

Now or Never

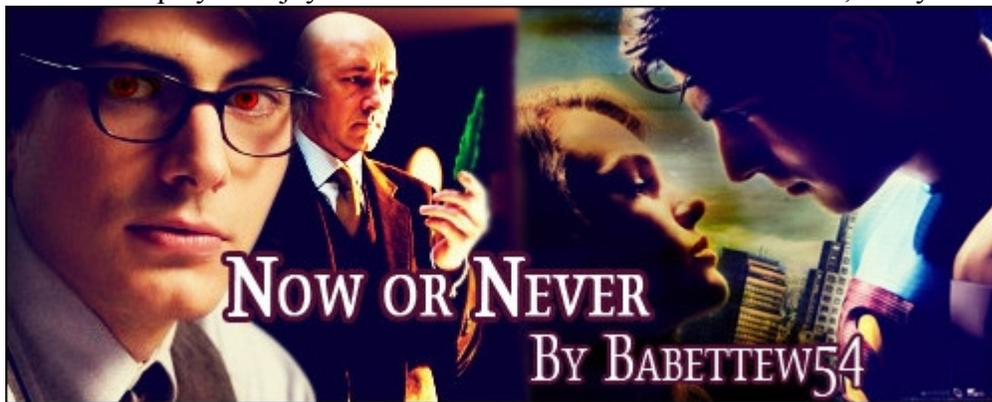
by Babbettew54

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Rating: MA

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Author's Notes: This story started out as a one shot written for the "National Drug and Alien Day," but quickly became so much more. It begins shortly after the end of *Superman Returns*. Lois is still in the dark about Clark's secret identity but then something unexpected happens that turns one person's scheme into someone else's golden opportunity. Things took off from there and I hope you enjoy the ride. Please read and review. Thanks, everyone! :D



Now or Never

Two months later after the events of 'New Krypton':

Lois Lane was at her desk finishing up her article when a fellow staffer turned on the monitor for the local news and of course Superman was the top story, and in spite of herself she listened and watched as the news anchors were positively giddy with reports of his many heroic rescues both here and abroad. She sighed and went back to typing but it was too late for that now as her concentration was gone. She continued to watch the news stories and thought about him and where things stood between them, if anywhere.

She hadn't seen or talked to him in weeks; oh, he'd stopped by to see Jason after he found out the truth about their son and with only a small hello to her, but ever since Richard had moved out he barely had anything to say to her, which was odd. It was as if he were afraid to talk to her for fear she might bite his head off again for leaving her all those years ago, but that wasn't the case at all. She had forgiven him, but she hadn't had the chance to tell him. Lois didn't want to admit it, but she missed him and she still cared about him deeply.

"Hey, Lois, are you almost finished?" Clark asked but she ignored him and kept watching the monitor or transfixed by it he realized. Sighing, he tried again. "Lois, it's getting late."

"What did you say, Clark?" She finally tore her eyes away from the monitor as her eyes

focused on him but as usual she didn't see him at least not in the way he wanted her to.

"Nothing," he answered then he turned off the monitor, after the last staffer had left the bullpen for the evening.

She shrugged her shoulders and went back to work.

They both looked up when a Planet delivery man walked up to Lois's desk and handed her a package. "This just came for you by special courier, Ms. Lane."

"So late in the day but who is it from?" She asked curious and very suspicious.

"No idea, but I need your signature, Ms. Lane."

"Oh, ok," Lois replied and signed for the package.

Clark watched and wondered who would be sending Lois special deliveries at this hour. He x-rayed the box and it was a necklace. He frowned. *She wasn't seeing anyone, was she? It can't be from Richard; I know he moved out; then who sent it?* Suspicious of the contents, he got up from his desk and came over to watch.

He had hung around the bullpen this evening hoping for a chance to escort Lois home because his strategy since Richard had left was to distance himself from her as Superman and get closer to her as Clark. He thought it was working, but the necklace may set him back for weeks especially if she thought Superman had sent it to her.

Lois was also wondering who had sent it as she opened it and inside was a necklace with a stunning red stone attached. She looked inside but there was no card or note so she thought it was from a secret admirer, Superman maybe? Her eyes gravitated to Clark and he was staring at her with an odd and strangely smug expression on his face.

Shrugging she put the necklace on and of course she assumed it was from Superman, a peace offering but he had never sent her any gifts, not ever, but maybe he was trying in his own special way to reach out to her. She stroked it and glanced at Clark again. "Isn't it lovely?"

Clark blinked and then his eyes glowed red. Lois also blinked thinking she must have imagined it. He came closer to her desk, came up behind her, took advantage of the view, closed his eyes as all sorts of fantasies invaded his mind. *In due time*, he thought then leaned down close to her ear and said "I'd like my stapler back now."

Lois watched him come closer and she had to admit the look on his face fascinated her; it's a look she had never seen before on her partner and she couldn't remember ever being *this* close to him before. She closed her eyes and tried to stay calm, but his nearness and his unique scent set her heart to pounding; shocking her. She swallowed and held up the stapler and he took it from her then she pretended to go back to work. "Was there something else you wanted?" *Oh, dear, why did I ask that?*

It's a good thing Lois did not have eyes in back of her head, because if she had seen Clark's devilish smile, she would have run for the hills. *You have no idea, Ms. Lane.* Instead he said "I have something very important to tell you Lois; log off now."

"I'm not logging off; I'm not finished yet," she declared, defiant of him giving her orders.

"I think you are," he said and shut off her computer.

"Clark, what are you doing? My article... what have you done?" Lois was shocked and furious with him.

"Don't worry; your story is on a backup drive remember, Perry had it installed on all systems ages ago," he reminded her then took her hand. "Now, come with me," he literally dragged her out of her seat.

Lois dug in her heels. "Clark, let go of me; where are we going... answer me!"

"We need to talk Lois; it's way past time for us to clear the air between us and you know

it."

She tried to pull her hand free, but he was so strong. "What are you talking about; there's nothing between us, Clark; never has been."

That stopped him in his tracks and Lois bumped into him; it was like slamming into a wall. *Good lord, the man was built like an oak tree.*

He stared into her eyes hoping she would finally open them and see him... Clark Kent, the man who loved and adored her. "Deny it if you want, but I know you want me Lois."

Lois's mouth dropped open then she snapped it shut, unwilling or unable to admit that she was attracted to him. She stared at him and then those nagging fantasies came into her mind about pulling off his glasses just to get a good look at his eyes and that tall body of his which seemed sometimes like it was calling out to her to touch it, just once to see if it was as hard and unyielding like just now when she had slammed into him. She shook her head to clear it.

"Clark, we're friends; I care about you, but..."

He wouldn't let her finish then pulled her into a vacant office, shut the door and locked it.

"Clark, unlock that door ... NOW!" Lois demanded.

"It's not really locked Lois; you're free to go, but I don't think you really want to leave," he said with that smug little smile again that Lois found unnerving and attractive all at once. Her heart began to pound again but she had to wonder why Clark was suddenly acting this way; it was so unlike him.

Lois backed up as he came closer, then he began to loosen his tie. She held up her arms. "Stop right there buddy; I don't know what you think you're doing but that's not going to happen."

"What are you afraid of Lois?" He kept coming.

"I'm not afraid," she admitted then she swallowed.

"Then why is your heart pounding like a drum; it's so loud."

She frowned and narrowed her eyes at him. "What did you just say?"

He ignored her question. "Just let me kiss you, just once?" He reached out to touch her cheek. "So lovely," he murmured then he raised her chin, leaned down to kiss her. Clark was thinking. *It's now or never, she has to know the truth.*

Lois was transfixed by the look on his face, she couldn't move, couldn't think and then she closed her eyes for a moment but just before their lips met, she came out of her trance, shoved him away, then put her hands on her hips hating the fact that he knew her better than she knew herself. "Knock it off, Clark, ok; you proved your point and yes, I am attracted to you." Then her eyes grew wide then as she touched the necklace. "Did you send me this?" She didn't give him a chance to answer. "You did, didn't you?" She yanked it off, went to the window and threw it away.

Clark touched his forehead and slumped onto the sofa as the effects of the red rock left his system. "Lois, I... I'm sorry, please just let me explain."

She frowned again as his demeanor changed from smug to meek in moments. *What in the world is going on with him?* Lois wondered. "I'm listening," she said and crossed her arms, still upset by his weird seduction tactics.

He stood up, came closer and tried to explain. "Lois, I do care about you, I do very much. It's just ..." He sighed and began again. "I wanted you to see me, Clark Kent, not the farm boy, not the normal guy, not the clumsy nerd, and certainly not the laughing stock of this office."

"Clark, I don't see you like that, not at all."

"Lois, I saw and heard both you and Richard laughing at me."

"Oh, that, well, I'm sorry about that, but sometimes you can be a bit of a nerd, but only a little." She touched his arm hoping to make him feel better.

He looked at her hand on his arm then raised his eyes to her face and tried to smile. "I did have something important I wanted to tell you."

"Oh, what was it?" She lowered her hand but he took it again and held it on his arm. Her heart stubbornly began that pounding rhythm again as she stared at him.

"I want more Lois. I can't stay here working side by side with you day after day and just be on the fringes of your life; I can't do it anymore."

She understood exactly what he was saying. "Oh, I see," she murmured but then she had a terrible thought and just the thought of it sent such pain inside her heart that she gasped. She squeezed his arm. "Tell me you aren't considering leaving again?" She asked terrified and when he didn't answer her, she grabbed both his arms then. "Please tell me you're not leaving," she begged as her eyes filled with tears.

She does care about me, he realized, but as he watched her try to come to grips with his possibly leaving her, he knew without a shadow of a doubt that he could never leave her again, not ever. "No, Lois, I'm not leaving."

"Oh Clark," she whimpered, so relieved and happy as the tears fell, but then she impulsively went into his arms holding him close. She closed her eyes, sighed and breathed in his unique scent, believing for a moment that it was his scent, but it wasn't, she suddenly realized; it was Superman's scent.

Clark closed his eyes for a moment as he stroked her hair then he raised her chin leaned down and kissed her softly at first then with more passion as he pulled her closer and stroked her back then his lips slanted to gain more access to her sweet mouth and his tongue swirled around hers as they both moaned into each other's mouths.

Lois tried to think as she kissed him back. *Clark was Superman, wasn't he?* Only one way to find out and with a will of iron, she pulled back and tried to breathe for a moment. Clark was confused by her actions as he stared at her.

Lois then raised both hands to his face and he knew then what she going to do. He waited as she removed his glasses and put them on the desk. She smiled at him as both hands took in the shape of his face, his strong jaw and chin, his beautiful blue eyes so clear and focused on her, his slick dark hair and then she touched his lips and they opened to kiss her fingers. Lois closed her eyes and then his lips were on hers again and this time her arms went around his neck to pull him even closer loving his strong arms around her again. His lips wandered down her throat then he pulled her blouse aside and moaned as she stroked his head and kissed his throat and his ear. "Oh, Clark," she sighed then she suddenly had a thought. "Is that your real name?"

Clark realized she still didn't remember their past. "Yes, Lois, Clark is my real name." He would tell her everything later much later. He smiled a little wistfully thinking about their special past.

He picked her up then, surprising her and then he laid her on the sofa leaned down and stroked her hair. "I love you, Lois, don't ever forget... promise me."

She pulled his head down. "I promise," she replied and then they were in each other's arms kissing and caressing each other, clothes were removed slowly each wanting this tender moment to last, and when her breasts were revealed to his hungry gaze her nipples tightened under his scrutiny, her back arched waiting for his mouth and hands and when he took a nipple into his mouth she gasped at the sensation, and then he stroked the other breast igniting fires;

she was burning up. "Oh yes," she cried as heat pooled like molten lava between her legs. His mouth returned to hers again and again moaning as he covered her mouth fully with his own, his head tilting from side to side as he pressed into the kiss.

Sensing she wanted more, he pressed her back onto the sofa, stroked smoothly down her flat belly until his fingertips touched her damp curls. Lois thrust against his hand, silently pleading for him to finish what he started. She was slick with desire and Clark didn't think he could wait any longer. She dug her hands into arms pulling him closer. "Now, Clark, now!" She cried begging for it. He entered her then with a smooth glide and then he began to move to pleasure her and him and soon they began that climb and he could feel her body clench around his throbbing length and knew she was coming. He followed her and cried out his pleasure against her neck as he joined her in completion.

A few moments passed as they caught their breaths then Clark pulled his coat from the floor and covered them as they snuggled close her head under his chin. "Are you alright?" He asked concerned when she hadn't said anything.

"Uh, huh," she replied still in a bit of a daze.

"Lois, I have to tell you something."

"No bad news please," she couldn't help but chuckle.

"Well, it's good and bad news."

"Go on."

"I didn't send the necklace."

"Ok, was that the bad news or the good news?"

"That's the good news; the bad news is that the red rock inside your necklace made me act differently. I'm more aggressive, self-assured, and arrogant."

She leaned up on her elbow so she could see his face. "So, you had a reaction to the red rock, but who would send something like that to me unless...?"

"Yeah, either someone knows about me or they knew you would be around Superman and he would become different, maybe do something bad or I don't know because when I'm around the red rock, it makes me do and say unpredictable things."

"You know who did this, don't you?"

"Yeah, I know; there's only one person who had the means and the knowledge to know these things about me."

"Lex?"

"Yeah, but it didn't work, because all I can think about when I'm around you is you, being with you and loving you, so the red rock was a good thing."

"I'll say it was good," she smiled and snuggled back into his arms. "Let's not worry about Lex right now. You sir have a lot of explaining to do, like... how is it that we have a child together?"

"Umm, about that."

Chapter 2: Where to Begin

Lois waited for Clark to answer her question about Jason; how it was possible he was the father of her child when she had never slept with him? "Clark, I'm waiting."

"Ummm, we should get dressed, go someplace where we can talk without fear of being interrupted by ... umm ... the cleaning people or something," he rambled trying to stall.

Lois could see he was stalling. "Clark, the cleaning people won't come into a locked office."

"But Lois it is a long story ... umm ... aren't you cold?"

"No, not really," she responded and pulled him close. "Aren't you forgetting how warm you are, like an electric blanket without cords, but I suppose we should get dressed but I was thinking ..." She leaned back and flirted with him, bowed her head thinking they could do it again.

He smiled reading her mind. "My thoughts exactly." He kissed her again and she responded without hesitation thrilling him and spurring him on to love her the way she needed to be loved, the way he'd been wanting to be loved by her for so long now.

The next thing he knew he was sitting on his haunches, Lois's legs were around him, her head was thrown back as he kissed and stroked her nipples. He kissed her to keep her quiet. He stroked her smooth thighs and then he touched her there and she was slick with desire for him. He moaned into her mouth, then lifted her up and slid her down on his straining erection. They both sighed in total bliss; it was too wonderful to believe; they never wanted it to end. Lois kissed him thrusting her tongue down his throat and then it happened. They both came at the same time clutching each other close until they came back down to earth; moments passed as they caught their breaths, kissing and stroking each other.

"Wow, that was ..." Lois hesitated as words failed her which was rare to say the least.

Clark smiled and chuckled. "Indescribable?" He suggested as he kissed her cheek, her ear and her throat.

"Oh yeah," she agreed as she leaned to the side to give him better access. "Umm, we'll never leave here if you continue doing that," she murmured, but that didn't stop her from pulling his head down and kissing him properly.

A few minutes later, two very strong willed people were barely able to cool down for a moment, smile into each other's eyes, left the sofa, got dressed and headed out. They agreed that he would meet her at the house as soon as he could if no emergencies arose.

Clark kissed her again but they refused to let go of the other, but moments later they finally did and he glanced around and the streets were relatively clear, then he speeded into an alley, changed and was in the sky in moments.

Riverside Drive an hour later:

Lois arrived at the house in a bit of a rush, knowing that Clark would probably be there waiting for her, and after checking out back she didn't see him and couldn't help but feel disappointed.

"Mom, what are you looking for?" Jason came up behind her, tugged her coat as he too looked out the sliding glass doors and didn't see anything.

"Nothing, sweetie, did you finish your homework at the sitters?" She asked coming into the kitchen with Jason right behind her.

"Yes, but I'm hungry."

"But didn't you have dinner two hours ago?"

"Yes," he stated as if that was any excuse.

Lois realized that her son was growing up way too fast and that she would have to keep a lot more food in the fridge for her growing son. "Alright, I'll fix something quick," she said and opened the fridge and saw the usual healthy choices she had agreed with her doctors to help with his asthma and food allergies, but that was gone now and all because of her son's father

who was a being from another planet. She shook her head and smiled at the strange thoughts swirling inside her brain. She then fixed Jason one of his favorite shakes and a plate of pasta. He seemed to enjoy it then he was off to bed.

Lois glanced at her watch and it was almost nine; so she changed into her comfortable pajamas and a robe, went into her office to try and concentrate on something other than Clark who was now several hours late. Staring at the blank page on her computer, she realized this was not going to be easy, with his absences and not calling, but being with him was such a joy to her heart and he was such a miracle for all of them, she couldn't find any fault with him, well except for the missing memory block that he had promised to explain it to her at some point.

Sighing, she took off her reading glasses, rubbed her tired eyes, turned off the computer, and decided to watch some television in the living room, but no sooner had she found a 'romantic' movie where the lovers were confessing their undying love for each other when she heard a knock at her front door. Smiling, her heart instantly lifted in spite of his lateness and not calling, so she decided not to chew him out because she knew he must have his reasons.

She opened the door and he stood there with an apologetic and quirky smile and Lois's heart instantly melted.

"May I come in?" Clark asked hoping she wouldn't shut the door in his face, but she did look happy to see him.

She decided to pay him back just a little. "Maybe; it is pretty late," she said inwardly smiling.

His face fell then he decided to apologize. He had rehearsed it in his mind when he realized he wouldn't be able to call or to get in touch with her. "Lois, I'm sorry, but the workers in the mine were losing oxygen and I had to concentrate on them, and the ground was shaking, and then I had to rescue these kids from this burning building, and then ..."

