

Crystal Dreams

by Deborah Rorabaugh (SHADO Librarian)

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Rating: K+

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"Rise and shine, sleepyhead," a man's voice said as Clark struggled to open his eyes. He squinted against the brightness surrounding him.

"Richard?" Clark managed to ask, finally getting his eyes to work. Richard White was standing a short distance from him, a wry smile on his face. Clark sat up and looked around. They were in the main chamber in the Fortress of Solitude, only he couldn't quite remember how he had gotten there. Or why he had been asleep on the floor.

Richard's presence was an even deeper mystery. The man was dressed in slacks and a white dress shirt open at the collar with the sleeves rolled up. He was still smiling and that was a little strange since Richard had died one year before, murdered during an investigation into arms smuggling.

"Um, aren't you dead?"

The other man shrugged.

"Does this mean I'm dead?"

"What's the last thing you remember?" Richard asked as a response.

Clark frowned as he tried to think back. "Going out to Baron Sunday's plane at Metropolis International."

"Without backup?"

Clark hung his head. "I didn't want Lois in the line of fire. Baron Sunday is a very dangerous..."

"You went out into a dangerous situation without backup."

"I am dead, aren't I?"

"Not yet..." Richard nodded to a holographic image that was taking shape in the air of the Fortress. It wasn't Jor-El's face that was coalescing. It was a scene in a hospital room, somewhere. Lois's face came into focus. Her eyes were dark with worry as she looked down at an unconscious man lying in a hospital bed, a respirator tube pushed down his throat. The man in the bed was himself. In the background he could hear the fitful beeping of a cardiac monitor. It sounded slow, even for him.

"Clark, why did you go out there alone?" Lois was asking. "You knew Hendricks was able to affect you... You knew he had used his powers to kill before..."

A man in a doctor's smock came into the room and checked the readings on the various instruments on the rack by the bed. "How is he?" Lois asked.

"I'm not going to lie to you, Mrs. Kent," Doctor Klein said. "Without knowing what is causing his unconsciousness, there's not a lot we can do. I will tell you that he's losing ground

and our tests aren't showing anything. No drugs, no injuries, nothing."

"Except that he's unconscious and he's stopped breathing on his own and that pretty well rules out simple catatonia," Lois added. Klein looked glumly at his patient. "Thank you, Doctor."

"Lois...?" Clark murmured. He turned back to Richard. "What's going on? Why are you here?"

"Why do you think I'm here?"

"I asked you first."

Richard chuckled. "Maybe I'm the ghost of Christmas present?"

Clark glowered at him.

"I'm a manifestation of the part of your mind that isn't hiding in a corner cowering in terror," Richard explained.

It was bright and noisy, the crystal singing replaced by a terrifyingly loud cracking and crashing. He heard a baby crying. There had been warmth and comfort but now he was cold and alone. Then it was dark and the baby's cries echoed shrilly in his ears. He felt his heart go into his mouth, his pulse beating wildly in his ears as he pounded on the lid that imprisoned him. He tried to break through the lid, tried to escape. The baby wailed and the noise outside the coffin grew unbearable.

Then there was silence. A deafening silence broken only by intermittent sobbing. A terrifying silence that went on forever. He was buried alive. He was going to die alone and afraid.

Clark was gasping for breath when he realized Richard was still there, watching him.

"Flashback?"

"I don't know, maybe... Although I would have expected you to be in a flashback. You show up often enough in my nightmares," Clark said.

"I suspect this one is more primal."

"Mom told me I would wake up screaming when I was little, but I could never tell her what the nightmares were about. They stopped when I got older."

"But whatever it is, it's still frightening enough to drive you to digging a hole, jumping in and pulling it in after you." Richard gave him a speculative look. "Tell me about Hendricks."

"If you're a manifestation of my consciousness, then you already know about him."

"Humor me."

"I was in Jamaica, working my way around the world before college. I'd been selling stories to the editor of the Jamaica Sun-Star, doing okay. I made friends with a fellow name of Matt Young. He was an NIA agent working with the local authorities to get a handle on the arms smuggling that was going on in the area. An exclusive on it would have made a great start to my career."

"What happened?"

