, scary, and mysterious incidents from the last four years.

Every so often, Clark would glance her way, as if he were checking to make sure she was really there. Truth be told, she was doing the same thing — checking herself to make sure she was there, alive, not dreaming or still in a coma. Everything was so familiar and different and surreal all at once. Even her body — especially her body.

She looked down at her right arm, still jarred by the sight of such flawless and youthful-looking skin. All those

freckles, a few sunspots, and that scar from burning the back of her hand on the oven rack making cookies for Lucy and herself when she was nine — everything was just...gone. And it was like that...almost everywhere, but especially her neck and arms and face, where she'd had massive scarring from severe burns.

Lois squeezed her eyes shut for a moment, trying not to let the fragments of memories from the explosion back into her mind. Those weren't gone.

Perry paused, asking her if she was all right, so she opened her eyes and sat up straighter, nodding to try and reassure him she was just fine. Thankfully, he continued, and although she didn't really focus much on the words he was saying, she let the comforting drawl of his voice soothe her. At the same time, she took the opportunity to study the man next to her...the alien? Well, even if that was true, it didn't seem right — she just had a sense about it somehow. Not to mention, Perry didn't talk of him as such. He did have powers, though, this Superman, this Clark Kent. Powers and something else that intrigued her, impressed her.

Perry had confirmed what she'd heard about, what she'd read about in the ambassador's office: A year ago, Superman had single-handedly investigated and rounded up all the main players in the gun-running operation and personally saw to it that they were brought to justice.

Accomplishing something like that? That took far more than brawn and super senses — she should know, since investigating the same operation herself had taken all of her skill and effort, and she'd only just begun to crack things wide open. Granted, she wouldn't have minded having a bit of that X-ray vision to help speed things along. All in all, though, he'd finished what she'd started, and he might well have saved her life by stopping the gunrunners who had been so relentless in pursuing her.

Yes, the man was a powerful and just hero, but Clark Kent knew how to investigate and how to write, as she'd seen from the dozens of his articles she'd asked one of the ambassador's aides to print out for her flight home the day before.

And still, there had to be something else about him too. She could...feel it. Ever since he'd entered the room, she'd felt this strong energy from him. And when he'd taken her hand? She didn't have the words to describe how that had felt — some sort of jolt or surge of energy and...emotion? It didn't seem to make sense, but then she wondered...

Perry had talked about all of Clark's powers, and the power of healing had not been one of them. Yet...she had this strange sense that she'd met Clark before. That the indistinct image in her head of a man holding her hand in that hospital room wasn't a figment of her imagination or some lingering neurological symptom from her injuries,

her coma. That the mystery of the locked door and open window the other night wasn't so much of a mystery when there was a man sitting right next to her who could fly.

But Clark Kent had been surprised to see her, had acted almost as though he was seeing a ghost. And as she sat and watched him listening to the end of her story as Perry told it, it seemed like he hadn't known anything about her plight at all. Even more peculiar — though heartening to know that the world's superhero had such an empathic soul — was the fact that his devastation and shock and relief at finding out about her capture and should-have-been fatal injuries were so palpable, she could swear she was feeling the emotions come off him in waves.

She needed to talk to Clark — and because Perry didn't seem to know about Clark's powers of healing, she needed to talk to him alone. Perry had finished telling her story and was now halfway into his tale of the time President Presley had invited him to Camp David to go fishing. Sure, everyone loved a good Elvis story, but if Clark had worked here for four years, he'd likely heard it at least once before, so Lois decided now was a great time to get Clark alone.

"Perry, sorry to interrupt..." she said as she stood, smoothing her hands over her jeans and tugging again at her borrowed T-shirt, which didn't quite fit right. "Do you mind if I talk to Clark alone for a bit? I have some questions I want to ask him about the gunrunners... Maybe we could write a follow-up piece, tie everything up in a nice bow now that I'm home? Plus, I'm sure you have work to finish..."