Lois chuckled then grabbed his arm, pulled him inside, shut the door, and threw her arms around his neck. "Shut up and kiss me!"

Clark happily obliged as she stood on tiptoe and kissed him properly. "Hmm, Lois?"

"Uh, huh?" Lois replied distracted by their kisses.

"I was hoping... we could talk," he murmured as kisses rained across her cheek to her ear. Neither of them seemed to be in any hurry to talk, and continued to kiss and caress each other for a few moments more. Soon, though, they had to come up for air and rested their foreheads against the other each trying to catch their breath. Clark stroked her hair and smiled. "I can't seem to get enough of you, Lois."

"I feel the same way about you," she said and smiled as she stroked his chest.

"Come on, let's sit down for a while," he said and led her to the sofa. Once they were seated and Lois scooted as close as possible without actually being in his lap, he smiled at her playfulness and said. "Where do I begin?"

"Well, the beginning is usually a good place to start."

"Ok, but first I wanted to tell you... I do have another name, a name my birth parents gave me."

"What is it?"

"Kal-El."

"Kal-El?" She whispered pleased. "I like it."

"So do I." He smiled and pulled her closer then began his story. "Lois, I wanted to start by saying the only reason I took your memories of our time together was because... I wanted to

protect you from my secret and you'll understand better once I explain why I did it."

"So, it was you, not some hysterical amnesia, which was what the doctor's told me?"

"Yes, it was me," he stated and waited for the inevitable blow-up.

"I suspected it but of course, I wasn't sure." She looked him in the eye and she could see he regretted what he had done. "I should scream and holler at you for what you did but it's not there, Clark. I've had years to come to terms with those missing days and I realized that I could never hate you because I knew deep inside that you loved me and wanted to protect me, plus I had Jason, so having him soothed the hurt and the pain." She tried to smile as she touched his cheek.

"I don't deserve you, Lois, but thank you for not hating me."

"You're welcome now please fill in the blanks!"

"Alright, I'll start at the beginning." He took her hand. "You and I Lois, we are friends, but there was a time when we were more than friends, so much more."

"Clark, we have a son; go on."

"Perry sent us on a little trip north to Niagara Falls."

"Are you kidding me? Niagara Falls but what on earth for?"

"A story, of course, a Sunday expose on honeymooners getting ripped off."

Lois just shook her head at her boss. "That doesn't sound very Pulitzer to me."

Clark chuckled. "No, it wasn't."

"Then what happened?" Lois eagerly asked.

He took a deep breath. "Well, I accidentally tripped..." Clark began but was interrupted.

"Mom, who are you talking to?" It was Jason at the top of the stairs then he came down the stairs rubbing his eyes and then he saw his favorite superhero sitting in his living room. "Superman?"

Clark smiled. "Hello, Jason."

Shocked into silence, Lois looked between her son and the man she loved, mouth hanging open.

Chapter 3: Only a Dream

Clark smiled and went to greet his son. "Shouldn't you be asleep?"

"I heard voices. Did you come to see me?" Jason asked excited to see him again.

Unsure of what to say, Clark turned to Lois. "Well, I ... ummm ..." He hesitated.

Lois was still in shock that Jason knew Clark's secret, that it took her a moment to answer. "Jason, Mr. Clark and I were talking and it's entirely too late for you to be up; say goodnight and go back to bed."

Jason knew that tone of voice, turned and went back up the stairs. Clark felt bad for him then he called out to him. "I'll come back and see you in a few days, how's that?"

Jason turned around as the excitement came back into his eyes. "That's great, goodnight Mr. Clark; goodnight Mom."

"Goodnight, Jason," Lois and Clark both said goodnight to him.

Lois watched him for a moment then asked him a question. "How long has he known about you?"

He came over to her, sat down and took her hand. "Well, since the first week I came back, I think. Remember when you, me, Richard and Jason were watching the monitor and the

announcer said 'Superman is back in all of our lives,' well, Jason stared at me, then stared at the monitor and he just knew. Later when I came to see him, he asked me if it were true and I told him the truth. Are you mad?"

Lois shook her head and tried to smile. "No, I'm not mad, not at all; Jason has always been very bright and intuitive, but what does that say about me?" She stood up and went to stand at the window.

He came up behind her, turned her around and raised her chin. "It doesn't say anything about you. Kids are very bright, it's just when we get older, we tend to ignore those little niggling thoughts and our intuition and then we forget about it; that's all it is."

"I suppose you're right," she said and sighed.

He pulled her into his arms and decided to ask her something. "I know we only just got back together, but at some point, we should tell Jason the truth about... you know, who he really is."

She pulled back and stared at him and realized that yes Jason would have to be told, but it was too soon. "I agree, but not now, Clark, he's still adjusting to Richard being gone; he's the only father he's ever known, and it's been tough on him," she replied and left his arms.

"Besides, he's fine."

"But his powers, Lois, has he showed any signs of his abilities? It could be anything... strength, eyesight, speed?"

She sat back down on the sofa, rubbed her eyes and made a decision. Clark should know what happened on the yacht. "Come and sit down; I have to tell you something."

"Oh, boy, I have a feeling this is going to be bad. Jason has shown his powers hasn't he?"

"Yes, he has but he was only trying to protect me. One of Luthor's goons tried to kill me by bashing my head with a paper weight. Jason acted instinctively... he pushed the piano he was playing and it killed him. Jason felt terrible about it; I hugged him and told him everything would be alright and I thanked him for saving me."

"Oh, no, how horrible for him; has he mentioned the incident again?"

"No, he hasn't and I have tried to talk to him about it, but he won't. Maybe you should talk to him? He hasn't been sleeping well the past week or so."

He hugged her close. "Don't worry; I'll talk to him."

"Thank you," she said relieved.

"You're welcome." He glanced at his watch and it was past ten. "It's late; you're tired; we can finish our talk tomorrow."

She looked him in the eye to see if he was stalling again, but he just seemed concerned for her. "Alright, we can talk tomorrow. I'll see in the morning." She raised her head for a kiss.

He kissed her goodnight then pulled back after a moment. "I love you," he whispered.

She suddenly realized what he needed to hear, what she wanted to say. "I love you too."

Clark's heart soared after hearing those words as he kissed her again then hand in hand slowly walked to the door. He touched her cheek not wanting to leave. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Clark," she replied but he just stood there not moving. Lois smiled at him and with her hand on his chest she gave him a shove.

Lois shut the door then let out a huge yawn, went upstairs and collapsed onto her bed, more tired than she realized. *I suppose all those other activities earlier in the evening caught up with me.* She giggled as she thought about her man, her 'Superman.'

Lois's brain was on overdrive this night as she thought about a lot of things, Clark in particular. Her thoughts wandered hither and there and... dare she even think it... *marriage.*

Once that thought entered her mind, there was no stopping it and then a smile hovered for just a moment, then it burst through lighting up her eyes until finally she closed them and hugged her pillow. Her last thought before she drifted off was... *I wonder what our life would be like if we were well and truly married.*

And with that thought, she fell into a very, very deep sleep.

Somewhere in the mists of a dream:

Lois was very happy as she surveyed her housework, went to the window and watched the view from her vantage point, which was on a high hill overlooking Metropolis. She and Clark, her husband, had chosen this lovely home for his easy access to and from their balcony door.

She still couldn't believe she had married 'Clark Kent,' the 'nerd from 'Nowheresville,' the one man she couldn't stand for years because he was always trying to one-up her stories, but here she was married to him and with a child.

Lois walked over to the mantle and dusted off his numerous awards given to him by the city of Metropolis and around the world for his heroism as Superman as well as their many awards as reporters then stood back and admired their collection.

Suddenly, she heard a crash and she knew immediately what it was. Their son, Jason, was finding the adjustment to his super powers more and more difficult. He was trying to help with the housework but managed to throw the vacuum cleaner through the wall with his strength and super-speed. There was no way they could hand him over to a sitter, not if his powers manifested themselves at the wrong time. Lois had resigned herself to being a stay at home Mom for their son, at least until his powers were more manageable which could take years according to Clark.

She managed not to scold him, took the vacuum cleaner from him and told him to go do his homework. Jason was being home-schooled for now. Jason pouted and did as he was told. Then Lois heard a swooshing sound and sure enough Jason had taken off again into the sky. He loved it so much, there was just no stopping him when he got the urge to fly. She called her husband on his cell and told him to get back here and to bring their son back home. Lois was at the end of her rope with that boy. Spanking was out of the question because it only took one time before she realized her hand would certainly break if she tried that again.

A few minutes later, Clark flew into the house with Jason in his arms, took him to his room and Lois could hear them talking about not flying out alone, and certainly not without permission, that he was too young and someone could see him. This was the third or fourth time that Jason had done this and Clark was sterner than usual with him. Hopefully, this would be the last time.

With a peck on the cheek, Clark took off into the sky again. Minutes later, she turned on the television and saw her husband, her 'Superman,' rescuing a beautiful new reporter from the jaws of death on the freeway. Her name was Lulu, of all things and Lois realized that Clark had found someone new to rescue because she wasn't there anymore, that Lulu had filled her shoes.

Clark flew home that evening and managed to catch a vase before it hit his head. "Lois, what in the world is wrong with you?"

Lois awoke with a start, the dream was so clear to her, that she lay there thinking about it and wondered if it was a sign of what was to come; a sign that her life with Clark Kent was doomed from the start.

The Daily Planet the next morning:

Lois tried to forget about the dream, but it would not leave her alone. She shook her head and went back to work.

A strikingly beautiful blonde woman walked up to Lois's desk and asked her a question. "I'm sorry but could you direct me to...?"

Lois looked to the left and there standing before her was the same woman from her dream. Shocked she stared at her unbelieving. "What did you just say?"

"I'm looking for my cubicle, number..." Lulu glanced at her papers. "Number 22?"

"It's just over there. Are you new here?" Lois had to ask.

"Yes, I just started this morning. My name is Lulu Grant, but everyone calls me Cat, and you are?"

Lois couldn't believe it, but she managed not to show any emotion as she held out her hand. "Lois, Lois Lane," she replied. *Know your enemies*, she thought.

Lulu shook her hand. "It's nice to meet you Ms. Lane. I'll see you around," Lulu pleasantly said.

Lois frowned and shot daggers into her back. She wanted to strangle the woman. *How dare she take my place?*

Clark came up to her desk and wondered why she was frowning. He followed the direction of her glance and wondered what she thought of her new co-worker. "I see you've met Lulu, I mean Cat," he said.

Lois turned her narrow-eyed glare on her partner, daggers still flying. "Yes, why?"

"Oh, she's a new reporter here on staff and we just met. She seems very nice."

"And you know this how?"

"Well, she's new to the city and has excellent credentials according to Perry."

"Credentials are one thing but it takes more than that to be a good reporter," Lois said not wanting to talk about 'Lulu' anymore. "What kind of a name is Lulu anyway?" Lois mumbled.

Clark chuckled. "She hates the name, so she wants everyone to call her Cat, and it seems to fit."

Lois stared at him her suspicion rising. "You seem to have an opinion about her for someone whom you just met. Were you in the interview with Perry or what?"

"Actually, I was, he wanted my input. You see, Cat will be working City with us Lois," Clark cheerfully replied.

Shocked, Lois's mouth dropped open... again!

Chapter 4: Lethal Weapon

Somewhere in the Bahamas:

Alexander 'Lex' Luthor had watched numerous newsfeeds from his small and dingy hotel room in the Caribbean as news of Superman's rescues over the past few days had come over the television, and nothing had changed. He was still just as heroic as before, no difference at all. Jor-El's information about the 'red kryptonite' had been very specific concerning its effects.

After being rescued by a passing cruise ship a week after landing on the island, Kitty had parted ways with him, and now he was on his own again without access to his millions, but his contacts in the states had managed to get the red kryptonite without too much trouble. He was

sure the red kryptonite would cause Superman to go berserk, wreck havoc on all around him, but something must have happened. Either Lois Lane knew about the red kryptonite or she never got the package, but which was it? He then called his contact at the courier service and was assured that the package had been delivered.

Then he thought about it some more and Clark Kent knew everything there was to know about Superman. He was probably there when the package arrived and knowing what a snoop the man was, he probably took the necklace from her and warned her about mysterious packages from unknown senders.

Lex knew he had to come up with another plan. First of all, he had to get back to the states. He was stuck in the Caribbean with no way to get back home, with no money and no access to his millions, but that was a minor detail. He would figure something out.

With more red kryptonite at his disposal, he had to figure out a way to get it to Superman without raising suspicion on himself, that he was still alive and out to ruin Superman's reputation, bring him down to his knees and to let everyone know that he could not be trusted, that he could turn on them, and destroy them all at any moment. It was only a matter of time but he would find a way, oh yes, he would find a way.

Suddenly, a plan came to him, a plan so brilliant, that sometimes he surprised himself with the cunning greatness of his magnificent mind.

Back in Metropolis, several days later:

Lois and Jason had come home a little earlier than usual this day because Clark would be coming over for dinner and Lois had planned a special dinner for both the special 'men' in her life. Her mood had improved considerably in spite of meeting 'Lulu' and if she were a betting woman, she would bet that Clark had picked up on her jealousy and treated her with kid gloves, taking her to lunch and a quick flight above the clouds afterwards.

Tonight was also going to be a 'new beginning' for Jason and Clark to get to know each other better and hopefully Jason would open up about what happened on the yacht. Jason was still reluctant to talk about that day and about his feelings. Clark realized that bottling those feelings up over a long period could lead to trouble, specifically his powers coming to the forefront at the worst possible time.

While preparing dinner, Lois thought about her earlier conversation with Jason in the drive home from the sitters. "Mr. Clark can help you, Jason, please just listen to what he has to say."

Jason was still reluctant to talk about that day. "Mom, why do you say 'Mr. Clark, he's Superman?'"

"Jason, we never call him that not while he's in his disguise, you know, as Clark Kent. It's too dangerous for him. Do you understand?"

"I guess so," he responded not understanding.

"Listen to me, Jason, this is important. Clark needs to be 'Mr. Clark' so he can live and work in peace like everyone else, so he can live a normal life and honey, he's counting on us to help him to do that and he can count on us, right, honey?"

Jason understood. "Ok, Mom, he can count on me."

She smiled at her son. "That's a good boy."

A few hours later, Clark arrived for dinner on time Lois noted which pleased her enormously putting her even more at ease. *It was only a dream, Lois, forget about it.* Lois

opened the door and she couldn't help her eyes as they roamed over his handsome face, his broad shoulders and long legs. He looked fantastic with a dark suit and striped tie which set off his good looks to distraction.

"Good evening, Lois," Clark smiled at her reaction, exactly what he was hoping for.

"Wow, good evening, Clark. You look nice, but you didn't have to change clothes just for us."

"This is a big deal for me, Lois. Jason and I well, we've never talked as 'Mr. Clark and Jason' before. It's important and I wanted to make a good impression."

Lois chuckled. "You're nervous?"

He straightened his tie and smoothed his hair in place. "Only a little," he lied.

Lois thought that was sweet. She leaned up on her tiptoes and kissed his cheek. "Just be yourself and you'll do fine."

He smiled and tried to relax. "Thank you Lois for your faith in me; it means everything."

"You're very welcome; now, let's eat. I'll get Jason."

The dinner did not go exactly as planned. Both Jason and Clark were quiet seemingly very nervous about their talk, and she couldn't help but notice the similarities between the two, not only their mannerisms but also their looks and smiles too. She could have kicked herself for not picking up on it before and shook her head at her blindness. "Well, why don't you two head on up while I clear the dishes?" They both hesitated. "Go on now... scoot!" She waved her arms toward the stairs.

Clark was the first to get up and headed toward the stairs. He waited as Jason joined him, then he followed his son to his room. Clark sat down on the desk chair while Jason sat on his bed. He immediately grabbed his backpack, pulled out some books and a small box.

"Do you have homework, Jason; I could help you?" Clark offered hoping to get a conversation started.

"No, I finished it at the sitters," Jason said as he opened a book and began to read.

Clark tried to come up with a question about the yacht but before he could say anything, he began to feel his eyes start to burn as if...! Then suddenly laser beams shot out of his eyes shocking his son. The beams hit the headboard inches from his son's head. Clark covered his eyes and ran from the room.

Lois had heard the noise and wondered what had happened. "Clark what in the world is going on and what's wrong with your eyes?"

"Lois, there's red kryptonite in Jason's room somewhere. Please go and find it; I'll head out and hopefully the distance will lessen the effects." No sooner had he said that then he began to float up towards the ceiling. Lois tried to pull him down but he was too heavy.

"Clark, what should I do?"

"Go and find the red kryptonite and throw it into the lake; please hurry, go now!" He instructed as he tried to concentrate on returning to the floor.

Lois ran up the stairs, made sure Jason was alright then she searched his room. "Mom is Mr. Clark alright and what are you looking for?"

"Jason did you bring something home from school today, something new, something unusual? It's important honey."

"Well, the teacher gave me this box and said to give it to you." He handed her the box, Lois opened it and the red kryptonite was inside. She immediately ran downstairs, then out the back door and threw it into the lake. She came back into the house then Clark fell from the

ceiling and hit the floor.

Jason followed her and wondered what was happening. He arrived downstairs and Mr. Clark was on the floor and his Mom was stroking his head and asking him if he was alright.

"Clark, can you hear me?"

"I'm alright; give me a minute."

Lois couldn't help but think about her dream and how uncontrollable Jason had been, but this was different somehow. Jason had been rebelling against his confinement, but Clark wanted to control his powers but couldn't somehow. "You called it 'kryptonite'? But this was different from before and it's nothing like the green version, right?"

"Yes, it has to be from my home planet Lois. I wish I could talk to Jor-El. Just one of the things Luthor took from me." He sighed. "The red kryptonite only affects my powers and my emotions. You know what the green does to me. This time my powers were controlling me. Each time I come in contact with the red kryptonite, there's no telling what it could do to me, that's why we have to be very careful from now on, Lois."

"And we have to find Lex, the sooner the better."