"I was tagging along with him and we ended up in a shoot out. A pilot named John Hendricks had been hired by an anti-Castro group to drop off shipments in Jamaica where they would then be ferried into Cuba. He was killed in the shoot-out. At least we thought he'd died. The NIA and the *Nacionales* laid all the blame on Hendricks and that's the way I wrote it and that's the way it was published." Clark paused a long moment, remembering the heady feeling of his first scoop.

"But...?"

"But, I was very young, and not nearly suspicious enough. Hendricks wasn't dead. He was

also innocent. Young and his partner were the real smugglers and they used my inexperience to frame Hendricks."

"Clark, did your editor ask any questions about the story? I mean a major piece from a rookie...?"

"Not that I recall."

"You have an eidetic memory."

Clark sighed. "No, he didn't ask."

"Doesn't that sound suspicious?"

"You think Joe Cochrane was in on it, too?"

"You tell me."

"Perry would never have published it without making sure I had all the research necessary to prove my case," Clark said. "I can't ask Cochrane about it though. He died about a year after I left there. A heart attack, supposedly."

"What about Young and his partner?"

"Clemens died of an apparent heart attack about four days ago. He went berserk then collapsed while driving a bus. Superman had to stop it to keep it from crashing into a traffic jam. The man was dead before the bus stopped. Young is in a coma. He had some sort of psychotic break - pulled a gun to defend himself from whatever he was seeing in his head. Then he collapsed and his heart stopped. I managed to get it beating again, but he hasn't regain consciousness as far as I know."

"And Hendricks?"

"The article destroyed his family, his reputation. I thought he was dead. From what research came up with, Hendricks let everyone think he was dead. Then about seven years ago Baron Sunday showed up in Europe with his magic show. Was a big hit, made enough to buy his own jumbo jet to live in. According to his PR he spent several years studying magic and Voudon before going on stage. It's funny..."

"What's funny?"

"Sunday's assistant, Ziggy," Clark answered. "At the theater I was watching very closely." He tapped the corner of one eye in emphasis. "To see how Sunday pulling off some of those illusions. And then, when he hypnotized Jimmy and Jimmy actually got injured bumping into an imaginary desk..."

"Mind over matter?"

"That doesn't explain how a man can walk into the newsroom, drop dead in front of a dozen witnesses and then look like he's been dead for years. That's just creepy."

"Necromancy?"

Clark glared at him. Richard shrugged. "You have to have considered it or else I wouldn't have said it. I am simply a character in your head. But we both know there are more things in heaven and earth..."

The holographic image of Lois began to speak again and Clark realized that the heart monitor had been beeping softly in the background the entire time he and Richard had been talking.

"Clark, you have to face the fear and go through it to the other side," Lois was saying. "Your whole life has been about not showing fear... Pushing it out of your head. But this fear is part of you. It's something so terrible you've pushed it way down, and it's time to let it out, Clark. Because this thing could... this thing is killing you. You're letting it kill you."

She leaned over and gently kissed him on the forehead. "Clark, please come back to me."

I don't want to do this alone..."

Lois looked down at her unconscious husband, willing the tears away from her eyes. Jimmy was waiting outside the hospital room with Jason. Lois had been picking up Jason from school when Clark went out on his own to speak with Baron Sunday, AKA John Hendricks.

Airport security had found Clark unconscious on the tarmac after Sunday's plane took off. The filed flight plan was for Chicago. Lois already knew that Chicago police had been notified to pick Sunday up on suspicion of assault. She also knew from other sources, that Sunday's plane had vanished into thin air about halfway to O'Hare. The FAA was looking for it.

She reached around the safety rail and took one of his limp hands into her own, willing him to open his eyes. The monitor beeped away. She silently repeated what she had said aloud earlier: *"Clark, please come back to me. I don't want to do this alone..."*

Lois allowed her thoughts to go back to the beginning of the nightmare. Early Monday morning.

Clark needed little sleep and was a fairly light sleeper in any case. Lois frequently woke in the night to find his side of the bed empty. She knew he was off on a rescue somewhere in the world and would be back.

But Monday had been different. She had been awoken not by his absence but his presence. She had been awoken by a choked off scream and had opened her eyes to find him staring wide-eyed at something she couldn't see. He'd batted at it with his hands, as if fighting something and his breathing became labored and harsh, almost like an asthma attack.