"Ah, sure, darlin'...if you're sure you're...all right? And you'll...stay...ah, you'll —"

"I'll be staying with you and Alice, yes. I'm not going anywhere again any time soon Perry. Promise." Her heart hitched a bit, a sort of pleasant but wistful squeeze. Perry was like a father to her, and while she hated that her absence had caused him so much pain, it was heartening to know that she'd been missed, looked for...even grieved. "Thank you, Perry."

He just nodded and cleared his throat.

Swallowing back the emotions, Lois turned toward Clark, who was looking a bit disoriented and dazed. "Well, Clark — can I call you Clark? — let's go to the conference room," she said as she opened the office door. He had barely moved — just stared at her — so she grabbed his hand and dragged him out of the office and through the newsroom, ignoring the curious stares of the staffers and the sensation of tingling and warmth where their hands met. She headed straight into the nearest conference room and then shut the door behind them, wondering why she was suddenly feeling a distinct sense of loss now that their hands had separated.

She shook herself mentally and glanced around the conference room, her eyes settling on the large window at the front of the room. Thankfully, the blinds were already closed. She didn't feel like extra eyes on her right now — she'd get enough of that once word spread about her return, hopefully due to her own byline.

She'd let go of Clark's hand to turn back and close the door, and now when she turned to face him...he was just... staring at it — the hand that she'd held. This guy was... nothing like what the newspapers had made him out to be and only somewhat like the man Perry had told her about.

"You're...pretty strong, right? Super strength? More powerful than a locomotive, I think they say?"

He looked up at her, shoving his hand deep in the pocket of his jeans and running the other through his thick hair. "Yeah," he said, sounding dazed still. "Yeah, I'm really strong."

"Then...how did I manage to pull you all the way here?"

"I..."

She wasn't going to get anywhere like this; she needed a different tack. "I'm sorry...let's... Here, why don't we sit down?" She pulled out one of the corner chairs for him and then sat herself in the one slightly opposite him.

Silently, he sat down, clearly a bit unsure of what to do with himself. But then he reached for an old mug filled with pens and other items, his fingers wrapping around it in sort of a nervous gesture.

"So..." she started. "You're Clark? I mean, that's what you've gone by most of your life, what you liked to be called? Right?"

He looked up at her then, pushing the mug away from himself, and smiled — a warm smile that, along with the rich, chocolate brown of his eyes as he truly seemed to see her for the first time, made her stomach swoop. "Yeah, I'm Clark."

"Are you...okay, Clark?" she asked gently, resisting the strange urge she had to put a hand on his shoulder or his knee to comfort him. At least he'd stopped fidgeting. "You seem a bit..."

"Dumbfounded?" he said with a self-deprecating smile, pulling his hands down into his lap.

She nodded, finding it impossible not to return the smile. "Not exactly the word I'd have chosen, but yeah... Is there... Gosh, I'm not even sure what the right question is to ask. I used to be really great at interviewing people — not that...sorry, this isn't — I'm not interviewing you. But just...it's been a while since I've talked to...anyone, really. And you seem upset...sad...but not quite?"

He was grinning at her now.

"What?" She could feel a blush rising on her cheeks, and she tucked her hair behind her ear.

"You babble."

She failed to bite back her own grin. "Well, someone had to use more words — you were hardly using any — and there was no way we were going to meet the standard conversational quota of word usage at that rate."

Clark threw his head back and laughed, and the sound of it felt like it flooded straight through to her heart, warming her all over and making her heart race.

Oh, God, what was that?

When their eyes met again, she saw a tenderness there she hadn't yet seen from him. Though as he seemed to search her face, some sort of sadness settled there too, tingeing everything with an almost...wistful regret.

A sense of guilt pricked at her then, and she wondered if maybe he felt responsible for not having found her when he'd investigated the gunrunners. Perry had said Clark had volunteered to go search for her.

"It's not your fault, Clark," she said softly.