"Mr. Clark, was this my fault?" Jason asked worried about him.

Clark held up his hand and Jason came forward and took it. "No, son, it wasn't your fault."

Then Jason began to wonder about the yacht and what he had done. "Mr. Clark what happened to me... on the yacht?"

Clark glanced at Lois and she nodded her head in agreement.

Clark got up from the floor and brought Jason over to the sofa. "Jason, what I'm going to tell you, is something your mother and I have wanted to tell you, well, for a while now."

"What is it?"

"Your mother and I have known each other for a long time Jason before you were born; we're very close."

"She never mentioned you," Jason said confused.

"I know; you told me. But before I went away on my trip, we became close and... there really is no easy way to say this." He squeezed his hand. "Jason, you're my son. The things you did on the yacht they're because of the powers you inherited from me."

Jason removed his hand from his and shook his head not believing it. "No, it's not true," he cried. "I have a father; his name is Richard White!" He yelled then turned and ran up the stairs.

Lois and Clark stared after him in shock.

"Jason, Jason, come back here!" Lois hollered after him.

Clark closed his eyes and hung his head then Lois came over to him and took him into her arms, holding him close.

Jason meanwhile picked up his Superman doll and without realizing his strength threw it as hard as he could; it hit the wall with a crack and fell to the floor. "Superman is my father?"

Clark left her arms after a moment. "Go to him, Lois, he needs you. He's been through so much and maybe it was too much for him to handle right now. I'm so sorry."

Lois stroked his hair. "There's nothing to be sorry about; I wanted him to know the truth too. Please don't go anywhere and Clark, he'll come around in time. You'll see."

"I hope so," he replied and tried to give her an encouraging smile.

She squeezed his hand and headed for the stairs.

Clark decided it was time for him to go. *I've done enough to hurt my son, my family.* He shuddered when he thought about what could have happened. Maybe it was just too much to hope for, having Lois and Jason in his life. It was a fantasy, but the reality was he wasn't cut out for this life, being a father and maybe one day a husband. His mind wandered then to a future where his one true love and their son could live together and be a family, but that's all it was... a fantasy based on nothing but false hopes and shattered dreams.

It was time to face reality so he set his mind to the real world, and the threat that was still out there, Lex Luthor and his insane plots and schemes, wrecking havoc with his family and innocent people. He glanced up the stairs and then left the house and headed to the police station to give them the last known whereabouts of Lex Luthor.

Chapter 5: Heredity

Lois knocked and then entered her son's room and Jason was sitting on the floor, Superman doll in his hands. He wiped his eyes with the back of his hand, looked up at his Mom then back at the doll.

Lois saw the damage to the headboard and the wall, sighed and sat down next to him. She took the doll from him, examined it for damage and then asked her son a question. "Do you want a new one?" The question had a double meaning.

Jason looked at his mother. "I don't know."

"You don't have to decide right now, but you should think about it, ok?"

"Ok," he replied.

She took his hands in hers. "Honey, I know you miss your Daddy."

"Don't you miss him?"

"Yes, I do, Jason, he's a wonderful man and a dear friend and he was there for us when we needed him the most, but Richard and I, we don't care for each other, not like Mr. Clark and I, but that doesn't mean that he won't be there for you. You know you can call him anytime and he'll come by and talk to you, take you out to the movies and have fun just like before."

"It's not the same."

"I know, but Mr. Clark, he's..." She hesitated.

"What is he Mom?"

"He's the man I love, Jason, and if you give him a chance I know you would love him too." She raised his chin to look at her. "Will you do this for me?"

He shook his head unsure what to do. "I don't know," he replied.

"Jason, remember our talk earlier today about Mr. Clark and whether to call him that or Superman?"

"Yeah, I remember."

"Well, when you think about Superman, what comes to your mind the most?"

Jason thought about it for a moment. "Well, I like his costume; he's tall; he's a hero; he likes kids; he helps people all over the world; and..."

"What else, what were you going to say?"

"He has a nice smile," he replied thinking about their talks.

"Oh Jason," she said and pulled him close. "Mr. Clark is all of those things too, and I agree, his smiles are something to see, and you know what, Jason, you have his eyes and his

heroic spirit."

"I'm a hero?" He asked unbelieving.

"Yes you are, Jason, you're my hero," she replied and touched his cheek.

Jason wanted to believe that, but he had his doubts. Suddenly, he found the courage to tell her what was really bothering him. "Mom, I hope he doesn't hate me for what I did."

"Of course he doesn't hate you. None of it was your fault and you saved my life." He kissed his dark head and held him close realizing it was the first time he had mentioned the yacht himself without her having to bring it up. "It's alright to talk about the yacht, honey."

"I was so scared for you Mom."

"I know you were but you were so brave and you wanted to protect me." She pulled back and took his face between her palms. "You saved my life, Jason," she told him again eyes tearing up. "And I'll never forget it, not ever."

They were both emotional as he went back into her arms holding her tight. "I love you, Mom."

"I love you too, honey," she whispered holding him a moment longer in a tight hug.

They pulled back and Jason stared at the Superman doll again. "He's really my Dad?"

"Yes, Jason, he is."

The idea was growing on him. "Is he still here; did he leave?"

"Yes he's downstairs; do you want to see him?"

"Yes, I do."

"Come on, let's go see him."

But Clark had left the house without saying goodbye and Lois was so worried. She knew that he was upset and he probably just needed to take to the skies and maybe think about things, so she decided not to call him, but to let him have this time to himself.

"Where is he, Mom?"

"He probably had an emergency, but he'll be back, Jason. Come on it's late, and it's time for bed."

Two days later, the Daily Planet bullpen:

Lois was starting to worry. Clark hadn't returned to the office or called and there hadn't been any saves in the city by him, but he had been seen overseas and Lois believed that he was searching for Lex. She decided to give him a call just to remind him to be careful and that she and Jason were waiting for him to come home.

Lois almost hung up the phone but then she heard the connection go through. "Superman, are you there? It's Lois."

"I know it's you, Lois, what is it?"

He sounded so detached and Lois could tell he was still hurting. "I was worried when you didn't call."

Clark felt bad about leaving the house without saying anything and not calling. "I'm sorry, Lois, but there was a good lead on Lex's location, so I'm in the Caribbean, and I think I'm getting close."

"Please be careful."

"You know I will."

There was a moment of awkward silence.

"Superman, if there's anything I can do to help you here, make some calls to my contacts, anything at all, you just let me know."

Clark had to smile. "If I think of anything, I'll let you know."
"Thanks, Superman," she said then paused. "I'll see you later?"
"Sure, goodbye, Lois."
"Goodbye, Superman."

Clark hung up the phone and his chest tightened. She was still *his* Lois in her mind and in his mind as well. There really was no way he could give her up, give up on his son. They were as ingrained on his soul as his DNA, there was no changing it. He sighed and headed to his destination.

He soon landed on the island of the Bahamas, checked into a hotel that was off the beaten path. The only cruise ship that landed in this part of the island had docked there within days of the 'New Krypton' incident and it was highly likely that Lex was still there on the island.

Lex was at that very moment hatching a plan to escape the Caribbean. It was imperative that he return to his many projects which were put on hold since the 'New Krypton' incident went bust, specifically his cloning of the Man of Steel which was still in the works. There was no stopping it now. His orders were that if he were unavailable to monitor the progress of the cloning, that it would continue no matter what happened.

Lex was furious because apparently his second attempt at poisoning the alien also did not go as planned, but he would not escape this next attempt. Luthor had also come up with a back-up plan. He had decided to turn himself into the authorities then they would extradite him to the United States. There was no way the police could prove that renegade scientists from Cadmus Labs had not replaced him with an insane and violent clone that was responsible for all the crimes he would be charged with. The clone was not him; all he needed was proof which wouldn't be a problem at all.

Later that same day, the DP bullpen:

After hanging up the telephone with Superman, Lois had come up with a plan to help him. She entered Perry's office highly agitated and was immediately reprimanded for interrupting his meeting, but Lois would not be deterred.

"Alright, Lane, this had better be good; what is so urgent that it couldn't wait?" Perry asked his star reporter.

"Perry, I just got off the phone with Superman. He's in the Caribbean trying to track down Luthor."

Perry groaned. "Another mad scheme no doubt," he grumbled then took a seat. "Go on, let's hear it."

Lois was too agitated to sit down, so she began to pace as she told her story. "Apparently, Luthor has tried to poison Superman on several different occasions, but both times he failed."

"Did you say poison? With what?"

Lois glanced around, went and shut the door to his office. "Perry this is not to be printed, got it?"

"Of course what happened?"

"Apparently, there's 'red kryptonite' out there that can cause Superman to act differently than he normally would. The first time it happened he became arrogant, aggressive, and self-centered. There was no stopping him."

"Did you say *red* kryptonite? And what happened the second time?"

"The second time was far worse than the first, Perry. He couldn't control his powers, lasers shot out of his eyes and he couldn't seem to stop himself from floating."

"That is bad and Superman thinks Luthor was behind it?"

"There's no doubt in his mind that he's behind it Perry, but there is something we can do about it."

"What's on your mind, Lane?"

"I could go down there."

"Forget it."

"But, Chief!"

"No, way, Lois; Superman would have my head for it."

"But I know where Lex is, Chief. I wouldn't be in any danger; Superman would be there. I could contact him as soon as I arrive and if he tried any tricks against Superman, like try and poison him again then I would be there for him; I'd be his back-up."

"You ... Lois Lane, a back-up for Superman?" Perry couldn't help but chuckle.

"I'm serious Chief. Who do you think saved his butt when he was poisoned?"

"You?"

Lois crossed her arms for answer. "Yes it was me."

Perry stroked his chin. "You may have a point."

"Great, as soon as I can make arrangements with my sitter, I'll be on the next flight to the Bahamas and remember to leave that front page available for my story, Chief."

Perry shook his head and watched her leave, but of course, the bad feelings came into his mind just like always. *Maybe another calamity won't strike again?*

He shook his head and prepared himself for the worst!

On the island of Nassau in the Bahamas:

Clark Kent, mild-mannered reporter for a major metropolitan newspaper, entered a hotel not far from the beach and he didn't know if it was his sensitivity to smells, but the restaurant across the street with its fish fry caused his eyes to sting. This was the third hotel he'd been to in the past hour, and after x-raying the place with no sign of Luthor, the next option was a face-to-face meeting with the hotel clerk. This shouldn't take long, he thought, as he walked up to the desk clerk, reached inside his wallet and showed the man a photograph of Lex. "Have you seen this man in the past week or so?"

The clerk was not use to lying as his eyes shifted back and forth. He'd done a lot of it since that gentleman checked in over a month ago. "No, I haven't. Is he in some kind of trouble?"

"No trouble; he's a... relative and I've been concerned because we haven't spoken to him for over a month."

"Oh, I see; I'm very sorry, but no, I haven't seen him."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sorry," the clerk said but couldn't look him in the eye.

"Thank you for your help," Clark sighed and put the photo back inside his wallet. He was about to leave when he spotted a woman sitting in a rattan lounge chair. His eyes landed on a pair of long shapely legs crossed at the knee, then wandered slowly up to her face and even though she was reading a newspaper, he would know those legs anywhere. "Lois?" He whispered shocked!

Chapter 6: Partners

The lobby of a dingy hotel in Nassau:

Lois lowered her newspaper when she heard him approach. "Oh, hi, Clark," she cheerfully greeted her partner all nonchalant as if they were out and about on a Sunday afternoon.

"What are you doing here? Don't answer that," he said knowing the answer. "Come on let's get out of here so we can talk."

"Slow down for a minute, Clark. If you know why I'm here, then don't you want to know if I found Lex or not?" That got his attention.

He took a seat beside her. "Well, have you?"

"Yep, he's here."

"Yes, he's in Nassau, I know that."

"He's in this hotel and I've already contacted the authorities."

"Are you sure; the desk clerk said..."

"He's lying."

"I had a feeling, but I x-rayed the hotel just before I came inside and I didn't see him."

"He'll be back in a while. I've been waiting for him."

"How long have you been here?"

"Since yesterday."

"I've been searching for days; how did you find him so quick?"

"I never reveal my sources, Smallville, you know that," she smiled at his expression.

Suddenly, there was a commotion in the lobby. Lex arrived and the police quickly came up behind him and put him in handcuffs.

Lois and Clark could not believe how quick that was. Lex was sputtering and shouting at all of them that it was all part of his plan, and that they would all find out the truth soon enough.

"What is he babbling about?" Lois asked.

"I haven't a clue," Clark said.

Lex spotted Lois and Clark and he was always underestimating those two. But they would pay for this, big time. Then he smiled but the smile never reached his eyes; they shot daggers at them.

Lois and Clark had seen that look before, but seeing Lex in handcuffs made their day. They waved goodbye and watched as Lex was lead away.

Meanwhile back in Metropolis:

Perry's assistant urgently poked her head inside his office door. "Chief, you need to turn on the news right now."

Perry turned on the television and there being lead away in handcuffs was Lex Luthor but also standing there right beside him was Superman. "Is this a joke?" Perry asked shocked as he turned up the volume.

"No joke Chief, Lex was arrested. He turned himself in a little while ago. They're taking him down to city lock-up for questioning."

"But why is Superman there as if... he supports him or something?" Perry wrinkled his nose as if he smelled something odorous.

"I have no idea."

"I need to reach Lois; get me her itinerary." He pulled out his cell and dialed her number but the call wasn't going through.

Back in Nassau, in a much nicer hotel:

"This is nice," Lois said but she had to wonder if her hotel the Planet had booked was nicer. She took in the amazing view of the ocean and the suite was decorated in charming shades of blue and yellow. She went out onto the balcony and breathed in the ocean air invigorating her.

Clark wasn't looking at the view or the room. His eyes wandered over her luscious curves from behind, from the tips of her toes to the top of her head. She looked lovely with her yellow sundress, her hair pinned up with wisps of dark hair falling down her neck, and the sides of her face. She then removed the pins from her hair and shook it free. Clark closed his eyes and swallowed.

"We should call Perry with our story," she said as she came back inside to unpack a few things.

He went over to her and stopped her by taking her hand. "It can wait for an hour... or two," he whispered and smiled with that predatory smile Lois had thought never to see again, but it was there nonetheless. It did turn her on in spite of the uncertainty. She stared into his eyes and waited for the red rock effect to enter his eyes but it didn't. She touched his cheek then removed his glasses. "It's you, isn't it?"

"It's me Lois and I want you ... NOW!" He exclaimed and then he pulled her to him and kissed her like he wanted to do since the moment he had first seen her in the hotel lobby.

Lois moaned into his mouth and kissed him back. He released her mouth so she could breathe a little. "Humm, I want you too," she said in answer to his passionate kisses.

Soon they on the huge bed wrapped up in each other's arms kissing and caressing not able to get close enough with so much excitement and passion that Lois found it hard to believe she hadn't figured out the truth before; so much time wasted. She had to have him, as she pulled him to her holding him close. Clark's mouth crashed down on hers as his excitement of being here with her fueled his desire to a fever pitch. He'd dreamed of them like this so many times and now she was here with him kissing him and loving him like never before. *Heaven must feel like this.*

Lois opened her eyes and drank in the dark form that was above her. She felt lost beneath him. He loomed over her then. He was so masculine and strong, but he was also gentle, caring and he was hers. He moved on top of her, touching her, and kissing his way down to her breasts. She arched her back and moaned. It felt so good. "Clark."

"You like that, do you?" She tasted like heaven to him. She was so responsive to his touch. He touched her everywhere he could reach, her beautiful breasts, her arms, her long legs and firm thighs. Her hands were in his hair, on his shoulders, down his arms, and his thighs, touching that part of him that was so ready and willing. Clark moaned. Lois was touching him. He touched her there, and she nearly flew off the bed.

He had to have her as he entered her warm sheath slowly at first then holding her face in his hands, he kissed her passionately, his tongue thrusting in rhythm with his hips. Lois wrapped her arms and legs around him trying to get closer. The pleasure was almost too sweet as he buried his face in her neck and kissed her throat and her ear stimulating her then Lois began to shake and moan. His climax then rocketed through him with mind-numbing force.

Lois screamed his name and he pushed once more and then he let everything go. He collapsed on top of her, his breath coming in short gasps.

After a moment, he rolled to his back taking her with him. He pulled her closer, stroking her hair and arms. Several minutes passed while their breathing returned to normal.

"Wow, that was... indescribable," she whispered remembering their earlier encounter. Lois sobered suddenly as she stroked his chest. "I love you, Clark."

Clark slowly opened his eyes and smiled at the amazing woman who held his heart captive. "I love you too, Lois." He pulled her closer as she snuggled under his chin.

"Can I tell you something?" Lois asked contentedly.

"Of course, what is it?"

"Jason came back down after you left."

"He wanted to see me?"

"Yeah, he did."

He pulled her closer. "Thank you, Lois; I know it was what you said to him."

"It will take some time, but he is willing to talk to you."

"That's all I ask for now, Lois."

She leaned up on her elbow trying to read his thoughts. "You had doubts, didn't you?"

"I was pretty devastated after what happened. I thought maybe..." He hesitated.

"What, what did you think?"

"That maybe... we weren't meant to be together after all."

"Clark Jerome Kent, enough of that kind of talk ok; look at us." She looked into his eyes and stroked his cheek. "Nothing and no one could ever change what we feel for each other, not even you."

The woman was amazing. "I believe you, Lois, I do," he smiled.

Those two words reminded Lois of her dream and she had to admit that she too had her doubts before, but that's all behind them now. "Good now, let's get some shut-eye; Perry will be calling once he finds out Luthor has been arrested."

An hour later, Clark couldn't sleep so he turned on the television and he could not believe his eyes or his ears. He sat up slowly bringing Lois with him.

"What's going on?" Lois asked drowsy from sleep.

Clark turned up the volume. The announcer spoke into the camera.