"Clark?" she had called softly and after a moment, he seemed to shake himself and came back to the here-and-now. The relief in his face was palpable as his breathing eased. "You okay?" she asked.

"Uh, yeah, I think so," Clark told her.

"Want to talk about it?"

He sighed and shook his head. "I don't think I'll be going back to sleep tonight. I'm going to go make myself some tea, maybe do some reading."

"You're sure?"

He looked troubled. "It's probably just one of those anniversary things Doctor Ricco warned us about. It'll be a year on Thursday. A year since Richard died." He kissed her on the forehead. "Go back to sleep, okay?"

It took a while for her to fall back to sleep and her dreams were filled with unease.

The day got stranger as it went on. First, she watched Clark tear open and discard a large red envelope. Whatever was in the envelope made Clark frown, but then her phone rang and she didn't think anything more about it until Jimmy walked up to him and handed Clark a red envelope identical to the one he had discarded.

"But, I think I already got one," Clark said, giving Jimmy a puzzled look. He opened the envelope and peered inside. "I just got through tossing it."

"What is it?" Lois asked, taking the envelope from him. Inside was a glossy publicity photo and two pairs of theater tickets. Jimmy was giving Clark an odd look.

"C.K., there's nothing in your wastebasket..." Jimmy said after a moment.

Clark stared at the empty wastebasket by his desk.

"Clark, what was it?" Lois demanded.

"Tickets to see this Baron Sunday," Clark explained, but he looked unsettled.

"And you weren't gonna use 'em?" Jimmy asked in disbelief.

"He's what, that magician?" Lois asked. She'd heard the hooplah about the man but her natural pragmatism got in the way. Even as a child she hadn't really enjoyed magic tricks. It annoyed her not to know how it was all done.

"That magician?" *The* magician. The greatest illusionist in the world!" Jimmy corrected. He pulled the publicity photo out of the envelope and showed it to her and Clark. Clark shook his head as if to clear it.

"Clark?"

Clark just shook his head again as Jimmy went on. "The guy is so cool. He lives on his own plane. He's even offered a million dollars to the first person who could show how he does his disembodied head trick. Nobody's even tried."

Perry yelled for him and Jimmy scurried off.

Lois smiled as she watched him leave. "And to think, you were just gonna throw those tickets..." There was a sudden noise beside her and she turned to see Clark collapse into his desk chair. "Clark, what is it?"

The wide-eyed fear was back in his eyes as though he was seeing something beyond terrifying. He was having trouble breathing again and started loosening his tie.

"Clark...? Clark!"

After a few long moments, Clark's breathing eased and the panic attack was over - this time. She crouched beside him.

"Clark, what were you seeing?" she asked worriedly. He was still pale and obviously shaken.

He shook his head. "I'm not sure..." His head came up and she knew he was hearing something beyond the range of a normal human. "I'll be back..."

Clark was back in the bullpen before Perry's daily assignment meeting started. Lois noticed her husband slip into the newsroom, make a call from his desk, then unobtrusively take a place beside the door to listen to Perry. Everyone was given their marching orders and then hurried back to their desks to begin outlining their new assignments or work on older ones.

"How did it go?" Lois asked when they got back to their desks.

Clark shrugged. "Superman saved an airport shuttle bus a little bit ago. The driver apparently went berserk. The passengers claim he was shouting to someone about an ambush and he tried to put the bus through evasive maneuvers like it was a jeep, like he thought they were under fire," Clark told her. "Superman got the bus stopped but by the time he got to the driver, the man was dead. An apparent heart attack, only there was no overt sign of heart disease or anything else that could have killed him. The ME won't be finished until tomorrow or so. I've got somebody in research looking into the driver's background. I'm betting there's something there."

"Do you think it's the tip of something bigger?" Lois asked.

"I honestly don't know," Clark told her. But Lois had gotten very good at reading her husband over the past year. There were things he wasn't saying.

"I should have told her what was going on. What I was seeing that was scaring me so badly," Clark told Richard. The other man seemed too real to be simply a product of his imagination.

"Why didn't you?" Richard had taken a seat on the crystal steps leading to one of the upper levels. His elbows were on his knees as he watched Clark.