He shook his head and looked down at his hands.

"You heard Perry, what they said about my injuries? I was unrecognizable and unconscious...under a false identity that even Perry hadn't known about. What more could you have done?"

"I don't know, I just... I thought..."

"Thought what, Clark?"

He shook his head again.

"Look at me," she urged, putting a hand on his knee, and in an instant, her body flooded with overwhelming emotion that stole her breath away. Sadness and guilt and despair all surged at her, within her, and then, just as suddenly, she felt it morph into a profound relief and something close to recognition but not quite.

Clark inhaled sharply, his head snapping up to look at her. "This!" he cried hoarsely, gesturing almost helplessly at her hand where it still rested on his knee. "Where was this?" He sucked in a shuddering breath, almost a sob.

Connection. Chemistry. *With her.*

Emotions — not words — were in her head, and they didn't seem to be hers. She pulled her hand back sharply in surprise, the overwhelming strength of the emotions dampening immediately.

"What do you mean?" she whispered. "Is this...is this because you healed me?" She gestured between them, not sure what to call "this."

Confusion knit his brow, and she could almost feel it as he asked, "What?"

"You were there, in the hospital, weren't you?" she insisted. "You...healed me with your powers."

"I...that's not...I don't have that power..."

"But I...I could have sworn..." She trailed off, completely thrown and trying desperately to grab at that indistinct image in her head and bring it into focus. But all

that came were the feelings, this...bewildering sense of certainty somewhere deep in her soul that she knew this man sitting in front of her despite the fact that he was acting like this was the first time they'd met. She knew she could trust him even though it made absolutely no logical sense.

Clark was shaking his head, his brow still creased, and she got the sense that he felt utterly helpless in that moment. And the feeling that it wasn't an unfamiliar sensation for him inexplicably tore at her heart and made her almost desperate to stop the pain — his or hers or both, she wasn't sure.

It had to have been him at the hospital; she could feel it. There was *something* there, and it had to do with this weird energy between them...and it was the only thing she could think of that would even come close to explaining... anything that had happened in the past forty-eight hours.

Before she could even think it through, she grabbed a letter opener out of the mug and dragged the blade of it across her palm, wincing at the sharp sting of pain as blood started dripping from the slice in her hand.

"Lois! NO! What are you doing?!" Clark grabbed her hand in his, the letter opener clattering as it fell and tumbled across the floor of the conference room.

Lois gasped and froze as a jolt of energy and sensation pulsed in her hand, and her eyes went wide as she actually saw the bleeding stop and the wound start closing, a gentle tugging and prickling sensation dancing across her palm as the skin knit itself back together slowly.

"It was you," she whispered breathlessly.

Chapter 4

Clark couldn't stop staring at the blood on the conference room table. Lois's blood. *His* Lois's blood.

His Lois. His Lois. His Lois.

For a moment, it was all he could think. He'd known it the second they'd touched hands in Perry's office, but he hadn't been willing to let himself believe it. Then he'd felt it again when she'd taken his hand and dragged him to the conference room. Felt it. *Known it*. And had been almost too scared to believe it.

There was something about her, though, something much, much more than he'd ever felt around the other Lois — stronger and overwhelming in the way it made him feel.

Then she'd called him Clark. She'd babbled. And oh, God, she'd smiled.

Now, though, now she was...well, she wasn't bleeding anymore. Somehow, she wasn't bleeding anymore, even though she'd sliced her own hand open with a letter opener. Somehow, she didn't even have a mark on her.

"See?" she said, pointing to the line on her hand, the skin lighter and fairer than the rest of her palm, and then

she trailed her fingers up her forearm. "It's the same as the other parts... It's like...brand-new skin. You healed me." Her voice was soft, a hint of wonder and gratitude in her tone, and it unsettled him even as it sent a pleasant warmth through his chest.