"We're outside city lock-up this afternoon with some stunning news. The authorities have just arrested Lex Luthor after he turned himself in, according to our sources. Luthor was a wanted criminal since his alleged failed attempt to destroy Superman and this planet only a few short months ago. And now it appears bygones are bygones as Superman and Lex Luthor are now on the same side.

"I've just been handed a statement just released by the police apparently made by Mr. Luthor upon his arrest and I quote: 'I am the real Lex Luthor. The man who looks like me and who perpetrated that horrible act against Superman and the people of this planet 'New Krypton,' was not me. That was a clone and I can prove it.'

"There you have it folks. The authorities will have to sort out this mess and we can only speculate as to why Superman is here in support of his archenemy. Only he can answer that question. And now we return you to your regularly scheduled programming."

Shaking his head, Clark turned off the television. Lois slowly turned to face her lover then she raised the sheet up to her chest not saying anything.

Clark read her mind, frowned and then his eyes widened. "It's me Lois. Come on, you know I wouldn't have anything to do with that lunatic and besides, there's no way that's Luthor. He's here in Nassau; it's going to take days if not weeks to extradite him."

"But how is this possible? He looks exactly like you and that man... it's Lex, isn't it?"

Clark was beginning to have doubts and now he began to wonder. "I really can't be sure, Lois."

"What in the world is Lex doing?" Lois asked at a loss but also very worried. "And how in the world did he get your DNA to clone you, Clark?"

"I've been thinking about that Lois. I never told you what happened on the island."

"Oh, Clark, you don't have to tell me if you don't want to."

"It's alright. Luthor's plan was to infect me with diluted green kryptonite and it worked. I didn't feel the effects when I first landed on the island but it wasn't long before I was on my knees trying to stay alive, and needless to say there was a lot of blood."

"I'm so sorry you went through that." Lois was getting worked up. "Lex is so evil; he needs to be put away for a long time."

He pulled her close to his side and thought about what Lex could possibly be doing. "He will go to jail and it won't be long now, but this cloning business has me worried. I know someone at STAR Labs who knows a lot about cloning."

Lois then began to think about Lex and when he had been arrested earlier in the day. "I think I know a way to prove who the real Lex is."

"Really, what are you thinking?"

"Did you see that ring on his finger?"

"No, what ring?"

"It had a green stone inside and knowing Lex, it's probably kryptonite and because you didn't feel the effects, then it was probably diluted just like on the island. So, if that was a clone then why would he be wearing a stone that could hurt you?"

"I don't recall seeing the clone wearing one on television."

"Exactly," Lois said and smiled.

"I think you figured it out." He shook his head at his brilliant and beautiful partner.

"You're amazing you know that?"

She smiled flirtatiously at him then she kissed his throat. "Humm, now aren't you glad I came?"

"What do you think?" He answered then showed her just how much he wanted her there.

Chapter 7: Bizarro

Early morning, the next day, the DP bullpen:

Lois and Clark had come straight from the airport to the DP after their long overnight flight home. It was a Saturday morning and Jason was still at the sitters, but Lois would be picking him up in a few hours. Right now though, Perry wanted an update on the Luthor arrests both in Metropolis and in Nassau. The Luthor 'clone' and Superman's obvious defection to the Luthor camp was on everyone's lips, on all the news channels, on television, online and in the papers, but only a few knew the whole story and now Perry would know too.

Clark knocked on Perry's door and entered without waiting for a response. "We're back, Chief."

"Come in, come in; I've been waiting for you," Perry said as he waved them in.

Everyone took a seat then Lois spoke up. "We got your messages Chief, and we've seen the newsfeeds, videos and we've been online too."

Perry chuckled. "I can just imagine the looks on your faces when you saw that news conference."

"It was definitely a shock," Clark said as he shook his head.

"Have you had a chance to speak to Superman? What did he say?" Perry asked dying to know.

"That thing, whatever it is, is also a clone," Clark said.

"I suspected it because since I left you those messages, the 'clone' has been seen around town and he's not the same as the first day he appeared. His complexion and facial features have changed, he's uncoordinated, and when he speaks it's almost childlike."

"It sounds like Luthor got it all wrong because there's only one Superman," Lois said and smiled at her partner.

Perry couldn't help but notice their intimate looks. "Is there something you want to tell me?"

"No, nothing, Chief," Lois said and kept her mouth shut for a change.

Perry had his doubts. "So, tell me, I want to know all that went down in Nassau. Kent, you were the first one down there, so what happened?" Perry asked wanting to know all the details.

"Wait a minute; you knew Clark was already down there?" Lois asked her boss then turned back to face him. Clark had the decency to look guilty as he glanced at the ceiling.

"Of course; come on now Lois, with your history of getting into trouble I couldn't just send you down there alone, besides I thought you knew he was there." He gave them a sly grin. "Don't you two 'talk' to each other?"

"Of course we do, Chief, it's just, well ..." She glanced at Clark for help.

"We got our wires crossed this time, Chief," Clark said and quirked a smile.

"Uh, huh," Perry mumbled suspicious but he didn't believe a word of it.

"Can we please stay on the subject at hand?" Lois asked weary of the conversation.

"Anyway, Chief, Lois was very helpful. She found Luthor on her own, contacted the authorities and Luthor was arrested shortly thereafter. I on the other hand, couldn't find him," Clark said and glanced at Lois.

Lois smiled at him thankful for the praise.

Perry tried not to roll his eyes and gave praise where it was due. "Good job, Lois."

"Thanks, Chief," Lois replied and couldn't help but gloat just a little.

"So tell me, which one is the real Luthor?" Perry asked.

"The one in Nassau," Clark replied.

"You're sure?"

"Positive," Lois replied.

"You know Chief it was Lois who figured out a way to tell the difference between them."

"Really, what is it?"

"The real Lex was wearing a 'green kryptonite' ring and the clone wasn't. You know he wouldn't pass up a chance to destroy Superman."

Perry stroked his chin. "Of course he wouldn't." He grinned at Lois. "That was pretty observant of you Lois."

It wasn't in Lois to be humble. "Yes it was."

Perry and Clark had to laugh.

After a few moments, Perry shook his head. "Excellent work guys, so when can I get my front page story?" He asked and rubbed his hands together.

"In a few hours, Chief," Lois said and chuckled at her boss.

"I'll look for it then," Perry said then his phone rang. He answered it but glanced at his star reporters. "Why are you two still here? Get to work," he commanded then went back to his phone call.

As Lois and Clark headed back to their desks, Lois glanced at her watch. "Look at the time; I promised the sitter I'd pick Jason up at 10:00."

"How is he doing, Lois, I mean, you know what I mean?"

"His special gifts haven't been a problem, not yet anyway. It has been hard for him, but being around other children is good for him. The sitter I found is wonderful; she has three kids around Jason's age, so he's adjusting."

"I'm glad, Lois. I can't wait to see him," Clark said getting excited.

Lois grabbed her bag and smiled. "He can't wait to see you too," she said and headed out. "I'll be back in a flash."

"Bye Lois," Clark said and watched her enter the elevator. His feelings were clearly visible for anybody to see.

"You haven't gotten over her have you." It was Perry and it wasn't a question.

Clark was so intent on watching Lois that he hadn't heard Perry's question. "Oh, hi, Chief, what did you say?"

Perry shook his head then he became serious. "You know you have some very stiff competition."

Clark was confused at first. "Oh, you mean him?" He asked not surprised by Perry's statement.

"Yeah, Richard didn't really have a chance once he came back. That was the reason he left; he just couldn't compete."

"I know that Chief," Clark said not liking the direction of Perry's thoughts then he began to squirm and tried to end the conversation. "I need to get started on that story. Lois should be back with Jason in a little while."

Perry was genuinely concerned. "Just be careful, Kent." And with that comment, Perry left him to his work.

Clark watched Perry go back into his office then those nagging doubts entered his mind. *I know she loves me; me, Clark Kent not just Superman... but he is me. Just stop it Clark.* He shook his head to clear away those hurtful thoughts, booted up his computer and got to work on the story.

Twenty minutes later Lois and Jason arrived back at the Planet, but before she could enter the building, she heard a swooshing sound. Smiling, she looked up into the sky but it wasn't Superman, it was the other one.

She knew it wasn't Clark because the 'S' on his chest was now backward, his cape was torn and dirty, his face was 'deformed' almost grotesque, and he didn't seem to be able to stand up straight. Lois was revolted by the sight of him then suddenly she felt pity for him, which surprised her.

Lois pulled Jason to her side and backed up from the entrance. Numerous onlookers

watched the other one with curiosity as they speculated what would happen next.

The other one landed just in front of them and then he spoke to her. "Lo... is?"

He knows me? Lois thought. *But of course, he has Clark's DNA and his memories.* "Stay away from me," Lois commanded even though she was terrified, she tried to be stern.

He acted as if he hadn't heard her as he came closer. He suddenly cocked his head to the side and looked at Jason. "Hel... lo."

"Mom?" Jason was very afraid.

"It's alright; he won't hurt us," Lois wasn't so sure about that, as she backed up again.

Clark heard the loud voices, the commotion and when Lois's heartbeat spiked, he hurriedly entered the elevator pulling off his tie as he went. Moments later he was hovering over the scene in front of the Daily Planet and moments later landed directly between Lois and Jason and the other one.

"Go inside Lois," he commanded and hoped she would obey.

Lois didn't need to be told twice as she pulled Jason inside the Planet lobby but decided to watch from a short distance just inside the revolving doors. "How bizarre is this?" Lois whispered.

Clark also felt pity for the clone and wondered how he was going to handle this. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw that the crowd was getting larger and realized that fighting him here and now would be pointless because he did have his powers, so he decided to try and reason with him to get him to move on. It was also clear from the looks of him that the clone was either very sick or dying.

"You should leave Metropolis, you're not welcome here," Clark said hoping to get through to him.

"Metropolis?" He looked around. "My home; me no leave."

Clark sighed. He needed another plan. He suddenly charged the clone, picked him up and flew him high into the sky. Clark had to hold on tighter because the clone wanted a fight, and so they fought in midair high above the city. Clark managed to avoid the clone's punches because they were awkward and ill-timed. The fight went on and on. *It's time for this to end,* Clark thought.

Lois and Jason came out of the building to watch the scene play out.

Clark then managed to get a good hold on him from behind but he realized the clone was getting weaker, while he on the other hand was getting stronger. *Was it possible the sun was affecting both of them but in different ways?* Clark flew higher and higher up toward the sun and then he could feel the clone's breathing become shallow. It was time.

Clark took him to the Fortress where he laid him down and held him for a moment. "The pain will be gone soon."

"I have... a name."

"What is it?"

"Bizarro. My father... gave it to me."

"Your father?"

"Lex ... Luthor."

Clark's jaw tightened but he didn't say anything.

Bizarro suddenly clutched Clark's arm, took his last breath and then his eyes closed... forever.

Clark laid him down, sighed and thought about Lex and his mad schemes. *When will it all*

end... if ever?

Back at the Planet, Jason had a few questions. "Mom who was that man and where did he come from?"

"It's a long story, honey."

"But...?"

"We'll talk about it tonight. Go on, finish your coloring book, Mr. Clark will want to see it when he gets back." Lois didn't want to talk about the clone.

Sighing she got back to the story and Clark had gotten along pretty well. It was clear from his input that Lex was behind the New Krypton fiasco and the cloning, even though they had no real proof. She, of course, could be considered a witness from her experience on the yacht, but her testimony could be considered biased towards Superman. They needed more besides the green ring to tie Lex to New Krypton and the cloning experiments. Lois suddenly remembered the woman from the yacht. *I remember now; it was Katherine... that was her name.*

A few minutes later, a sad and depressed Clark exited the elevator, saw his family and tried to smile but it didn't reach his eyes. That's how he saw them; they were his family. His heart had found no other way to look at them; it was just the way it was, the way it would always be.

Jason was the first to see him. "Mr. Clark, you're back!" Jason exclaimed and felt compelled to welcome him back. He jumped out of his chair and ran to him.

Clark was thrilled by his son's welcome. It was just what he needed. "Hi, Jason," he said and picked him up and gave him a hug, as tears sprang into his eyes.

Jason pulled back, saw his tears and touched his cheek. "Are you ok?"

"I'm alright," Clark replied and set him down. "What's going on around here?"

Lois was so touched by the scene that she couldn't speak for a moment. "Everything is fine, but can we finish this at the house, I have some research I need in order to finish the article."

"Sure, I need to speak to Perry first; give me a minute."

"Ok, Jason, get your things, we're leaving in a few minutes."

"Alright, Mom."

Clark entered Perry's office after knocking. He went to the window and looked up at the sky. He had made a decision, but it felt as if his heart were breaking, shattered into a million pieces never to be whole again.

Perry watched him for a moment. "How's the article coming, Kent?"

"It's good, but the reason I needed to see you, it's about Lois and Jason." He paused as his chest tightened the pain almost unbearable. "Look out for them, Chief. I know you care about them."

"Of course I do." He watched him for a moment not liking what he was hearing. "What are you trying to say, Kent?"

"I may have to go away for a while," he murmured as he tried to ignore the pain those words caused.

"But, you just got back. What is this really about?"

"You were right, I can't compete with him," Clark murmured as he closed his eyes. That wasn't the real reason he was leaving, but it was one Perry would understand then he turned to

go.

Perry suddenly felt bad about the things he had said. Lois and Clark have always had this connection from the moment they had met. He had seen it back then and now it seemed to be back just as strong as ever, but circumstances always seemed to get in the way. Maybe it was their time now and Perry felt he had to do something to see that they didn't throw this chance away, not this time. "Sit down, Kent."

"I have to go," Clark said not in the mood for a lecture.

"Sit down... NOW!" Perry commanded in a voice that no one could ignore.

Clark sighed and took a seat. "You're not going to talk me out of this."

"If you've made up your mind, but I don't think you have," Perry said and went to stand at the door and watched Lois and Jason for a minute.

Perry turned back to him. "I know you love them, don't deny it."

"Of course I love them; that's not the issue."

"I can't believe you would say that," Perry said disappointed in him then he went to stand before him. "It's the only issue here, Kent. Aren't you forgetting something? I know those two. I've been here, seen a lot over the years, and I knew that she didn't belong with my nephew. Their relationship crumbled before you came back into her life. Lois did not love him, not the way she loves you."

His head came up at those words. "I know Lois didn't tell you that."

"No, but it's as plain as the nose on my face how she feels. I know Lois. She hides her feelings well, but deep down under that tough exterior is a woman in love. You can't throw that away, Kent, not again."

Clark closed his eyes and thought about his words and he knew they were true. He had promised Lois he would never leave her again. He remembered the look in her eyes when she asked him if he were leaving and it was there right there for him to see. She did love him and they would survive this crisis with Luthor and move forward as a family. He just had to have faith in them and what they feel for each other. He stood up and shook Perry's hand. "Thank you Chief. I'll see you on Monday."

"See you on Monday, Kent, and I want that article as promised."

Clark shook his head and grinned. "You'll have it in a little while, Chief."

"Excellent; I can't wait to read it."

Clark left Perry's office with a new strength and purpose. He took a deep breath and watched his family for a moment then he went to Jason and picked him up holding him close. "Lois, before we leave, Jason and I need a few minutes."

"Oh, ok, I'll be waiting here when you get back," Lois said and smiled understanding.

Clark and Jason headed for the elevator then Clark pushed the button for the roof. He sat Jason down and held his hand.

"I'm not allowed on the roof, Mr. Clark," Jason said wondering what was up.

"I know, but just this once, ok, I'm sure your Mom would understand."

"Ok," Jason replied as they exited the elevator and headed up to the roof.

Jason became excited as he took in the Daily Planet globe, all the tall buildings and he could even see the river. "Wow, this is great, Mr. Clark."

"I knew you would like it. Here, how's this? Better?" Clark said as he picked him up so he could see the sights.

"Thank you, Mr. Clark," Jason replied then he had a thought. "Are we going flying, Mr.

Clark?" Jason couldn't help asking.

"No, not today, but one day real soon," Clark replied chuckling.

"Really do you mean it?" Jason couldn't contain his excitement.

"Sure, I mean it," he replied then he sobered suddenly. "Jason, I brought you up here because you deserve an apology for what happened the other night, you know, in your room?"

"Mom told me it wasn't your fault that someone wanted you to hurt people."

"Yes, that's true Jason. But I also wanted to say how sorry I was for leaving and not saying goodbye to you and your Mom. Can you forgive me?"

Jason suddenly realized he could forgive him for just about anything. "I forgive you, Mr. Clark."

Clark was so moved that his eyes filled with tears. He pulled him in for a hug. "Thank you Jason."

Jason hugged him back then he had another question for him. He pulled back and looked up at the clear blue sky. "Will I fly one day, Mr. Clark?"

Clark pulled him closer then looked up at the sky their heads touching. "Maybe one day ..."

Hand in hand, Clark and Jason exited the elevator to the bullpen then he saw Lois and the look in her eyes fueled his soul like nothing ever would, just as the sun fueled his body. He touched her soft cheek and smiled. "Let's go home."

Lois leaned into his hand and smiled. Soon, they all headed home.

Perry watched them from his office door for a moment then went back inside with a self-satisfied smile on this face.

Chapter 8: Fate Delayed

Monday morning, Metropolis courthouse:

Luthor's hearing was scheduled for 10:00 am in the morning and Lane and Kent would be there. After their '*CLONE OR NO CLONE*' front page article hit the newsstands earlier that morning, the Internet was all abuzz with the story, so all they had to do was wait for Luthor to arrive from Nassau and then the authorities would throw the book at him.

In the article, Lane and Kent had decreed that the man being extradited from the Bahamas to America this week was in fact the real Lex Luthor and according to Superman, the Superman clone had died with Lex Luthor's name as his last words. Lois and Clark had also turned over to the police the name of the one person who could corroborate their article, but finding her would be a challenge. Her last known location was in the Bahamas.

Clark had searched for her for several days but with no luck. It was obvious she had gone underground for protection but with the right incentive, she may find the courage to come forward and to do the right thing.

"Do you think she'll come back?" Lois asked her partner as they sat in the courtroom waiting for the proceedings to begin.