Clark remembered reading about something called lucid dreaming, where a person could control his dreams, change the outcome of a nightmare. He tried to change Richard's clothes from slacks and white shirt to jeans and a t-shirt. *If this is a dream, this should work.* Richard stubbornly refused to change, looking back at Clark with barely concealed humor.

"Why didn't you tell her?" Richard asked.

"I didn't want her to worry."

"Oh, and you unconscious in a hospital bed isn't cause for worry?" Richard retorted.

"Why are you here?" Clark demanded.

"I've already told you. I'm a manifestation of the part of your mind that isn't hiding in a corner cowering in terror."

"But why *you*?"

Richard's expression grew more solemn and he started to change, rapidly growing older, clothes altering into a faded plaid shirt and overalls. The face became Jonathan Kent's.

"Would you rather talk to me?" Jonathan Kent's gravely voice asked. "It's your choice. But I have to tell you, I'm a little disappointed in you son. I didn't think your mom and I raised a quitter."

"I haven't quit," Clark defended himself. "I just haven't figured out what's going on, or how to fix it."

"Lois told you," Jonathan said. "You might try listening to her."

The hologram showed Lois's face again.

"Clark, you have to face the fear and go through it to the other side," she was saying. "Your whole life has been about not showing fear... Pushing it out of your head. But this fear is part of you. It's something so terrible you've pushed it way down, and it's time to let it out, Clark. Because this thing could... this thing is killing you. You're letting it kill you."

The scene changed. *Lois was standing in a street blocked off by fire engines as a fire raged in the background. She was looking up at him, expression earnest, firm, sincere. "I know for a fact that the demons inside my head are infinitely worse than anything anybody else can do to me. And I know that I am stronger than they are. And I know that you are stronger than the ones inside your head."*

Clark looked over at Jonathan. "But what do I *do*?"

"Face the demons, son," Jonathan said softly. "Face them and go on. Before they kill you."

The music was driving, eerie, with a heavy drum beat that was designed to make hearts pound. Lois took note of the way the music and stage were designed to keep the audience off kilter. The dinner theater was full and Lois recognized many of the faces. The rich and famous of Metropolis were all in attendance.

The people at her table were probably the least rich and famous in the entire audience. As near as she would tell, She, Clark, Jimmy, and Perry were the only members of the press there. Jason and Perry's wife Alice filled out the complement at their table. Clark had been sent four tickets. Lois didn't know where Perry had snagged the other two tickets. This performance had been sold out for weeks and their table was right in front.

Baron Sunday was on the stage, a tall, esthetic black man wearing brightly colored robes. He stood next to a large box which encased the body of his assistant, Ziggy, leaving just the grinning dreadlock covered head sticking out. Sunday enclosed Ziggy's head in a smaller box. Sunday waved his hands, mumbling words Lois couldn't make out from her seat. Then the

smaller box floated away from the larger box and hovered in the air for a moment. A flap on the smaller box opened, showing Ziggy's smiling face.

The audience went wild - all except Clark, who had his glasses pushed down his nose as he watched the stage.

"I'm not sure how he's doing this. I can't spot any wires... trap doors..." he whispered to Lois as he pushed his glasses back into place.

On the stage, the small box came to rest atop another large box identical to the one the assistant's body had been enclosed in on the other side of the stage. Sunday opened the fronts of both boxes and an intact assistant sauntered out, giving the audience a jaunty wave. The audience went wild once again, except for Clark who clapped politely but without near the enthusiasm of Jimmy or Jason.

Sunday looked out over the audience. With the stage lighting it should have been impossible for him to make out anyone in the darkness, but his eyes seemed to light on Clark. The illusionist was looking straight at him, flashing a brilliant smile.

"Is he smiling at me?" Clark asked Lois in a worried whisper.

"Sure looks like it?" Lois whispered back. "Is there something you want to tell me?" She kept her tone light but there was something unnerving about Sunday's smile.

"And now, to finish up the evening," Sunday announced grandly stepping down from the stage. "I'd like to create a special illusion for a member of the audience. Any volunteers?"

Sunday stopped at their table and Lois could see Clark stiffen at the man's proximity. "You?" Sunday asked, looking to Jimmy instead.