But...he shouldn't...be able to heal other people... right? That...wasn't...that wasn't a power he had. It wasn't a power the other Clark had either; Lois would have said something. His head was spinning with all the possible explanations, and along with the very real fact that *his* Lois was just sitting there, right in front of him after all this time and painfully idle hopes, he was almost feeling physically exhausted. Having been awake for almost two days straight now certainly wasn't helping.

He shook his head to try and clear his thoughts. "It... wasn't me..."

"But you just...you saw it, same as me. You felt it, too, right?" she said.

Clark brought his gaze up from her palm, finding her deep, beautiful brown eyes regarding him with an imploring look, as though she was desperate to have him believe her.

"I did..." he rasped out. "I just don't understand how." But even as he said it, he knew. Some tingling in the back of his mind told him this was familiar. That he'd felt the same prickling and tugging before. That this was what it'd felt like when his body had healed itself after he'd been shot with a kryptonite bullet late last year. "But in Lisbon...it wasn't me."

"But...if it wasn't..." She looked at him, confused, hurt, almost. Then he somehow sensed a shift in her, from confusion to resolve. "It *had* to have been you! There's this strange...connection I can feel between us, and...I have this hazy memory...an image of you in the red and blue, and... I can *feel* that it was you."

What she was saying...he could almost feel it, her desperate certainty, this connection between them that had been quietly humming ever since they'd first touched in Perry's office. But...what she was saying...the rest of it couldn't be true. "Lois, I've been in Indonesia for the last thirty-eight hours, saving people and cleaning up after an earthquake."

She tilted her head, and her brow creased in confusion. "I don't...I don't understand."

He didn't either, even though he wished it had been him, that he'd been the one to find her, save her like he should have all along. But...he didn't even...he wasn't even sure how it was possible that her palm had healed just now when he'd touched her, let alone the impossibility of being in two countries at once and healing the kind of ultimately fatal injuries she'd had. He shuddered, shaking his head and trying not to think about Perry's description

of her wounds or the fact that she'd been so near death when this miracle recovery had occurred.

Her mood shifted again — somehow, he could sense it — and she seemed a little defeated and something else... “Well, if it wasn't you, then it must have been your doppelgänger,” Lois said with a huff and more than a hint of defensiveness.

Clark was all set to reply, to try and smooth things over, when the truth of what she said, unwittingly, hit him squarely in the chest. “That's it!” he exclaimed. “You're right, Lois! It must have been *another* Superman! I mean, I still don't know how the healing happened, but all things considered...it would have to have been...another me.”

Lois was silent for a moment, her eyes regarding him cautiously, and Clark suddenly felt very warm and self-conscious. “I was trying to be sarcastic...but you're telling me you really do have an exact double running around out there?”

“Yes...and no, not exactly.” Oh boy, how did he explain this? “I'm guessing Perry didn't tell you about alternate universes and what happened last year?”

“Alternate what? And...what happened last year? You stopping the gunrunners?” Lois asked, her voice pitching a bit higher.

“Before that,” he answered quietly. “The event...the person who made me even know to look for you...”

“Perry?”

“No...you. Another...you.”

“Clark...you're not making any sense. What do you mean, another me?”

God, he was messing this all up. How did he even begin to explain? Would it be cheating to bring Perry in to help? “I mean...about a year ago, another woman showed up at the Planet, claiming to be you, and she turned my entire world upside down.”

Clark heard her gasp, and he swore he could actually feel the tension building in the room. He stood, unable to sit still despite the sheer exhaustion that was starting to weigh him down, and he started pacing as he explained. She didn't yell or call him crazy or leave as he continued. Not even when he mentioned H.G. Wells and interdimensional travel and parallel universes and near but not exact counterparts.

Miraculously, she stayed and listened to everything. Well, everything he'd shared...and he wasn't quite ready to admit to having been in love with her counterpart — or at least what he'd thought was love. He knew he'd have to tell her someday, if he ever hoped to have any kind of relationship with her. And oh, God, did he want that — the yearning within him so deep and powerful even though he tried to temper it. He could tell she was struggling with parts of the story or maybe all of it — her distress, maybe

even anguish, was somehow almost palpable.