"Well, your idea was brilliant, Lois. I'm a bit surprised Perry went along with it."

Lois chuckled. "Once I explained to Perry that all the evidence the police had against Lex was circumstantial and that he could go free, he went along with it." She took his hand. "Of course, the stabbing happened, but we have no proof that it was Lex. Only Kitty was a witness

to that, we really need her here."

Clark didn't say anything. The wound in his side spoke to him every now and then and he wondered if the wound would ever heal both physically and mentally. He knew what Lois was saying was true. He squeezed her hand. To find Kitty, Lois had dropped a few hints in the article about a certain someone being cloned and used to represent that person in court, if that person didn't come back and tell the whole story. "I just hope it works."

"I hope so too," Lois said worried her plan wouldn't work but then they looked into each other's eyes with the hope that it would work.

Moments later, the alleged 'real' Lex was then brought into the courtroom in an orange jumpsuit and in handcuffs. Lois and Clark glanced at each other satisfied with all their hard work and couldn't help but enjoy the proceedings. The courtroom was filled to capacity. A few minutes later, the judge arrived and the hearing was called to order.

Judge Stewart had a reputation, a fair and honest reputation, but that didn't mean he would stand back and let a career criminal loose among the populace. He then spoke to Luthor. "Mr. Luthor, you have been charged with multiple crimes against this state and this country. How do you plead?"

His attorney helped him to stand. "Not guilty," Luthor answered the judge firmly and with his head held high.

Lois and Clark were not surprised by that plea.

"Bail will now be set. The State's prosecution has set bail at \$5 million dollars," Judge Stewart stated.

Luthor's mouth dropped open; he was outraged. He didn't have that kind of money, and one tenth of that which was the minimum to get him out of jail was \$500,000. He just didn't have it. After finding out from his attorney that the estate of his 'late wife' could be tied up in legal proceedings for years by countless heirs, he could be stuck in jail for weeks.

His court-appointed defense attorney, Mr. Burns, spoke up then. "Your honor, Mr. Luthor is penniless; he has no passport, no means to leave the country, and no family that could help him. He's all alone in the world. Where would he go?"

Judge Stewart had no sympathy for Luthor. "You do realize that the charges against your client borders on an 'act of war' against this country, not to mention aggravated assault with intent to murder Superman. According to the government's indictment, Mr. Luthor concocted a scheme, not unlike the one he set out to inflict upon innocent victims in California, which almost caused a catastrophic event, an earthquake. If not for Superman's actions back then, millions of lives could have been lost and if not for a technicality, your client would be in prison serving a life's sentence."

The judge continued. "And now, here we are again, having to deal with his schemes and threats against this country, and if not for the quick thinking and heroic actions of Superman, it could have happened all over again and all because of his unreasonable hatred for one man. Now give me one good reason why Mr. Luthor should not remain in jail for those unspeakable acts."

Mr. Burns cleared his throat. Luthor punched him in the ribs to get him to say something, anything to keep him out of jail.

Judge Stewart was done. "Bail is set at \$5 million dollars. Trial will begin two weeks from today. Court is adjourned."

Later that day outside the Daily Planet building:

Katherine 'Kitty' Kowalski managed to make it all the way to Metropolis without any trouble at all. She had decided to change her name as soon as she and Lex had parted ways. Her name was now 'Bernice Jones' and she had a real passport to match. Now that she had gotten this far, she was starting to get cold feet.

Her dark hair was covered with a not too flattering blonde wig. She also had on a hat, sunglasses, even though it wasn't that sunny this day, and slacks and an overcoat, even though it was nearly 60 degrees outside. Kitty's disguise was drawing attention to herself, which wasn't her intention at all. There really was no turning back now though. She'd gotten this far, so she took a deep breath and entered the building then wasn't sure which way to go. The guard walked over to her and asked if she needed help. Kitty gave him one name. "Lois Lane."

"Of course, 30th floor," the guard said.

"Thank you," Kitty said then entered the elevator, pushed the button for the 30th floor and nervously waited for her destination. When she finally exited the elevator, she was bombarded by noises of phones ringing, television monitors tuned to various news channels around the world, and frantic people going about their jobs and paying Kitty no mind.

She decided to look for Lois on her own. She took off her hat and sunglasses and she spotted her soon enough, but then she cocked her head to the side and watched a young man standing over her. He was pointing to something on her computer then they smiled at each other and she knew love when she saw it. She blinked and wondered if she had imagined it.

Then the man stood up straight and even from this distance, Kitty could see how tall he was and the look on his face; there was just something about him. He turned and saw her and Kitty could have sworn there was recognition in his eyes but only for a moment. Had she imagined that as well? Kitty had never seen him before ... or had she? He came toward her and Kitty stiffened as second thoughts came into her mind again then she turned to go. *This was a mistake.*

"Miss, may I help you?" Clark knew who it was even with her blonde wig. He would know that face anywhere.

Kitty stopped and turned to face him. "Lois Lane, I need to speak with her."

"Of course, right this way."

Kitty followed him still wondering if this entire idea was a terrible mistake.

"Lois, Miss... I'm sorry, what was your name miss?"

"It's Jones, Bernice Jones."

Lois recognized her immediately. "Miss Jones, please follow me. Clark could you join us, please?"

"No, no, only you, Ms. Lane," Kitty was still doubtful about speaking to anyone except Ms. Lane.

"Alright, but I will have to record our meeting. Are you ok with that? If not, then, Mr. Kent will have to join us."

"Well, if you put it that way, I suppose he can come."

They went into a conference room then Kitty took off her coat, went to a window and looked up at the sky as if looking for something or someone. "Is it true that Superman loves Metropolis? I wonder if he'll fly by today. I've been here for several hours, but I haven't seen him yet."

Lois cocked an eyebrow at her partner. Clark shook his head and shrugged his shoulders. "Ms. Jones... or is that Ms. Kowalski?" Lois asked.

Kitty removed her wig and smoothed her hair in place. "It's not much of a disguise huh?"

She sighed. "Yes, Katherine Kowalski is my real name, but you can call me Kitty. That is my name."

"This is Clark Kent; he's my partner," Lois introduced him.

"Yes, I've seen your bylines in the Planet. It's nice to meet you Mr. Kent." Kitty stared at him and that same feeling came over her again, like she'd seen him before today and he had recognized her too; she was sure of it.

Clark began to squirm under her scrutiny. "Shall we sit down and get started with your statement Kitty?" He asked hoping to move things along.

"Of course, that is why I'm here. So, it's true that Lex cloned himself and Superman. I read your article about it," Kitty stated unbelieving, but with Lex anything was possible.

"Yes, it's true, but the Superman clone is dead," Clark stated.

"Yes, I know; I read about him in your article. Is it possible the Lex clone could also face the same fate?" Kitty asked.

Clark sensed Kitty wasn't completely convinced and needed to understand what was really going on. "We can't take the risk that Lex will go free and this scheme of using a clone to justify his actions could work if we can't tie him to the green kryptonite and New Krypton. Only you, Kitty know what happened on the island. Are you ready to tell us everything after Superman was stabbed in the back and tossed into the sea like so much garbage?" Clark asked getting emotional.

Kitty's eyes widened briefly as she stared at him. Lois glanced at Clark out of the corner of her eye and tried to diffuse the situation.

"Are you ready Kitty?" Lois asked.

"Yes, I'm ready." Kitty took a deep breath and began her story. "After Superman was stabbed in the back and tossed into the sea, Lex began to gloat like I've never seen him before. He was sure Superman was dead. His greatest enemy gone and he felt triumphant like he was sitting on top of the world literally, but he wasn't finished yet. He had plans, big plans for the island, for using kryptonite and Superman's crystals for more experiments. He began to gather pieces of it like so much gold, like they were worth a fortune. Some of them had Superman's blood on it and when he saw it, he cackled with glee, laughing like a madman. He was relentless with his plans.

I asked him why, why did so many people have to die? He just shrugged his shoulders, lit his cigar and looked at me like I was the dumbest person in the world. He just didn't care about anyone but himself. A little while later, the island began to rumble and shake like an earthquake, so we ran for our lives, three of his employees didn't make it. Lex and I barely escaped from the island in the helicopter.

Once inside the chopper, Lex handed me the crystals. I looked at them and I knew I couldn't let Lex carry out anymore mad schemes to hurt innocent people, so I tossed the crystals onto the island. Lex was furious with me, but there was no time to get them back; the island was crumbling beneath us. We took off just before the island broke apart. We both watched as Superman raised it from the ocean and took it into the sky. Several hours later, we landed on a strip of beach in the Caribbean and barely survived on coconuts for a week until a passing cruise ship picked us up then dropped us in the Bahamas. That's all there is."

"Thank you, Kitty. One more question. Did Lex ever say anything to you about a red rock that could poison Superman?"

"A red rock? No, I've never heard of that," Kitty replied curious. "Don't tell me he tried to hurt Superman again?" Kitty shook her head. "He just won't stop."

"Not until we stop him, Kitty. Would you be our star witness to convict Lex once and for all? I'm sure the government could put you into witness protection and get you around the clock police protection before the trial," Clark asked.

Kitty thought about it and it was the reason she had come all this way. "Yes, I'll help you."

Lois and Clark both breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank you, Kitty. Wait here while I contact the authorities and we'll get you a place to stay. Where's your luggage?" Lois asked.

"At the airport; here's the key."

"I'll take care of that for you," Clark said and took the key from her, stood up then he held out his hand. "Thank you Kitty; you're very brave. Would you like some coffee while you wait?"

Kitty froze as everything fell into place but she managed to find her wits. "Sure ... I take it ... black," she slowly replied then her eyes widened but Clark had already turned to go.

"Wait here Kitty, I'll be right back," Lois said.

Once they had exited the office, Lois and Clark stared at each other and then they were in each other's arms clutching each other close. "It's almost over; the nightmare is almost over," Clark said holding her tightly to him.

Lois could feel tears welling up in her eyes. She felt silly but she couldn't help it.

Clark pulled back, saw her tears and wiped them away with his thumbs. "I love you," he said and kissed her right there in the hallway. Lois kissed him back loving him so much; it felt like pain sometimes.

Someone cleared their throat. It was Perry. "Hey, back to work you two." They didn't see his smile as he went down the hall toward his office.

Riverside Drive, later that night:

Kitty was settled and ensconced in a safe house with armed guards while Lois and Clark headed home with their son hopefully for a quiet evening with just the three of them.

After dinner, Lois felt that Jason was being a bit clingy but she wasn't going to interfere with her son's acceptance of his real father. Jason and Clark deserved this after what they had gone through these past few months. Clark was reading him a story on the sofa and Jason was getting sleepy nodding off every now and then. When his eyes finally closed in sleep, his little head on his arm, Clark smiled and stroked his hair.

"He's bone tired; take him up and I'll be up in few minutes," Lois told him.

"I'll be waiting," he whispered then carefully lifted his son, and took him up to bed.

Clark tucked his son into bed and smoothed his hair away from his forehead. Jason snuggled under the covers and whispered "Goodnight, Mr. Clark."

"Goodnight, Jason," Clark whispered with the hope that one day he would call him "Dad," but he had time now; they all did. He stood there for a few minutes more until he finally went back to sleep.

"Is he asleep?" Lois asked as she poked her head inside.

"Yeah, he's asleep." Clark sighed. "He's so beautiful Lois."

Lois came into the room when Clark just stood there watching him. She put her arm around his waist and guided him into her bedroom. After undressing, putting on a nightgown and climbing into bed, Lois brought up the subject of her missing memories. "You know, seeing you with him like that, I can't help but think about all the time we lost Clark."

Clark had gotten down to his boxers, pants in hand then stopped what he was doing, took a deep breath and turned to face her. "I know."

"Jason is asleep, so no interruptions this time." She patted the bed and waited for him to join her.

He hung up his clothes, then climbed into bed and pulled her to him, but inwardly Clark wondered if Lois was really ready to hear everything. "Where was I?"

"You tripped ...?"

Hoping to ease his way into his story, he decided to remind her about her obsession with finding out the truth about him. "I think I need to back up a little. Earlier in the day, we were sightseeing at the Falls when this kid who was playing on the railing, fell over the side. I pretended to go and get us hot dogs then I rescued him. You yelled at me, but I ignored you, went to change, and got us a couple of hot dogs, then you told me that Superman had just been there. You were always suspicious of me always trying to find out my secret identity."

"Now that I do remember," she said and smiled.

He chuckled at seeing her smile. "I know and then you told me your suspicions and I denied it. Then you jumped into the river."

"You're kidding."

"Nope, you jumped right in and barely survived without drowning. I helped you to shore, then I fell in. You were convinced I wasn't Superman. And then later in our suite, I brought you your hair brush, but I wasn't looking where I was going, so I tripped over a pink bearskin rug."

"Really, then what happened?" Lois was finding this all unbelievable.

"My glasses fell into the fire pit in the center of the room, I reached into the fire without thinking and you grabbed my hand to see my burns, but of course there were none. You knew the truth then and I couldn't deny it anymore."

"And...then what?"

He took a deep breath and continued. "You told me... you were in love with me."

She looked at him closely. "Just like that ...?"

"Just like that," he said and smiled remembering.

She shook her head at her boldness. "Wow and then what happened?"

"We flew to the Fortress and... I gave up my powers to be with you."

"You did what? But why, I don't understand?"

"My father insisted."

"Wait, your father, but...?"

"Oh, I forgot you don't know about him. My biological parents are dead, but I can speak to them because they're both AIs."

"AIs, that's incredible. But why would he insist you give up your powers to be with me? That seems a bit extreme."

"It was, but to me, there was no choice. I loved you and I wanted to be with you more than anything. Nothing was more important to me than that."

"Oh, Clark," Lois whimpered. "I think I know what happened next," she whispered barely holding it in.

He knew that it would be hard for her to hear everything, but they had to get past this. He turned her to face him and braced himself with his next words. "We made love Lois for the first time, several times actually." He paused when he saw her eyes brimming with tears.

"Jason was conceived that night."

She knew what he was going to say, but that didn't stop her heart as it constricted with the pain. Lois sniffed unable to hold it in any longer then she began to cry. He pulled her to him

holding her tight. "I'm so sorry. Don't cry, please don't cry."

She snuggled under his chin, let the tears fall for a few minutes then she wiped her eyes with the back of hand. "I don't want to hear anymore."

"But I wanted to tell you about Zod and why I had to get my powers back, why I took your memories, why I left you and..."

Lois covered her ears hoping to shut it all out. "No Clark, none of it matters now."

Clark frowned but he didn't want to push. "Alright, we can talk about it later."

"No, Clark you don't understand. We will not talk about it ever again." She stated firmly, left his arms then turned to face the wall.

Clark could hear her begin to cry again. He didn't know what to do. He never expected she would react this way, to shut down like this, but he couldn't just lay here and not give her any comfort. He scooted over to her and pulled her stiff body close to him. Lois had no choice but to put her arms around him and pull him close. She did want his comfort and she accepted it. He reached for a tissue by the bed and gave it to her then he stroked her hair. However, the tears refused to stop.

After about a half an hour, Clark realized Lois had fallen asleep but of course he couldn't sleep worried that they had reached another roadblock in their relationship; worried they may not be able to get past all the pain and heartbreak of the past and move forward; and maybe... that their love may not be strong enough after all.

Chapter 9: The Whole Truth

Noon the next day, Metropolis Police Headquarters:

The media was in a frenzy. The 'alleged clone' Lex was about to arrive from Nassau and everyone was waiting for him to make his appearance. *More like a grand entrance*, Lois thought. She glanced at Clark and he was staring straight ahead. To say that things were a bit strained between them was an understatement. They had barely spoken to each other this morning and it was all her fault, she knew, but she just could not bear to hear Clark's explanations about why he had taken her memories and left her behind for five years without a word. She thought she was strong enough to hear it, but maybe she wasn't. It really doesn't matter anymore, that much was true, but she had to come to terms with the past and soon before things got really out of hand.

Thinking about last night, she had asked him to move in with them just before their talk but he hadn't given her an answer yet, which didn't surprise her, but now, she supposed he wasn't going to do it. That made her very sad especially for Jason, very sad indeed. Then her mind flashed back to this morning when she had overheard a heartwarming scene between Jason and his father.

"Good morning, Jason, how are you this morning? You were pretty tired last night, do you remember?" Clark said as he sat down next to his son.

"Mr. Clark?" He whispered as she wiped the sleep from his eyes.

"Yes, Jason, what is it?"

Jason was quiet for a moment. "Can I call you ... Dad?"

Clark was quiet for a moment too. "Of course you can, come here," he said and pulled him close, eyes closed enjoying their closeness.

"I love you son," Clark murmured truly touched.
"I love you too, Dad," Jason said holding him close.

She smiled a little wistfully remembering then she shook her head. It was time for her to face her fears. They both needed him so much. She took a deep breath. *Buck up, Lane. You're turning into a whiny sniveling female. You can take the truth and then put it behind you. Come on, just listen to what he has to say then deal with it.*

"Lois, Lois?" Clark snapped his fingers in front of her face.

"What, oh, I'm sorry, what did you say?"

"Lex is here," Clark said then pointed to the police SUV as it pulled up to the front steps. Lex stepped out like he owned the place, in handcuffs surrounded by uniformed officers and police detectives. Flashbulbs went off as the media jockeyed for position to get their questions answered. Lex searched the crowd of reporters, spotted Lois and Clark and had to smile. He then approached them with the smirk on his face hoping to start something.

It truly was remarkable how closely Lex and the clone resembled each other. Clark watched Lex come closer, narrowed his eyes, x-rayed him and sure enough the radiation had spread, but there was no way of knowing how bad it was without further tests.

Lex knew he had the upper hand and was giddy with the knowledge. "How nice to see you both again and looking so well. Do you have any questions for me, Lane, Kent?"

Lois spoke up then. "You're not fooling anybody Lex; we know what's really going on here."

Lex smirked. "That's not a question." He turned to Clark then. "And you Kent, anything you want to ask me?"