"Sure. Okay," Jimmy agreed, getting out of his seat and following the illusionist onto the stage.

"I need your name, birth date and city where you were born," Sunday told him.

"James Bartholomew Olsen. Born here in Metropolis on February 15, 1978."

Suddenly a piece of paper and a pencil appeared in Sunday's hands. He jotted down the information Jimmy had given him and then held the paper over Jimmy's head.

"I want you to relax. When the ashes float down around you, you will fall into a deep trance," Sunday instructed.

"Ashes?"

The paper suddenly burst into flames and fine gray ash fell down around Jimmy. He closed his eyes.

Lois glanced over at Clark and Perry. Clark had stiffened again, as if ready to jump out of his seat. Perry looked faintly worried.

"Now, when I snap my fingers, you will imagine you are back at your first day of second grade," Sunday told Jimmy. Sunday snapped his fingers and Jimmy opened his eyes. He looked toward the audience and waved. Lois was struck at how much Jimmy actually looked like a little kid - his posture, expression, even his voice.

"Hey Bobby! How was your summer?" Jimmy asked an unseen companion.

"I forgot to mention... you've come to school completely naked," Sunday added, grinning at the audience.

Jimmy's eyes widened in horror as he blushed and tried to cover himself with his hands.

"I don't know what... I mean... I was dressed when I left this morning..." Jimmy squeaked in panic. The audience was laughing as he looked around for a place to hide. Finally he crouched down as if hiding under an imaginary desk. He rubbed his head as if he had bumped it and started whimpering.

The audience reacted with a collective "Aww..." of sympathy.

Jason was watching the stage, his forehead creased in a frown. "Mommy, is Uncle Jimmy okay?"

"I'm sure he is, munchkin," Lois assured him, although from the look on Jimmy's face, she wasn't as sure as she was trying to sound.

"When I snap my fingers, you will be back here, fully clothed and you will remember everything," Sunday instructed. He snapped his fingers. Jimmy blinked his eyes as if waking from a sound sleep then stood up, rubbing his head. Sunday took his hand they both bowed to the audience's ovation.

A short time later, as the rest of the audience began to leave, Sunday's assistant came to their table. "The Baron would like you stay a few moments to speak with you," he said, but there was a nervousness about him that Lois hadn't seen on the stage.

"I thought Baron Sunday didn't give interviews," Lois said.

"The Baron wishes to meet the famous Lane and Kent," the assistant said. He then scurried off, disappearing behind the curtains of the now darkened stage.

Jimmy was still rubbing his head. "What happened to your head?" Lois asked. She reached over and parted his hair to find a growing lump on his scalp.

"I was trying to hide under my desk and I guess I bumped it," Jimmy explained, wincing at her touch.

"But the desk was only in your imagination," Perry observed, giving the young man a curious look.

"Mister Olsen was so convinced of what he was experiencing, his body reacted as if his vision were real," Sunday said smoothly as he approached them from the darkness backstage.

"Interesting trick," Clark commented.

"Hardly a trick. I only made use of what was already in his mind," Sunday explained. He stared at Clark long enough to make Lois nervous. "You're a... Pisces, right?"

Clark nodded slowly. "February 28th."

"Nineteen seventy-six?"

"Seventy-two."

"Another Metropolitan?"

Alarm bells went off in Lois's head. "You planning on sending him back to second grade?" Beside her, Jason giggled.

Sunday gave her a glare that sent shivers down her spine. Then he smiled. It wasn't an improvement.

"No, Miss Lane. I'd have something much more interesting in mind for a man as worldly as Mr. Kent," Sunday told her. Behind him, the assistant seemed to shrink in on himself as if he wanted to take off running.

"Face my demons?" Clark yelled. "How am I supposed to do that when I don't even know what they *are*?"

Jonathan just shook his head. "Oh, son. There are none so blind as those who will not see."

The next day wasn't much of an improvement. Clark was antsy and irritable and when Lois tried to get him to talk about it he just shook his head. He had hardly slept at all after Sunday's performance and to make matters worse, he had managed to lose the monogrammed

silk handkerchief Jason had given him for Father's Day.

Clark had two more panic attacks - one on the newsroom floor, the other in the elevator. Whatever was bothering him was not getting better with time and he simply refused to talk about it. At least he had filled her in on how he knew Matt Young at the NIA and what happened in Jamaica.