Her voice was slightly shaky, emotional, when she finally spoke. “So...all those years, your entire life until just a year ago...you hid?”

“I...yeah...” The question surprised him, halting his pacing, his breath catching in his throat, and a wave of some emotion he couldn't quite discern washed over him. He'd expected something different, a question about the other Lois or the other Superman or... “I just...” He ran a hand through his hair and blew out a shuddering breath, his stomach knotting with decades-old grief and regret and fear.

Everything, the flood of emotions and the exhaustion, hit him at once, and he was sure he might lose his legs out from under him, but then — he wasn't even sure how or when — her arms were around his waist, her body pressed against him, her cheek against his chest, all so tightly he wondered if that was the reason it was so hard to breathe.

And then he felt it — a blanket of compassion and sorrow and understanding and tenderness and belonging, all surrounding him and holding him just as tightly as Lois's arms and permeating his soul. He sagged into her, and somehow she held him even tighter.

It felt like an eternity — a perfect, bittersweet eternity — that he was in her arms, before the torrent of emotions finally ebbed, and she slowly loosened her hold and took half a step back and looked up at him. In her eyes, he saw everything mirrored, all the comfort and reassurance she'd somehow given him.

“You...you hardly know me,” he whispered, his tone questioning.

Lois shook her head slowly and brought a hand up to cup his cheek, wiping tears away with the pad of her thumb. “I don't feel like that's true. It's like... I'm not even sure how to explain it. I know we just met — God, I hope this doesn't sound half as crazy as all the stuff you just told me — but I *do* know you, or my heart does. When I look at you, when I touch you, when you're hurting and my heart is breaking in two... God, I just...”

She had her own tears, and his heart ached sharply at the sight of them, making his hand reach up as if by habit to wipe her tears away as she had his. But when his hand touched her cheek and his thumb swept across her skin, he felt so much more than just the warmth and the moisture, and it stole his breath away.

Both her hands came around to his chest, her palms pressing gently against him and her body drifting ever closer. The wild fluttering of her heartbeat suddenly filled his senses while feelings surged between them again, different this time than grief and compassion. If he had to guess and he dared to hope, he might say it was love that he was feeling from her. It was like nothing he'd ever felt

before — his own heart racing, seemingly in time with hers; a warm and tingling sensation starting in his chest and spreading wondrously throughout his body; and an overwhelming sense of belonging.

And he knew, he knew right then that he would do everything in his power to make sure she was safe and happy, and, God...oh, God, he wanted nothing more than for that to mean she wanted to be with him. Always.

But they'd literally just met — under the most bizarre and extraordinary and impossible circumstances, yes — and he could only hope what he was feeling, what he was sensing from her through whatever this connection was, was as true and astounding as it felt.

"I'm not sure what this is between us..." she said quietly, as though not to disturb whatever strange magic this seemed to be.

His hand still cupping her cheek, he watched silently, certain that her eyes had flitted down to his lips for a long second and that she'd leaned into him just a little more closely than she had been.

"This feeling, this..." Her eyes seemed to read him, to stare into his soul. "It's like we're connected somehow, and it doesn't make any sense how. We just met. We just... It's like we're..." She trailed off, letting out a breath that was almost half a whimper.

And Clark couldn't help but lower his lips to hers, a tentative touch at first, slow and achingly tender, as his heart threatened to pound right out of his chest and the tingling of anticipation and need thrummed throughout his body. When she whimpered again and melted into him, his heart soared fiercely, and he deepened the kiss, bringing his other hand up so that both were framing her face as his mouth slanted against hers. As he drew his lips across hers again and again and let his tongue oh so gently explore, her warmth and softness and the way she so eagerly met each caress of his mouth only added to the intensity of all the feelings flooding through him.