Clark stared at him and decided the sooner this was over the better for everyone. "Tell me Lex just how long have you had radiation poisoning?"

Everyone gasped at that question but no one knew what he was talking about.

Lois was shocked Clark would bring that up, show their hand now at a time like this. But as she thought about it, it wasn't as if Lex could hide it. The radiation was in his system, and it would be there for years and years. There was no way around it.

Lex instinctively covered his hand. The ring was gone in police evidence just as everything else he had in his possession, meager as it was. Lex was furious; now he would have to make a deal with the authorities, but he knew he had nothing to bargain with or... maybe he did.

Lex was then led inside, where a STAR Labs physician was there waiting to take his blood and examine him for 'diluted' kryptonite poisoning which would tie him to the New Krypton incident and then Lex would be doomed for sure. Everyone followed Lex inside except Lane and Kent.

Lois watched her partner as they left police headquarters. She stopped him after a moment still stunned by what he had done. "Why did you do that?"

He turned to face her. "I saw no reason to keep it a secret. The doctors will know soon enough that Lex is infected and then this entire thing will be over. Lex will go to jail and that will be that."

Lois stared at him but he wouldn't meet her eyes. "I see what this about... tell everything, get everything out into the open no matter what. Is that what you were thinking?"

"We should leave; I don't want to argue about it," Clark said and quickly headed to her

car.

Lois followed him, but she had to run to keep up with him. "Slow down, Clark, and I'm not arguing with you. We're discussing this rationally and calmly."

Clark's stride was long and Lois had to look down for a moment to see where she was going so she wouldn't trip in her high heels. Then he stopped unexpectedly and Lois slammed into him. Clark caught her before she could fall but he wouldn't let her go. "Are you alright?"

They stared at each other. She rubbed her arm as if in pain. Clark thought it best that he x-ray her. Lois watched as his eyes slowly moved from the top of her head to her feet. She knew what he was doing and it actually turned her on so much she had to close her eyes to blot it out. She slowly opened her eyes and he was staring at her and she knew what he was thinking. They both remembered that night in the Daily Planet when she had found out the truth about him.

Lois had forgotten how to breathe then she finally answered his question. "I think I'm ok." He dropped his arms then an awkward silence followed.

"Umm, it's lunchtime, are you hungry?" Clark asked hoping they could talk to clear the air but Lois's heart was pounding and so was his.

Food was not on Lois's mind at the moment. "Starved actually, what did you have in mind?" *Talk about double meanings*, Lois thought then she stared at his lips and could not pull her eyes away if she wanted to.

Clark shook his head. "This isn't going to solve anything," he murmured but that didn't stop him from pulling her to him and kissing her and slanting his mouth against hers unable or unwilling to talk about their problems. He just wanted her beneath him, writhing in his arms, sobbing for him to take her, screaming his name and coming all around his throbbing length. He came up for air after a moment. "We have two hours," he murmured against her throat then he realized that he lived not two blocks from there.

He looked around, streaked into an alley, twirled into the suit and took off into the sky with Lois in his arms. Lois held him tightly around the neck. They rarely did this, but she was so turned on and excited that she would do anything if he would love her, keep on loving her no matter what, and then she decided that she would listen to the whole truth, swallow her hurt and pain, then move on from there. They deserved this chance; they'd been through hell and back to be together and Lois wasn't going to let the past hurt them anymore. They would make it work this time; they would do it.

Seconds later they landed on the rooftop, entered the stairwell then down to the top floor to his apartment. He opened the door and they were inside. Lois did not have a chance to look around his place because he picked her up and took her to his bedroom. He set her down then he twirled for a moment and he was standing there before her in nothing but his briefs. His erection was obvious. Lois forgot how to breathe again.

"It's your turn," Clark said with that devilish smile Lois loved so much.

She backed up a step and began to slowly undress. After stepping out of her shoes, she unzipped her skirt and it fell to the floor. Her blouse was unbuttoned slowly, that too hit the floor. Clark then came up behind her and helped her remove her bra. It slid down her arms and that too hit the floor. He held her breasts in his palms, placed an open mouth kiss to her neck, squeezed her breasts and tweaked her nipples to tight little buds. Lois's moans were fueling his own desire as he turned her around, lifted her up into his arms and slanted his mouth against hers. His tongue swirled as hot wet kisses were given back and forth as their tongues fought for

position.

He fell back onto the bed with Lois on top of him. She sat up but they both still had on their underwear. They both laughed for a moment then he pulled her down beside him. He sat up and slowly removed her underwear which were dripping wet he realized. Lois closed her eyes and wondered what he would do next. They'd never done oral sex that she could remember, but maybe just this once.

She opened her legs wider for him to do what he wanted with her than she felt his hot breath on her thighs and she moaned and opened her eyes. His sparkling blue eyes watched her as he dipped his head, kissed and sucked all around her folds then he took her clitoris into his mouth. His finger slipped inside her hot wet sheath and Lois's hips lifted off the bed of their own accord. "Oh Clark!" She moaned over and over again. Clark was relentless as he inserted two fingers inside and Lois could feel herself coming. "Oh, yes!" She screamed his name and shuddered with rapture.

Lois was limp as he lifted her legs up over his shoulders and then he entered her slowly. Lois was on fire and moved with him matching his rhythm stroke for stroke, and then her orgasm broke over her again so quickly that it stunned her as she trembled in his arms and she could feel his hot semen shoot inside her causing her to come yet again. Clark pushed once more as her climax caused his big body to shake as his moans were heard loudly then Lois pulled his head down and kissed him passionately loving the feel of him inside her still hard and pumping away. Soon his head dropped to her shoulder as the tension drained from his body.

Lois stroked his hair and kissed his temple. She glanced at his bedside clock and they still had an hour and a half before they had to get back to work. *So much time, what will we do?* Lois thought and smiled.

Clark finally pulled out of her warm body, kissed and stroked her hair. He didn't want to say it, but they had to put the past behind them; it was the only way for their relationship to move forward.

Lois saw the look on his face and knew what was coming. She braced herself for what he was going to say. "Everything is going to be alright, Lois. The past can't hurt us unless we let it; remember that."

"I'll try," she said and tried to put on a brave face.

Clark sat up in bed with Lois by his side, pulled the covers over them and began the rest of his story.

"After that beautiful night that we spent together, we left the Fortress and came back to America, but we stopped to get some food. There was a bully in the diner who took a seat beside you while I was in the men's room. I asked him to move but he called me four-eyes and taunted me. We fought but I was no match for him. I lay on the floor bleeding and then I began to wonder if I had made a terrible mistake. The television was on and General Zod, a Kryptonian like me and several of his followers had arrived on Earth and had already been here for several hours wreaking all kinds of havoc in a small town in Houston, Texas."

Lois pulled him close thinking about the fight, but then she tried to come to grips with someone like Clark here on Earth, but one word stood out. "Houston?" Lois shook her head at his incredible story. "Go on."

"I had no choice but to go back to the Fortress to try and get my powers back to stop Zod. I had to try to reason with my father somehow."

Lois sighed, understanding. "And it worked obviously."

"Not without some begging and compromises."

"Meaning me," Lois whispered then closed her eyes but the tears threatened yet again but she managed to keep them at bay.

"I'm sorry, Lois, but if there had been any other way..."

"But why Clark, I don't understand why we couldn't be together."

"There were a lot of reasons, the main one being that I couldn't watch you suffer because of me. Zod had taken you to the Fortress as a hostage. I eventually defeated him and Luthor who had joined forces with him to defeat me." He took a deep breath then continued. "My parents told me I couldn't have you and have my powers. The world needed me and I knew you would be alright. You're so much stronger than I am Lois." He paused for a moment then sent more daggers into her heart. "Then I decided to break up with you."

She stared at him. "Just like that?"

"Yes, just like that. I thought it would be easier that way."

She shook her head not understanding his reasoning. "Then what happened?"

"The next day, I came into the office and I could see that you had been crying. You told me that you had watched the sunrise after crying all night then you said you would never be able to move on because I was a tough act to follow. I knew then what I had to do, so I kissed you removing your memories of those three days."

The most important memories of my entire life were gone and with a kiss of all things. Lois suddenly realized how selfish they had been because the world needed Superman. "Clark I understand, I do. It tears me up inside but I understand why you had to go back."

He wondered if that were true so he pressed his point. "But do you understand why I had to let you go and why I had to leave? I tried to stay here with you and live my life as if nothing had ever happened between us. But every day that went by was torture for me. I tried to remain at my job to work beside you day after day, be your friend, but I just couldn't do it," he said and his eyes watered thinking about those lonely days.

She saw his tears and pulled him close. Then she suddenly remembered the long days and nights after he had left her, of looking up at the sky every day, of dreading coming into the office, and seeing Clark's empty chair. It was as if a part of her was missing, a very large part of her. But in spite of it all the heartache and tears, she still wanted both of them back and forgiveness was something she could do if only she could see them again.

She touched his cheek finally understanding his pain. It must have been unbearable for him. It was time to put the past to rest. "It was hard on both of us, Clark, but through all of it, we never lost this, we still love each other and I meant what I said to you in Nassau." She then pulled his head down and just before their lips met, she said "nothing and no one could ever change what we feel for each other, not even you."

He pulled her closer and then he kissed her. And before they realized it, the hour and a half was gone and they had to rush back to the office and Lois still hadn't seen Clark's apartment.

A few days later in County lock-up:

Stunned, Lex stared at his test results and couldn't believe it. "This is a mistake; it has to be."

"There is no mistake, Mr. Luthor. These types of tests are repeated several times for accuracy. You have cancer and it's progressive," the STAR Labs physician told the shocked

man before him.

"What do you mean progressive?"

"Terminal."

Speechless for a moment, Lex stared at the doctor. "What did you just say?"

"We can make you comfortable, but the cancer will spread."

Lex stared at the test results again. His jaw worked as his mind thought of ways to get out of jail. "How long, how long do I have?"

"Six months, maybe a year."

Furious with his diagnosis, Lex slowly lifted his head. "Get out."

As soon as the doctor left, Lex began to pace. *I have to get out of here and back to my lab; I know I can beat this thing.* "Guard, guard!" He yelled. "I want to see Clark Kent ... NOW!"

An hour later, Lois and Clark stood outside the jailhouse as they had both been stunned to get Luthor's summons to see him. "What is he up to?" Lois wondered aloud.

"I suppose we'll see in a little while."

"But Lex asked for you, not me Clark."

"He won't have a choice. Aren't you curious about what he has to say? I know you are."

"Of course I am." She sighed. "Alright let's get this over with."

Lex was sitting at a table hand-cuffed waiting for them. "Well, this is not a surprise. Hello, Lois," he smirked.

"What do you want Lex?" Clark asked not in the mood for his taunts. They both refused to sit so Lex had to look up at them.

"Well, now that I think about it, it's good you're here too, Lois, because this concerns you as well."

"We didn't come here to listen to riddles," Clark said as he took Lois's hand. They were about to summon the guard when Luthor spoke up again.

"How's Jason doing these days?"

It was such a shock hearing their son's name come out of Luthor's mouth that they both stood at the door, their backs to him unmoving for a moment.

"I suppose he's finding it hard to accept that his father is a disgusting alien."

Lois turned to face him, but she kept her cool. "You're the one who's disgusting, where you did get such an idea?"

"Aren't you forgetting something... Ms. Lane? I know what happened."

"You don't know what you're talking about," Lois continued to play dumb.

"Oh, I know alright, your brat killed a man."

Clark lunged for him, but Lois held tightly to his arm. "Luthor, if you don't shut your mouth, I'll do it for you," he growled furious with him.

"Awww, poor Clark, always the last to know. How does that make you feel when you touch her, knowing she spread her legs for that, that thing?" Lex was repulsed by the idea.

Clark had to blink because his eyes were starting to heat up. "Come on, Lois, we're leaving," he said and turned to leave.

Lex stood up and shouted at them. "All I want from you is a way out of here or everyone will know who his father is!"

"Guard, guard!" Clark yelled refusing to answer his demands.

"You have two days to think about it!" Luthor yelled again as the door closed behind

them.

Chapter 10: The Fight Continues

Once outside the jailhouse, Lois had to take several deep breaths to calm down. "I've got you, we're almost there," Clark said as he held her close to his side. They slowly made their way to her car then he helped her inside. The initial shock had worn off somewhat and Lois was ready to pull out a revolver and pump the man so full of holes there would be nothing left, no skin, no bones, only blood, blood everywhere. She turned her determined gaze on her partner. "What are we going to do?"

He gripped the steering wheel as he shook his head. "I'm in shock, Lois, how in the world does Luthor know about Jason? You never told me he saw Jason throw that piano."

"Lex wasn't there when it happened, but one of his goons must have told him and that's probably why he left us to die on the yacht."

"I can't believe this is happening to us. We were almost there, Lois."

"Clark, stop with that kind of talk. We will stop him, we always do. Come on, we can do this."

He went on as if he hadn't heard her, then it dawned on him. "That's why he sent the red kryptonite to Jason. He wanted me to hurt him, Lois. He wanted me to hurt my own son and he almost succeeded."

She was also getting upset. "But he didn't succeed, Clark, we will stop him. If we put our heads together and with Kitty's help, we can put him away for a long time." She took his hand. "Come on, Clark, you must have some idea how to stop him. Please!" Lois was begging now.

He squeezed her hand. "I'm so sorry all of this happened. All I've ever wanted was for you and Jason to be happy."

"We are happy, Clark, you, me and Jason. Luthor can't destroy that; we won't let him."

"You're right, he can't destroy that, no matter how many clones or red kryptonite he sends our way, we won't let him hurt us anymore. It's over Luthor; he's pushed us too far this time." Clark suddenly got an idea and it just may work then he pulled out his cell phone.

"Who are you calling?"

"Mr. Anderson, the state's prosecutor on Luthor's case. He has to know what Luthor is trying to do."

"Are you considering telling him about Jason? Clark you can't."

"We may not have a choice, Lois."

The prosecutor's office an hour later:

Clark and Lois immediately thanked Mr. Anderson for seeing them on such short notice then explained the situation to the prosecutor, why Lex was desperate to escape jail not only to spread a secret about a family member but also to fight his illness.

Mr. Anderson listened and told them what he knew. "I've already heard from Mr. Burns, Luthor's attorney. Apparently he wants to change his plea and he wants to deal his way out of prison and now I know the reasons."

"It's blackmail plain and simple. He can't get away with this, Mr. Anderson, we're counting on you to put Lex away for a long time," Lois said.

"I don't believe that will be a problem; we have an airtight case against him. I'll make sure

that Luthor is put in an isolation cell away from the general population, where he can't run off at the mouth and hurt someone. This secret must be pretty devastating to your family member."

"It is very devastating and if it got out, this person's life could change forever," Lois said hoping she wouldn't have to elaborate.

"I see and knowing Luthor, I'm sure he's taking real pleasure knowing this secret, and how much he wants to exploit it for his own personal gain. The man is very predictable."

"That much is true, but he's also unpredictable. There's no telling what he might do," Lois said.

Clark pulled Lois close to his side. "Thank you, Mr. Anderson. Can you tell us your plans?"

The prosecutor went to stand behind his desk and thought about it for a moment as he looked over his papers. "First of all, I want to call a special hearing to find out exactly what Luthor is planning and what his 'deal' encompasses. Judge Stewart will see exactly what's going on and how unethical it is. Luthor is guilty, he knows it. I'm sure he's on our side. His statement in court the other day confirmed it."

"It was obvious to all of us how the judge felt about Luthor and his schemes," Clark said beginning to feel the tightness in his chest begin to fade. He glanced at Lois and he could see she was also relieved.

Clark shook his hand. "Thank you, sir. Is there any way Lois and I could attend this hearing?"

"That's not a good idea, Mr. Kent. I think it should be a closed hearing under the circumstances. Luthor could say something in open court."

"He has a point, Clark," Lois said terrified at that possibility.

"You're probably right, but we want to be at the courthouse to find out what happened," Clark said.

"I'll call you as soon as I have a time and a date," Mr. Anderson said as he escorted them from his office.

"Thank you again," Lois said as she also shook his hand.

Two days later in Judge Stewart's chambers:

In attendance: Lex Luthor, Mr. Burns, Luthor's attorney, and the prosecutor, Mr. Anderson.

Judge Stewart entered his chamber, stood behind his desk and spoke to all involved. "This special hearing is now called to order." He banged his gavel and everyone took a seat. "As you all know, the circumstances of this hearing are unusual to say the least. That is why the proceedings will be recorded a little differently." He held up a recording device for all to see. "Are there any objections?"

Luthor waited for his attorney to object but when he didn't say anything, Luthor poked him in the ribs again. "Object, object!" Luthor urgently whispered.

"It's pointless, Luthor, it's his chambers not open court, he can do whatever he wants," Mr. Burns explained.

"If there are no objections, let's continue." He took a seat. "Mr. Burns, I understand your client wishes to make a plea deal with this court," Judge Stewart said.

"Yes, your honor," Mr. Burns replied.

"Go on, I'm listening."

"The clone, your honor," Mr. Burns began.

"And what has Superman's clone have to do with any of this?"

"Not Superman's clone, your honor, Mr. Luthor's clone."

"I'm not following, please elaborate," Judge Stewart frowned not liking the direction this was going.

"From what I understand, the clone is in excellent health, no degeneration, no accelerated growth issues, he's doing very well."

"And, get to the point," the judge said getting impatient.

"Mr. Luthor is willing to extend all his research on his cloning process in exchange for leniency, your honor."

The Judge actually barked with laughter. "You're joking, right?"

"No, not at all, your honor, successful cloning is very rare especially with humans. Mr. Luthor has made great strides and he wants to help humanity, not destroy it. He wants to do good things, sir."

"Is that all, Mr. Burns?" The judge tried not to smirk.

"Umm, there is one more thing, your honor. I do not agree with this but Mr. Luthor was insistent. He has become privy to a secret, your honor and wishes to add it to the deal."