The other positive note of the day was that Young had gotten back with Clark and agreed to talk with them. A less positive note was that research had run a background check on both Hendricks - the man Clark and the NIA had publicly accused of having been gun runner - and Baron Sunday. Prior to the incident where he allegedly died, Hendricks had a clean record. Baron Sunday had no past at all and looked uncannily like an older version of Hendricks. Lois had little doubt that they were the same man.

"I was on my way out," Young said, meeting them in the lobby of the gray block office building where the NIA had its offices. "Hope you don't mind doin' this on the run..." He turned to Clark. "You've come a long way from that green reporter I met in Jamaica."

"So have you," Clark countered. "Head of the Metropolis office? Sorry about Rod Clemens, though."

Young gave Clark a puzzled look then his expression cleared. "Oh... Rocket Rod Clemens. He was only in my group for a few months, you know. Had some serious personal problems. Seems he could never get the Gulf out of his head."

"Post traumatic stress?" Lois asked.

"Oh yeah," Young said. "Just before he shipped stateside, he was caught in the chest by a sniper. Almost killed him." He gave them another curious look. "Why the interest? The papers said he died of a heart attack."

"Just an angle we're pursuing," Lois told him.

"What kind of angle?" Young asked slowly. Suddenly he stiffened and his eyes opened wide in surprised shock.

"Matt? What is it?" Clark asked.

"The dogs!" Young answered, his voice choked in terror.

"There aren't any dogs here, Matt," Clark said gently.

Young didn't seem to hear him, backing away from them, a look of utter terror in his eyes. Passersby were stopping to stare. Suddenly, he had a service revolver in his hand.

"Stay back!" Young shouted. Then he started firing. Passersby dove for nearby doorways for protection. Clark had pushed Lois down, out of Young's way. Young kept pulling the trigger until he was out of ammunition. Then he dropped the gun, putting his hands in front of his face as if to protect himself.

Finally he screamed, clutching at his chest as he dropped to the ground. Lois was on her knees beside him and ripped open his shirt to expose his chest. There were fresh scratch marks on the pale skin.

Clark checked for a pulse at his neck. He pounded once on Young's chest then began chest compressions. Lois moved around to Young's head and began breathing for him.

After a moment Clark sat back on his heels. "He's got a pulse."

People had begun to appear from the doorways. A panda car screeched to a stop beside them. The officer inside threw open the door and ran over to them.

"What the devil just happened, Clark?" Lois demanded as the police and EMTs took over. She hailed a cab to take them back to the office.

"I wish I knew," Clark said, shaking his head. "First Clemens, he thought he was pinned

down by enemy fire, and now Matt?"

"Was Matt afraid of dogs?" Lois asked.

"He told me once he didn't like them much," Clark said. "He'd been attacked by a neighbor's guard dog when he was little."

"The scratches on his chest could have been from a dog," Lois noted.

"Like the bump on Jimmy's head?" Clark asked.

The afternoon didn't get better. If anything, it was worse. Sunday's assistant had come running out of the elevators. He looked terrified. "Mr. Kent! I come here to warn you!"

Clark guided the frightened man to a chair.

"The Baron. He wants you..." The man suddenly screamed and fell to the ground. Clark tore open his shirt to expose the man's chest and started CPR. Lois called 9-1-1.

The EMTs rushed out of the elevators and took over for Clark. They tried the defibrillator - nothing. After several more minutes of working, they sat back shaking their heads.

"I'm Detective Lundren. You're Miss Lane?" the detective that followed the EMTs into the newsroom said. "What do you know about him?"

"His name's Ziggy. He works, or worked, for Baron Sunday, the magician," Lois said.

"Oh, yes. I've got tickets to take my boys to see the show tonight," Lundren said. The EMTs loaded the body onto a gurney, a sheet covering his face. Lundren lifted the sheet to look at the body.

"Is this a joke?" Lundren asked the EMTs. They both shook their heads.

"How long ago did he die?"

"He collapsed maybe thirty minutes ago," Lois told him.

"He looks like he's been dead a lot longer than that..." Lundren pulled the sheet back further. Ziggy's face had shriveled to a parchment covered skull with only a few strands of dark hair.