After what seemed like another eternity — this one of perfect bliss and belonging — he slowed and gentled their kisses, eventually pulling back and resting his forehead against her, his hands sliding down to her neck.

"Sorry," he whispered as they both tried to catch their breath. "I...couldn't help...sorry."

"Oh, God, don't be sorry for that...don't — nope... don't be sorry." She closed her eyes as a smile spread across her face, and she let out a breathy laugh.

Clark's heart fluttered madly, and he couldn't help but smile too. Even as they stood there, still breathing hard, their hearts racing, it seemed they were surrounded, wrapped snugly in a cocoon of all the extraordinary, profound emotions he couldn't even begin to list or describe.

"You know..." Lois said, her arms still draped around his neck, "in all of this, there's really only one thing that's not completely out there and confusing..." Lois lifted her head, and he saw a gentle hesitancy in her beautiful brown eyes.

"What's that?" he asked softly, reaching up to cup her cheek again.

"How I feel about you," she said, her voice small but no less filled with conviction. "I mean, it doesn't exactly make sense on the surface of things, but... I can feel it. I know it, trust it — trust you. I can't explain it, but it's there and it's..."

"Wonderful?"

Lois nodded, her eyes shining with emotion. "The rest of it, though? Gosh...it's pretty mind-boggling, almost..."

"...impossible?" Clark said quietly, shaking his head, his thumb stroking gently across her cheek. It did seem impossible, and yet, here she was, in his arms — his Lois. He still couldn't believe it.

She laughed lightly. "Yeah. But maybe..." she started, hesitating just a second before she continued, "given that I'm here — alive, healed — in the arms of a man who flies, who's traveled to another universe...it's really not all that impossible, is it?"

Epilogue

As Clark walked back to his apartment arm in arm with Lois, he glanced up at the stars again, shining brightly on the chilly March evening, and he wondered not for the first time that week how he'd managed to get so lucky. A warm sensation washed over him, filling him with love and wistful gratitude, and somehow he knew what she would say — even before the gentle press of Lois's fingers into his bicep, where her hands looped around the crook of his arm.

"I can't believe how lucky I am either," she said softly as she rested her head against his shoulder.

He paused just briefly to place a kiss on the top of her head before they continued on, just now approaching his apartment building. "Did you enjoy yourself?"

"Mmmhmm," she hummed almost dreamily. "The caciotta cheese ravioli was amazing, but the tiramisu was even better. You're spoiling me, you know?"

Clark laughed, the sound echoing just a bit as they entered the small atrium area in front of his apartment. "I don't think it's possible to do that, especially since you keep reminding me just how much fine dining you have to catch up on."

"Gosh, that's gonna mean a lot more dates in the coming weeks and months," she said, releasing his arm after giving it a little squeeze and stepping to the side so that he could fish for his keys in the pocket of his slacks.

“Are you sure you can handle that?”

“Endless dates with you?” He turned toward her, and a now-familiar warmth spread through him as their eyes met. He grinned. “Sounds like a job for Superman.”

Lois swatted at his arm, laughing as she did. God, the sound was like magic, healing his soul piece by piece every time he heard it. “Hurry it up, flyboy. You promised me ‘the best decaf coffee ever,’ and I have to know if you’re telling the truth or not.”

“Okay, okay.” He chuckled, putting his hands up in surrender, his keys hanging from the fingers of his right hand. As he unlocked the door, opened it, and motioned to indicate she should go first, Clark threw a look of mock offense her way. “But you should know by now that Superman doesn’t lie.”

He followed her in, closing the door behind them, his shoe scuffing against a few letters on the floor as he came to stand beside her. She’d paused and looked down, and his eyes followed hers to find a medium-sized pile of mail just at the foot of the door underneath the mail slot.

“All right, so Superman doesn’t lie, but apparently he also doesn’t check his mail?” She gave him a wry smile and a questioning eyebrow.