Judge Stewart shook his head. "Forget it; I'm ready to make my ruling. Your deal is denied, Mr. Burns," the judge said.

"But, what about Mr. Luthor's secret your honor?" Mr. Burns pleaded.

"There are no secrets in my chambers," he replied then paused for a moment, as he looked at Luthor. "Tell me, Mr. Luthor, this secret that you're willing to give up, will it help humanity or will it destroy it? Will it enable you to do good things?"

Lex stared at the judge as he found himself at a loss for words. "Well, I ummm..."

"I didn't think so," Judge Stewart replied, not surprised in the least.

Mr. Burns tried again. "Mr. Luthor is dying sir. He doesn't have long to live, he really wants to use this time to make things right."

"He should have thought of that years ago before he went on a rampage and destroyed lives and property." Judge Stewart had made a decision. "Mr. Luthor, stand up please."

Luthor stood up ready to accept his punishment.

Judge Stewart read his ruling. "In answer to Count I of the Indictment: Assault with intent to murder: *To be convicted of Assault, it must be found that the defendant intentionally, knowingly or recklessly caused physical injury to another; or with criminal negligence caused physical injury to another by means of a deadly weapon.*

"Under federal law, your client has met all of these criteria for assault, Mr. Burns. Assault with a deadly weapon can result in a prison sentence of up to twenty years. In answer to Count II of War Crimes: *The law defines a war crime to include a grave breach of the Geneva Convention noting that 'grave breach' has the meaning of all of the Convention, meaning ... crimes committed against persons or property protected by the Convention: willful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments, willfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health.*

"Your client's theft of Superman's crystals, his cloning of Superman and his willful acts against persons and property has also met the criteria for war crimes. Under federal law, war crimes result in a prison sentence of up to twenty years.

"Therefore, it is the judgment of this court that you be remanded to a maximum security prison within the week where you will serve a sentence of no less than 25 or more than 40

years in prison without parole.

"This hearing is adjourned. Take him away." Judge Stewart banged his gavel, stood up and left his chambers.

Lex stood there with mouth agape, shocked to his soul.

The Courthouse, minutes after Luthor's sentencing:

Kitty arrived at the courthouse, armed guards beside her and saw Lois and Clark's joyful celebration and knew what had happened. It could only mean one thing Lex had gotten the maximum sentence. She stood there watching them for a minute and wondered if she should say anything, that she knew Clark's secret, that he was Superman and a father. She watched for a few more minutes and then she suddenly remembered the last time she and Lex had seen each other. They had stood on the dock after disembarking from the cruise ship each staring at the other.

Kitty held her puppy close as tears hovered about to fall. "Will we see each other again?"

Lex tried not to be moved. In her own way, Kitty understood him like no else ever had. "Not likely. Take care of yourself Kitty." He turned and walked away, his white coat flapping as he walked and left her standing there staring after him.

He had given her a few hundred dollars to get back home but she decided to stay in Nassau and try to make a life for herself. Then she saw Lane and Kent's article about Lex's cloning of himself, Superman and now her. It was time for it to stop and she had made the decision to come back to America and try and stop him.

Kitty came back to the present, approached the happy couple, they both smiled happy to see her. Clark gave her a hug and so did Lois. She tried to put on a smile, but a part of her was depressed and she didn't understand why. They both sensed this and brought her over to a bench sat down with Kitty between them. "I assume that Lex got the maximum sentence?" she asked needing to know.

"Yes, Kitty, 25 to 40 years in prison," Clark replied.

"I see, and if the cancer doesn't kill him?"

"The judge said no parole," Clark answered her.

"I need to see him," she said not even knowing what she could possibly say to him. It was her testimony that had gotten him convicted.

"Are you sure, Kitty? Lex will probably lash out at you, hurt you just like always," Lois tried to dissuade her.

Dr. Emil Hamilton suddenly appeared before them and he seemed to be agitated.

Clark stood up to greet him. "Emil, what's going on; why are you here?" Clark asked.

Emil hesitated and wondered if he should speak in front of the lady.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Emil this is Katherine Kowalski, Kitty, and we owe her a tremendous debt," Clark made the introductions.

Kitty stood up to shake his hand. "It's very nice to meet you, Dr. Hamilton."

"The pleasure is mine, and please call me Emil," he said intrigued.

Clark's eyebrows rose. "What's the reason you came by, Emil?"

"It's about the Lex clone," he said.

"What's wrong with him?" Kitty asked.

"He's dying," Emil stated bluntly.

"Oh my," Kitty said as tears sprang into her eyes.

Lois helped her to sit down again. "Are you alright, Kitty?"

"I feel silly; I haven't even met the clone."

Lois knew exactly what she was feeling. The clone was a human being with feelings just like all of them. She took her hand to offer some comfort. "You should wait a few days before seeing Lex, give yourself a chance to accept what has happened. It's a lot to think about. You can stay with us. The guards can be released, I think. Clark, do you agree?"

"Of course, come with us, Kitty."

She hesitated but only for a moment. "Alright, thank you," she smiled.

"Good, I'll speak with the guards and then we can leave. Thank you, Emil for bringing us the news about the clone." Emil was watching Kitty then Clark made a decision. "Why don't you come by for dinner Emil?"

"Oh, I don't want to intrude," Emil answered inwardly excited.

"It's no trouble at all, right Lois?"

"Of course, come by at 7:00?"

"I'll be there," he said and smiled at Kitty.

Kitty saw his smile ducked her head and actually blushed.

A few days later, Kitty thought she was now strong enough to see Lex. She walked inside the jailhouse visiting area. She had decided to remove her wig and just be herself. Lex wasn't there yet, so she sat down and waited. Her heart was throbbing so hard, she was terrified. *He can't hurt me, not anymore*, she thought.

"Well, well, well, I should have known you couldn't stay away," Lex said as he entered and took a seat.

He looked tired, worn out and not himself. "How are you Lex?"

"So they told you? I don't want your pity. Is that why you came?"

Kitty decided to show her strong side. "Not at all, I came to give my statement. Now, I guess I'll head back to Nassau. It really is beautiful down there. Too bad you didn't stay. You could have been a free man instead of spending the next 25 years in prison."

Lex's lips thinned. "I'll be out of jail in no time. No prison can hold me. You'll see."

"You're delusional. Lane and Kent said..." He interrupted her.

"Lane and Kent, Lane and Kent... one day..."

"One day what? Lex you're going to a maximum security prison and you're dying. Accept it."

"Never," he said. He stared at her for a moment then stood up suddenly, startling her then he said something Kitty thought never to hear from him. "We will see each other again, Kitty, and when we do, mark my words, you will not be happy about it. You can give Lane and Kent the same message. I'll see you around."

"Guard!"

Chapter 11: Family Matters

Six months later, a house on the hill:

Lois and Clark had lived together for almost six months and Jason was doing well in school too. His powers were still dormant for the time being. Lois had talked to him about home schooling Jason but Clark was totally against it. Private school was fine for their son and Lois agreed wholeheartedly. She couldn't be more pleased as she thought about her dream.

The house they were living in was a rental with an option to buy. They loved the house with its magnificent views of Metropolis and the lovely countryside. It was the best of both worlds. Clark had his grass and Lois had her view of the city; it was perfect for them.

The subject of marriage had come up but only by Martha. She jokingly mentioned to Clark to make an honest woman out of Lois. Clark took it in stride but inwardly his heart soared that Lois didn't go all silent on him like before. She smiled and actually seemed to be warming to the idea. That was a few weeks ago and the subject had not come up again, but he would mention it again. In his mind, it was time for them to finally reach that goal. It was what they had strived for all these months since they had gotten back together.

"Mom, Dad, I'm ready," Jason came down the stairs ready for the first day of school for the first grade. Now that he was in grade school, he was now wearing uniforms of navy slacks, light blue shirt and navy sweater.

Lois thought he looked grown up, too grown up to her eyes and then the tears formed and she dashed them away.

Clark knew that look as he pulled her close, then the school bus horn honked and Jason sprinted normally to the bus. They both waved as he left.

Clark closed the door and his expression told her something was wrong.

"What is it, what's happened? It's not Luthor is it?"

"Actually yes, it is. While you were upstairs with Jason, the paper came." He showed her the paper. The headline read: 'LEX LUTHOR ILL IN PRISON.'

"Have you talked to Kitty recently? Does she know about this?"

"I have no idea; I'll give her a call so she won't be thrown by the headline." She and Emil had been dating for a few months. If you saw her, you saw Emil. "Hi, Kitty, it's Clark."

"Oh, hi, Clark, I was just heading out. What's up?" Kitty had found a job as a lab assistant at STAR Labs. Emil had found her the job.

Clark put the call on speaker. "Lois is here... we have news."

Kitty stiffened fearing the worst. "It's Lex isn't it?"

"Yes, he's sick, Kitty. We don't know how bad it is."

Silence followed that statement.

"Kitty, are you there?" Clark asked as he and Lois shared a glance.

"I'm here. That part of my life is over, Clark."

"I know, but..."

"I mean it, now I have to go. Goodbye," Kitty said.

Both Lois and Clark said their goodbyes then Clark hung up.

"I understand how she feels Clark and I don't blame her." She sighed. "Is there any way to find out how sick he is?"

"I suppose so; I do know the warden at that particular prison. It's the same prison Luthor was sent to after the California earthquake, and the same one he escaped from too."

"Really, that is not what I wanted to hear."

"Don't worry, he's under maximum security, plus he is sick." She still looked worried. "I'll head over there now."

"Thank you, Clark," she smiled and kissed him goodbye.

Federal Maximum Security Prison, upstate New York:

Clark decided to enter the prison as Superman to remind everyone that he was still around and that his presence would be felt when and if a prisoner tried to escape or be released. It also

gave him a chance to get a rise out of Luthor, get him to admit his suspicions about Jason to his face.

The warden greeted him cheerfully. "It's wonderful to see you again Superman and I know why you're here."

"It's wonderful to see you again, sir. How is he?"

"It is true that Luthor is ill, but his doctors have reason to hope he will recover."

Clark hated to admit it but he wanted a different outcome for Jason's sake. "I see, but six months ago, the doctors were convinced he would not last the year."

"Yes, I saw that report, but apparently that's not the case anymore. I have seen and spoken to Luthor several times and he appeared, what's the word... upbeat? Mr. Luthor has an inner strength that's hard to describe. It's as if he has a secret of some kind that has enabled him to be strong enough to survive the massive amounts of chemical treatments for his illness."

Clark knew what he was referring to and mindset played an important part in cancer patient recovery. "Luthor is not allowed visitors, correct?"

"Yes no visitors and no communications whatsoever."

Clark was relieved to hear that. "I wish to see him."

"But, are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure."

When Luthor was told he would be allowed a visitor just this once, he knew who it was; he just knew. The door opened and Superman walked in. He had to admit it was good to see him. With no visitors and no one to talk to, he was going a bit stir crazy in this place. "Well, if it isn't the Man of Steel himself. Hello Superman."

"Lex."

"What brings you by?" He cheerfully asked.

Clark frowned. The warden was right, too cheerful by far. As he stared at him his back itched, but he resisted the urge so he straightened his spine. "Why do you think; what are you up to?"

Lex chuckled. "What you see is what you get." He stood and walked from one side of his cell to the other. "I can't do anything in this place; no television, no radio, no computer, nothing, just the guard with his stone face and no conversation. He brings me my meals and takes my tray away just like clockwork, but I do have this one small window."

Clark saw the window but he wasn't fooled by Lex's attitude. It was classic Lex. "You're planning something, aren't you?"

"And exactly who would I tell these plans to anyway? It's like I said, no phone, no letters, nothing!"

Clark was really worried now. He could have done something before he was sent up here, but what? "I will find out what it is and when I do, if you thought you were isolated now, believe me, you haven't seen anything yet."

Lex shrugged off his warning, but he thought he would leave him with something to think about. He walked over to him, smirked then said. "Just watch your back."

Clark narrowed his eyes, but didn't respond, turned and knocked on the door. "Guard!"

Luthor's smile was pure evil.

An hour or so later, Clark was very busy making rounds, but his mind was not on what he was doing as he narrowly saved someone's life. Luthor's words would not leave him alone. He

should have known this would happen. Suddenly, he had an urgent need to see his son, just to see if he was alright. He headed to the school and realized it was almost time for dismissal, so he changed and waited for him to exit the school.

While waiting for him, various emergencies came into his hearing, but they were taken care of without him. He watched as groups of excited and rambunctious boys and girls exited the school, some headed to cars, and others headed to school buses, then he spotted Jason. He felt so relieved just to see he was alright.

Jason saw his father and he was so shocked that he couldn't believe it at first. His father never had time to pick him up from school then he waved and smiled at him. Jason ran to him then Clark picked him up.

"Dad, what are you doing here?" Jason asked happy to see him but then he began to worry that something must have happened for him to come and see him like this, without warning or calling first. "Is everything alright?"

Clark smiled to reassure him. "Don't worry, everything is fine, Jason. I came because ... well, I wanted to see you ... and..." he paused when he saw Jason's eyes light up. "Would you like to go for a ride?"

"Really, right now!" Jason squealed.

"Sure right now," Clark chuckled as he set him down and took his hand.

Jason suddenly realized this was it, and he couldn't help it as his heart began to pound. Clark heard it so he squatted down eye to eye with him. "Are you ready, son?"

Jason didn't speak for a moment. He was excited about flying with his father, but a part of him, that human part of him was terrified. "Uh, huh, I'm ready."

Clark wasn't so sure about that, but Jason needed this and so did he. "Let's go over here and sit down for a minute." He squeezed Jason's hand as they headed to the school playground and sat down on a bench. "I understand how you feel Jason."

"You do?" Jason wondered about that. "Were you ever afraid?"

"Of course, Jason, it took me years to get up enough courage to do it, but I didn't rush it. I took my time, I practiced for a few years, and then one day, it just happened."

Jason was very curious about that. "Wow, how did it feel?"

"Well, it's hard to describe. It felt ... unreal at first, like nothing I've ever felt before, and now every time it happens, I still get butterflies and ... amazingly it still thrills me like the first time I did it."

Jason wondered again about himself. "Did you mean it when you said ... maybe one day?"

He pulled him to his side. "I can't predict the future Jason, but there is a very good chance you will fly one day."

Jason was beginning to believe. "I'm ready now."

Clark stood up and went behind some trees to change. Jason stood up arms in the air. Clark picked him up and shot clear up into the sky, high above the clouds so no one would see them. "You can open your eyes now, son."

Jason opened his eyes and all he could see was the beautiful blue sky, and clouds everywhere. The air felt like nothing he'd ever felt before. He breathed it in and smiled at his father.

Clark smiled back. "Hold on tight now, your Mom is waiting for us."

Jason held him tightly around the neck as his father flew them towards the Planet, a little slower this time. Jason finally looked down and he gasped and all the tiny cars and even smaller people. "Wow...!" He exclaimed thrilled.

Clark smiled at his expression. Soon, they were over the Planet and Lois was on the roof waiting for them. He slowly landed and set Jason down. He looked up at his father in awe of him and the things he could do. "Thank you ... Superman."

Clark smiled. "You're welcome, Jason," he replied and ruffled his hair. He winked at Lois then took off into the sky.

They both waved at him. Clark glanced back and returned their waves then he shot up into the sky off to another emergency.

Daily Planet offices, several days later:

Clark entered the office ready to speak to Lois and to plan a special evening with her. He had decided to ask her to marry him. Luthor and his plots and schemes were not going to stop them from living their lives and being a family. It was something he had wanted with her from the moment she had accepted him the first time years ago, and now this chance would be the one they've waited for; the one that would get them to that very special place... *marriage*.

Lois in the meantime had picked up Jason from school and was headed to the office. She was almost there when she heard a swooshing sound. At first she thought it was Clark again but then she remembered Bizarro, and the dread came back into her heart.

Suddenly, someone dropped down in front of her car then she slammed on the breaks just before hitting a boy who was standing there in a black tee-shirt with a red letter "S" on his chest, black jeans, and he was smiling at her. "What in the world ...?" She whispered.

Back at the office, newsfeed was gradually coming in about a teenage boy flying around Metropolis. The monitors were positively buzzing with the news. Clark was shocked by the stories, but for some reason he decided not to put on his suit. He left the office, exited the lobby and then he saw him and they were only a few blocks away. It was a young boy standing in front of Lois's car smiling at her. "Oh no, not another clone?" He whispered as he came closer. He didn't appear threatening; he just stood there not saying anything. Clark decided to watch for a moment.

Lois saw Clark approach just to her left and breathed a sigh of relief. Luthor and his schemes, but then she remembered what had happened to Bizarro and she wished this boy would not see the same fate. He did look like Clark with dark hair and a devilish smile, but he was definitely different from the other one, Lois admitted as he stared at her.

She left the car and hoped to find out where he had come from, his name and anything else she could find out about him. "Jason, stay in the car."

"Alright, Mom," Jason replied.

She moved a little closer to him. "Did you want something? What's your name?"

"Conner," the boy replied then he cocked his head to the side. "Lois Lane?"

"Yes, my name is Lois. Where did you come from?"

He seemed confused as he looked up into the sky.

Lois frowned at him. Clark came up to her then. "Lois, is everything alright?"

"Everything is fine. Clark, this is Conner; Conner this is Clark Kent."

Clark held out his hand to the boy hoping he would take it.

Conner seemed confused then he slowly held out his hand. "Clark Kent?" He said the name as if it were somehow familiar to him.

"Yes, hello, Conner," Clark answered him as they shook hands. "Would you like to come with us?"

Conner hesitated as he stared at them. "Alright," he replied and smiled.

Lois and Clark helped him inside the car where he sat next to Jason.

"Hello, my name is Jason," Jason said trying to be polite.

"Hello, my name is Conner," Conner replied and held out his hand.

Jason looked at his Mom unsure of what to do.

"It's ok Jason," Lois said as she watched them interact. She had to admit, this young man was an enigma and someone she would like to get to know. She glanced at Clark and he had an eyebrow raised as if reading her thoughts.