"This is impossible," Clark murmured. He had actually gone pale. Lundren shrugged and followed the EMTs out of the newsroom.

"Clark, promise me you won't go after Sunday alone," Lois said.

"I wasn't planning to," Clark told her. "I'm just trying to figure out how he's doing it. Clemens autopsy didn't come up with anything. No drugs or anything like that and nothing's shown up with Matt either."

"And whatever it is has been affecting you, too," Lois reminded him.

"Maybe he really is a black magician," Clark suggested. "I've read about magic and the supernatural. In Jamaica I even interviewed a few bokors and I know they're nothing like in the movies. But one thing stands out in everything I've read, everyone I've talked to. Everything you do comes back at you, kind of like Newton's laws. If you do good, good comes back. If you do evil, that also comes back. Intent is everything."

"In that case, Sunday should drop dead any time now," Lois said. "If we're right, he's killed three people, maybe more. And he won't stop when he's finished with you. He thinks you were involved in taking away his family and hurting them. He wants revenge and he's tasted blood."

"Revenge is barren of itself: it is the dreadful food it feeds on; its delight is murder, and its end is despair." Clark quoted. "We have to stop him. I don't want him coming after you or Jason."

"I'm going to go pick up Jason from school and then I have an appointment with Doctor Klein over at STAR Labs." Lois told him. He gave her a worried look. "We're just talking, so

don't worry about it."

"Lois, if it was something more, you'd tell me, wouldn't you?"

"Of course I would," she assured him. "But promise me you won't do anything stupid. Sunday's power seems based on fear. I know my demons. I'm a little worried about yours."

"Dad, tell me what I'm supposed to do," Clark pleaded.

"Son, you know that what ever it is it has no power over you except what you give it. And if it is a memory, it's something you survived," Jonathan said. "Sometimes when you shine a light on things, they're not so scary after all."

He didn't want to do it, didn't want to visit that frightening place. His heart started racing and he tried to slow it down. He could feel the fear turning his blood cold. He was trembling but he had to go on. *'This fear is part of you. It's time to let it out,' Lois said.*

"I'm enclosed in something. There are voices. Colors... red... blue... And loud noise. Like thunder... It's terrifying."

"But there's more, isn't there?" a voice asked. A voice more cultured than Jonathan's. *Jor-El.* Jor-El was standing there in his silver-white robes watching him with benign curiosity. "What happened before the thunder, my son?"

"Voices," Clark answered. "A man and a woman. The woman is crying. The place where they are is coming apart."

"You will travel far, my little Kal-El. But I will never leave you. Even in the face of my death the richness of my life shall be yours. All that I have learned, everything I feel, all of this and more I have bequeathed to you my son... This is all that I can send with you, Kal-El. And not near so rich a gift as that your mother sends along. Her... love." Jor-El's voice.

"It's you and Mother," Clark realized. "The city was coming apart. I wasn't being buried alive. I was being put in the crystal ship that would take me to Earth. I was too young to understand. All I knew was that Mother was gone and I was scared and there was no one there. I was alone."

Jor-El nodded solemnly.

"Clark, please come back to me. I don't want to do this alone... Together we're more powerful than any spell," Lois was saying. She had taken his hand and placed his palm on her belly. "Hold on to this. Hold on to us."

"Clark..." Richard was back. "All you have to do is open your eyes."

"You're not a dream, are you?"

Richard smiled. "Sometimes the difference between life and death is nothing more than the difference between reality and a dream."

"Lois is pregnant..."

Clark opened his eyes to see a hospital room. Lois was standing by the bed and Jason was standing on a chair next to her. He reached up and pulled the respirator tube from his throat.

"Lois..."

"Thank God you're back," she said, giving him a hug. "Don't ever scare me like that."

"Sorry... Klein gave you good news, didn't he?"

Lois's cheeks were wet with tears. "Yes, due date's middle of May. Klein and I were afraid... It doesn't matter... We think Hendricks may really be dead this time. His plane crashed outside Chicago. The first reports say one of the bodies on the plane had been dead for many years."

"His sins finally came back on him?"

She nodded. "You can't run from your demons."

"And they're usually not so scary when you shine a light on them. And together, we're stronger than all of them."