Clark answered with a sheepish shrug. “I...tend to forget about it..since I, uh, use the window to come and go most of the time.”

“Ohh,” she said, nodding. “That makes sense. I just didn’t think about it. Well, I guess we should get this all cleaned up off the floor for you, though.” She squatted down — somewhat awkwardly given her dress — and started gathering up envelopes.

“Here, I should be doing that. It’s my mail.” He knelt down to help, gathering handfuls himself.

“Clark — ” she said, turning to him quickly, her eyes wide and an envelope in her hand. “This one’s addressed to both of us.”

“What?”

Instead of responding, she stood abruptly, clutching just the one piece of mail and letting the rest drop down to the floor in a chaotic flutter. A rush of excitement hit him as he watched her hurry down the steps and over to the couch. “C’mon, Clark!” She patted the cushion next to her and then started tearing into the envelope.

Clark shook his head, laughing to himself, and then cleaned up the pile of mail at super speed, put it on the entry table in a nice stack, and sped over to sit down on the couch next to Lois.

She’d pulled out a single sheet of paper filled with a message in neat, even lettering that looked so much like his own handwriting, he wondered for a second if he’d sent himself something from the future. It would maybe explain why Wells hadn’t contacted him. But as Lois leaned

slightly into him, holding out the letter so that they could both read, it was clear it wasn’t something he’d written.

Dear Lois and Clark,

I hope this finds you well.

My name is Kal. I’m from an alternate universe, but not one you were aware of (before this letter, that is). I was displaced from my own universe, and H.G. Wells is bringing me home. But first, he asked if I would make a brief detour to your universe.

As Mr. Wells tells me, my universe is quite a bit different from yours, and our life paths differ just as much, but it appears our values and goals are the same, as are a few other things. I, like you, Clark, have an aura that renders me invulnerable, and up until a few years ago, I didn’t realize all that it was capable of. Thoughts and feelings can be easily transmitted. But more importantly, through careful control of my aura, I can extend my abilities and even life force to others. This allows me to, in a sense, “heal” injuries.

Due to this, Mr. Wells has asked that I heal you, Lois, and rescue you from what would surely be fatal injuries. He doesn’t know I’ve sent this letter, but I couldn’t fathom healing you and leaving without informing you of a few things. Lois, given the extent of your injuries and the way my aura works, you will be left with an aura of your own that is essentially a blend of your life force and my aura. Because you are not Kryptonian like Clark, you will not have invulnerability or healing power, but you will likely be uniquely in tune with him. Although I am not Clark, I am similar enough that your aura will probably respond to Clark’s presence. Admittedly, I don’t know much beyond that, but I didn’t want you to think something dangerous was happening or that something was wrong.

Clark, be extremely careful with your aura if you decide to practice and hone the abilities I described. I discovered it by accident during a rescue while trying to reach people in danger. My aura tore while protecting them, and it required a long and quite painful recovery period. The incident honestly almost killed me. However, I am eternally grateful for my aura. It has enabled me to do more than I ever could have imagined. I have no doubt it could be a benefit to you if you decided to pursue its use.

I wish I had the time and the energy to tell you more, as there is much to share, but I must send this now and go heal Lois before my window of opportunity closes.

Take care of yourselves. Trust each other. Love each other.

Sincerely,

Kal

When they’d both finished reading, the silence seemed to stretch on for several long moments, yet he could feel Lois’s excitement, wonder, and anxiousness mixing with

his own. That, and he knew she was smiling without even having to look at her.

“What?” he asked, fighting back a smile of his own.

“See? It’s not impossible.” She set the letter on the coffee table and snuggled into him as he lifted his arm so she could settle in the crook of his shoulder and against his chest.

Clark let out a breathy laugh. “You were right, Lois,” he said as he held her just a little more closely, leaning them both back into the cushions and pressing his lips to her temple. “You were right.”

THE END