Jason and Conner shook hands, a possible friendship between the two seeming to take shape.

Jason was fascinated by him and had to ask. "So, you can fly?"

Lois and Clark stared at each other and said at the same time. "STAR Labs."

A mysterious man stood in the shadows of the crowd seemingly very pleased with the results of his work and the inevitable outcome.

Clark called ahead and a few minutes later they arrived at STAR Labs and Emil was waiting for them. Kitty was also there waiting to meet this Conner 'superboy.'

They all exited the car then Clark introduced him. "Emil, Kitty, this is Conner... a friend."

"Hello, Conner, it's nice to meet you," Emil said, smiled and shook his hand.

Conner looked around and wondered what was happening. "Is this a hospital?"

Kitty came forward then to answer his question. "Hi, Conner, I'm Kitty, and to answer your question, no, this isn't a hospital, but a research facility. There are doctors here, however, if you feel sick. Do you feel sick, Conner?"

"No, I feel ok," he replied.

"I'm glad Conner. Would you like to come with us?"

"But why are we here?" He turned to Lois for answers.

Lois came forward to reassure him and took his hand. "It's ok, Conner, these people are our friends, and they just want to make sure you're ok, that you're healthy. Do you understand?"

"I guess so," he replied.

"Good, go on now, we'll be right behind you," Lois instructed the skeptical young man.

Conner, Kitty and Emil went inside with Lois, Clark and Jason right behind.

Lois took Clark's hand. "Oh, Clark, we have to help him, no one else will, and what if...?" She whispered fervently but couldn't finish the question.

Clark squeezed her hand. "I know and we will," he told her firmly.

Several hours later, Emil and Kitty came into the waiting area with Conner's test results.

"How is he?" Lois asked as they all came forward to greet them.

"He's resting. The test was hard on him because of his invulnerability, but we managed to get a blood sample," Emil said.

"So, what did you find out?" Clark asked knowing the answer.

"He's a clone with multiple DNA strains... Superman and... Lex Luthor," Emil said.

Lois gasped and put her hand over her mouth. Clark shook his head, groaned and rubbed his tired eyes wondering again when it would ever end.

Jason watched his parents worried about his new friend. "Is Conner alright?"

Kitty answered his question hoping to reassure him. "He's fine, Jason." He turned to Lois and Clark. "He's asking for you both, you too Jason."

"Can we see him?" Jason asked his parents, but when they didn't answer him, he said. "He's all alone, Mom, Dad?"

"Of course, we can, Jason," Lois said and took his hand, but Clark just stood there rooted to the spot. "Clark, are you coming?"

Everyone waited for him then Jason held out his other hand for his father to take it.

Clark closed his eyes and thought about Conner. *It's not his fault; none of it was his fault.* Clark came forward and took Jason's hand. "Sure, let's go."

As everyone entered Conner's room, he was so intent on soaking up the sun, eyes closed, that he didn't hear them knock or call to him. "Conner, Conner, hello," Lois said smiling at him.

Jason also came forward to say hello. "Hi, Conner, are you alright?"

"I'm fine, Jason," he smiled at his friends. "I was worried that I'd have to stay here. Can we leave now?" He asked instinctively touching his arm.

"I'm sorry, Conner, but we have to run a few more tests and you can leave in a day or two, how's that?" Emil replied.

He frowned, not liking the idea. "Ok, if I have to."

"Everything will be fine, you'll see," Emil said. "I'll get started on those tests. I'll see you all later."

"Thanks Emil," Clark said and shook his hand. Lois and Clark tried to smile at Conner both feeling a bit awkward. "We'll visit you tomorrow, would you like that Conner?" Clark asked.

"Awesome; can Jason come too?" He asked smiling at his new friend, but then he had a thought. "But what will happen to me after that, where will I go?"

Lois and Clark glanced at each other. Kitty was also thinking about him too. "We should talk," Clark whispered as they all left Conner's room.

"Stay with Conner, Jason," Lois instructed.

"Ok, Mom," Jason replied.

Conner frowned then he sat down with Jason. He turned on the television to distract Jason for a bit and then he watched the door. He could see everyone clearly then he decided to listen.

"What are you thinking, Clark, or do I need to ask," Lois said.

"You have to help him, Clark," Kitty put in her two cents. "If you don't, I can take him."

"Really, Kitty, but you've never been around super-powered beings before and you have no idea what to expect," Clark said.

"But he's part Lex, and I..."

"No, Kitty, we can't ask you to do it, Conner will come home with us until we can figure out his future, well at least until he turns 18," Clark said.

Kitty supposed he had a point but it was time to clear the air. "Isn't it about time you told me the truth? You can trust me you know, I would never tell anyone."

"What truth, Kitty?" Clark played dumb.

"Clark, just tell her," Lois said and sighed.

"Well?" Kitty waited.

"You know?"

"Yes, I figured it out a while ago," Kitty said.

He sighed. "Ok, it's true, I'm Superman."

"See, that wasn't so hard," Kitty said smiling at him.

"You have no idea, Kitty," Lois deadpanned as she quirked an eyebrow at her partner.

Back in Conner's room, Conner turned to Jason and smiled from ear to ear.

"Why are you smiling?" Jason asked.

"It's nothing; nothing important," he replied still smiling.

Chapter 12: Waiting for You

Several weeks after Conner had been settled in Smallville with his Mom, Clark finally found some time to get Lois to a restaurant on a Saturday night. It just so happened to be Conner's first night in Metropolis and he would be watching Jason this night. It was their way of putting their trust in him and Lois had to be convinced things would be alright.

It was a beautiful night for their special evening, and after she accepted his proposal, Clark was sure she would, they would go on a late night flight under the stars. Lois had no idea what he'd been planning, but the boys did and they managed to keep it a secret. He had the ring and true hope in his heart.

He stood at the bottom of the stairs and waited for her to join him. Glancing at his watch, they were going to miss their reservation. "Lois, are you ready yet, we have ten minutes to get there."

"What's the rush, Mr. Kent?" Lois asked smiling at him. She came down the stairs, evening bag under her arm as she put on her earring. Conner and Jason watched the scene at the top of the stairs each smiling and giggling with their hands over their mouths.

Clark was struck speechless; she looked wonderful. Her hair was long and loose around her shoulders, her dress was stunning. He loved the color, dark red and it fit her to a tee in all the right places. "Wow, you sure do know how to make an entrance."

Lois twirled when she hit the bottom of the stairs then she milked it for all it was worth. "Oh, you mean this old thing?"

"Come here you," Clark said and pulled her to him and kissed her. "Hmm, hungry?"

"Don't ask that or we may never leave here," she replied with a twinkle in her eye reminding him of their rendezvous in his apartment.

"Hmm, I have no problem with that," Clark said and smiled at her expression. "You are bad."

"And you love it," she said and kissed his cheek.

"I love you," he whispered suddenly serious.

She touched his cheek. "You're in a mood." Lois paused as she tried to read him. "I love you too." She smiled and took his hand. "Let's eat!"

"Remember boys, lights out in two hours!" Clark called before he opened the door.

"Goodnight, Dad, goodnight Mom!" Jason called then he shot a sideways glance at Conner. "Go on say it," he whispered.

"Goodnight, Mom... Dad!" Conner called.

Lois and Clark stopped and stared at each other, eyebrows raised then they both said... "Goodnight boys!"

Clark shook his head at their unusual family, squeezed her hand and headed out.

The restaurant wasn't far from the house. Their neighborhood was outside the city but it was a quaint neighborhood with inns and family-owned restaurants and the drive took only five minutes. This particular one was Italian, Lois's favorite, no large crowds and they knew the owners well.

"Mr. Kent, Ms. Lane, welcome, welcome!" Bernardo Rizzo welcomed his guests and showed them to their table. These two were very special to him. Mr. Kent and Ms. Lane had helped catch the robbers who had been terrorizing the neighborhood for several months and he couldn't be happier to see them.

"Where is your lovely wife this evening?" Clark asked as he shook his hand and looked around.

"Well, she's not here this evening; she's not speaking to me. I forgot our wedding anniversary," he replied shame-faced.

"Bernardo, how could you?" Lois asked teasing him a little.

"It's not my fault, Ms. Lane, it was several days ago. We had a special wedding party and things got crazy around here and I... I forgot."

"Now you know that's no excuse... wedding anniversaries are pretty special Bernardo. Have you tried to make it up to her?" Clark asked feeling sorry for him.

"I've tried flowers, candy, a special dinner, but no luck."

"May I make a suggestion?" Lois asked him.

"Please, I would appreciate any advice," Bernardo begged a little desperate.

"Well, give her something that reminds her of your special day, your wedding day. She won't be able to resist your apology... trust me."

"Oh, that's a wonderful idea, Ms. Lane, thank you, thank you, I'll do that... and I know just what to give her too. Oh, I'm sorry; I'll have a waitress bring your menus now. Thank you so much. Enjoy your dinner."

"Thank you, Bernardo," Clark said as they both watched him walk away.

"Not bad, Lane," Clark remarked.

"I have my moments," she said and smiled.

"Yes you do," Clark said returning her smile.

After dinner, instead of heading straight home, they walked along the quaint streets admiring the beautiful view and found themselves down by the river and found a quiet spot to talk.

Clark squeezed her hand as they walked along. Finding the courage to rescue someone and to do the things that needed to be done had never been a problem for him, but this, proposing to the woman of his dreams, the love of his life, that's something else. It took a special kind of courage to do that, but the question was did he have that courage?

Lois turned to him then, smiled and pulled him closer to her as if she couldn't get close enough. She sensed he had something on his mind.

Clark thought it best they talk about Richard, but in order for them to move forward and for her to accept his proposal, they had to discuss him, no matter how painful.

"Lois?"

"Yes?"

"Why didn't you marry Richard, didn't you love him?"

She frowned and looked up at him, trying to figure out what was going on. "Wow, talk

about out of the blue. Why in the world would you ask that?"

He shrugged. "I've always wondered about it. I know you lived with him for a while."

She sighed. "Yes, we lived together."

"And you loved him?"

Lois left his arms and went to sit down on a park bench. "It's a long story, Clark." She sighed and thought about their relationship. "Richard and I were comfortable with each other, no pressure, no demands and it was... convenient for both of us."

"But he wanted more, didn't he? He wanted to marry you," he stated as he went to sit beside her.

"Yes, he did, but..." She hesitated.

"But...?" He prompted her.

She looked at him as she thought about her answer. "I thought I loved him, but I just couldn't do it."

He shook his head. "I think I understand."

"You do then explain it to me because I don't get it."

"I think you do, you just don't want to accept it."

"Accept what?" Lois was confused.

"The truth..." He stated then paused at her questioning look. He took her left hand and kissed it reverently then he looked into her eyes. "You were waiting for me, Lois." And with that bold statement, Clark got down on one knee, took the ring from his pocket and showed it to her. "Would you do me the honor of becoming my wife, Lois?"

Lois should have been shocked by his proposal, but she wasn't, not at all. She had wanted it from the beginning when she had first seen him that fateful night when he had first rescued her. Her heart had recognized him behind the glasses, but sometimes the heart is silent for a time, but now it was singing and she heard it loud and clear. She knew the truth. She touched the beautiful ring. "Are you sure, I'm not the most pleasant of people to be around, I'm argumentative, stubborn, hard-headed, and..."

He stood up and pulled her to him. "Shut up and kiss me," he whispered.

She happily obliged for a moment. They both pulled back and smiled. "Was that a yes?" He asked knowing the answer.

"What do you think?" She replied and held out her left hand.

He put the ring on her finger. Lois's eyes filled with tears she was so happy. "It's beautiful," she said admiring the lovely ring. "How long have you been planning this?"

"I can't remember, since the moment we met, I think," he replied finally admitting it to himself.

"You're joking right?"

"No, not really," he said and smiled at her doubtful look.

"Wow, you sure are a romantic, Mr. Kent," she said and put her arms around his shoulders.

"I do try," he said and smiled.

She stood on tiptoe and just before their lips met, she said. "Don't ever change!"

Moments later after Clark had changed, Lois found herself high above the clouds in her love's arms and she couldn't be happier than at this moment. It appeared to her as if they had actually made it. "Oh, Clark, I'll never get use to this," she whispered as she looked up at the beautiful night sky.

Clark smiled as he watched her lovely face. "Me neither," he replied happier than he ever thought he could be and what he was about to say could up that joy just a little bit more. "Lois, I have some good news and now seems like the perfect time."

"What is it?"

"I may be able to get my crystals back."

"Really, but Kitty said...?"

"I know but after what Kitty told us, I contacted NASA and it's possible they could still be there attached to the island and all we have to do is find them."

Lois was thrilled with the news. "Did you say *we*?"

"That's the best part. They agreed to help me in any way that they could."

"Oh, Clark, that's wonderful news. I'm so happy for you. I know what this means to you."

He pulled her closer. "I knew you would understand, and I was hoping at some point in the near future to tell Jason and Conner about their heritage."

"It's definitely something they should know when they get older. Speaking of those two, let's fly over the house and check up on them."

"Now Lois, I trust them, don't you?"

"Of course I do, but they don't have to know about it," she replied with a devious smile. Clark knew that look, shook his head and headed to the house.

Meanwhile back at the house:

"Conner, I don't know about this," Jason said as he watched his friend stand on the windowsill overlooking the backyard. "You could fall."

"Jason, don't you remember, I've flown before."

"But you said that was your first time; maybe you should wait until..." Jason hesitated.

"Until what...?"

"I don't know, until you have help from somebody..."

"Oh you mean Superman?"

"Yeah, Superman could help you."

"He's always so busy, and I'm only here on the weekends and things are always busier for Superman on the weekends, more crime and more people in trouble."

"Please, Conner, don't do it," Jason begged really worried for him.

"I can do this Jason and one day, you will too."

Jason stared at him wondering again if he really could do it ... maybe he could just like his father had said.

Lois and Clark were within a few blocks of the house when Clark picked up on the boy's conversation. "There's a problem at the house, Lois; hold on."

"Is it Lex?"

"In a way, yes it is."

"Oh no, hurry Clark!" Lois exclaimed.

Conner was about to leap when Clark and Lois appeared before him hovering just outside the back window. "Go back inside, Conner," Clark instructed the boy.

Conner did as he was told and went back inside. Jason felt bad for Conner. *He's in a lot of trouble now. He might not be able to visit on weekends anymore.*

Clark changed while Lois waited for him then they both went inside the house. "Boys, get down here ... NOW!" Clark hollered up the stairs.

Jason and Conner came down the stairs both worried about their punishment.

"Ok, who wants to go first, tell us what happened," Clark said his disappointment very clear.

Jason and Conner glanced at each other.

"Well, I'm waiting," Clark said.

"It was me," Jason said.

Conner tried not to gasp at that comment.

"What do you mean Jason?" Lois asked shocked.

"I wanted to see him fly again, so I asked him, but then I changed my mind, but Conner wanted to see if he could do it again."

"Is that true Conner?" Clark asked watching him closely. He knew Jason was lying about part of it, but this was Conner's chance to come clean.

"Well, sort of," Conner mumbled.

"What do you mean sort of?" Lois asked.

"Jason didn't ask me to do it; I wanted to do it just to see if I could."

"I see," Clark said. "Jason, lying will not be tolerated, you know that."

"Yes sir," Jason mumbled ashamed head down.

"Go on now; we'll be up a little while to say goodnight," Clark instructed him then turned to Conner. "Take a seat, Conner, Lois and I will be right back."

"Yes sir," Conner replied.

They went into the kitchen. "Clark, you do realize he can hear everything we say."

"I know, but we should be in agreement about his punishment as his guardians."

"I know that, Clark, but I'd like to say something before we give him his punishment."

Lois glanced at Conner and he looked terrified. "Come on."

Conner sat in a side chair while Lois and Clark sat on the sofa. "Lois wants to say a few words before we decide what to do," Clark told him.

Lois couldn't help remembering her dream and the more she thought about it, the more it made her think about rules and boundaries and how important they were especially if the person is super-powered and young. "I have a few questions first. Conner, did you know it was wrong to try and fly around Metropolis alone without permission or assistance?"

"No, I didn't."

"Lois?" Clark knew where she going with this.

"And did you fly while you were in Smallville with Ms. Martha?"

"Oh, no, she strictly forbids it," he hastily replied.

Lois raised an eyebrow at her fiancé.

Clark sighed. "Conner, it's late, Lois and I will decide your punishment in the morning, but... umm... goodnight."

"Alright, goodnight," Conner said but before he left, he had something to say.

"Congratulations," he said and smiled as he nodded at her ring.

"Thank you, Conner ... goodnight," Lois said returning his smile.

Clark shook his head and couldn't help smiling at him. "I screwed up, didn't I?" He mumbled as he slumped back onto the sofa and ran his hands through his hair.

"No, but things could have been a lot worst. Jason could have joined him. You know we have to set rules and boundaries for both of them; that is all they need. All children need that, if not, chaos would rule us all," she chuckled trying to lighten the mood a little.

"You do have a point," he admitted.

Lois frowned as she glanced up the stairs. "Do you know when Conner found out about you? He didn't even blink when he saw us flying."

"I have no idea, but you know you're right." He shook his head thinking about him. "He's full of surprises, that one."

She could read her fiancé like a book. "But you like him, don't you?"

"Yeah, I do."

"I do too," Lois admitted. "Jason misses him when he's not here. They talk on the phone almost every day after school."

"What are you trying to say?"

"Well, maybe not right away, but after his training in a few months or however long it takes, he could come here and live with us."

"You're serious, aren't you?"

"I'm very serious when it comes to my family; I don't play around," she stated firmly.

"You mean 'our family,'" Clark said and smiled as he pulled her closer.

She smiled in total agreement. "Yeah, our family," she whispered as they sealed their commitment with a kiss, a kiss of togetherness, hope and... *love*.

The end!

A/N: I hope you enjoyed it! Conner needs his own story doesn't he? Hmm, thinking...! :D
Thank you for taking this journey with me. And you know what I'm going to say... reviews are love! Thanks again, everyone! :D