

Poison

by repmetsyrrah

© 20-Oct-08

Rating: K+

Disclaimer: All publicly recognizable characters, settings, etc. are the property of their respective owners. The original characters and plot are the property of the author. The author is in no way associated with the owners, creators, or producers of any media franchise. No copyright infringement is intended.

Lois Kent groaned as she got up awkwardly from the couch and waddled in the direction of the toilets. "I swear these kids think my bladder is some sort of trampoline."

"What's a bladder?" Her daughter, 6-year-old Skye, asked from her place on the floor. Her older brother, Jason, looked up from his Playstation game.

"It's where all your pee is before you go to the toilet."

Skye made a disgusted face. "Ew, why would the babies want to jump on that?" Jason just shrugged and returned to his game. They sat in silence for a moment before Skye got bored again.

"When's Dad getting back?"

"Dunno." Jason frowned as he concentrated on his game.

"When are we going to Uncle Richard's?"

"Dunno."

"Why doesn't the moon fall out of the sky?"

"Dunno, be quiet."

"Can I play?"

"No."

"Please?"

"No, now shut up!" He yelled as his distraction cost him one of his lives. Unfortunately, Lois had just returned from the bathroom and heard him.

"Jason, don't talk to your sister like that," She snapped, Jason tried to look sorry. He'd only just gotten his PS4 back from the time he'd locked Skye on the roof of the apartment building.

"I'm sorry, Skye," He said, putting on his best apologizing voice. However, Skye was no armature at this game either. She sniffed and stuck out her bottom lip.

"Mommy, why is Jason so mean?" She asked, turning her big, blue eyes to her Mom. Normally, Lois would not have fallen for it, but lately her hormones had been fluctuating wildly. She walked over to the TV and yanked the plug out of the wall.

"MOM!" Jason yelled, "She made me lose a life!"

"Go to your room now or you may lose your life," His mother snapped. Jason glared at her then ran to his room and slammed the door. But not before he saw Skye shoot him a triumphant smirk from her new place on the couch, under the sympathetic arm of her Mom.

He stomped to his bed and flopped down on it, staring at the ceiling. Why did Mom have to be so weird when she was pregnant? She had been like this with Skye too, only nicer, in

Jason's mind. She certainly hadn't ever yelled at Jason or sent him to his room for no reason.

Maybe it was worse this time because there were three babies inside her. Jason didn't know much about babies. He knew how they were made and kind of what happened when people got pregnant. But he didn't know what other people were supposed to do with someone who was pregnant. He'd only been 5 last time.

A shout of laughter came from the living room and Jason let out a sigh of frustration. Skye was *so* annoying. She was almost never in trouble with their parents and everyone they meet said how cute she was. He hated her.

Immediately, Jason tried to take back that thought. He didn't hate her, not really. Normally they had lots of fun together. Almost always, really. Skye adored Jason and would pretty much do anything he asked. Dad had warned him about not taking advantage of that and he didn't. Much. Skye was really fun to play with, even if Jason would never admit it to his school friends. But sometimes she could be so damn *annoying*.

He heard his mother get up and go into the kitchen. Making a mental note not to eat anything until he got to Uncle Richard's house (pregnant moms ate really weird things), he slipped out of his room and down the hall.

Skye was playing on his Playstation and had already lost two more lives. Jason resisted the urge to yell again and simply took the controller away from her.

"You can still play," He assured her, as she opened her mouth to call for Mom. "But we'll make a new game for you okay?" Skye didn't say anything. "It'll even have your name on it," he promised.

"Really?" His sister asked, looking excited.

"Uh huh." Jason exited his game without saving. He would have to redo some parts but at least he'd still have those three lives. "We'll call it 'Skye's game' and no one else will be allowed to play it, okay?" he explained, selecting 'New Game' on the start menu.

"Okay," Skye replied happily. The last ten minutes were soon forgotten as brother and sister bonded over high-tech shoot outs and alien enemies intent on wiping out all life on Earth.

When Lois returned from the kitchen she paused for a moment, taking in the wonderful sight before her. Jason was on the couch, jumping up and down and yelling commands at a hysterically giggling Skye.

"Jump! NO, don't go in there!...Ahh!" He jumped off the couch in an over dramatic fashion, jumping up again almost at once. "Watch out he's got a grenade. No, you can't do that...Quick, switch weapons, No, he's on your team! Oh! Oh! Shoot that guy!" Skye shrieked with laughter as Jason jumped off the couch, threw his arms in the air and yelled, "Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!" when she lost her last life.

"Can I play again?"

Lois walked over and picked up the remote. "Not right now, sweetie. Richard is coming over soon to take you to his house. Now, I just want to see if your father will be coming to the doctor's with me okay?" She looked at the clock and, deciding that 10 minutes of sitting with her children was worth the effort it would take to get up, sat down.

Skye nodded, still grinning, and settled on to the couch beside her Mom. Jason put the Playstation away and joined them. Both the children loved hearing about their Dad's heroic acts as Superman. Although, they both knew how important the secret was and never to call him Dad when he was in his Superman cape.

Lois turned the TV off the video channel and rolled her eyes as cartoon network came on.

The kids cheered but she quickly changed the channel. Usually she would have to flick through several news channels, depending on the importance of the disaster. Sometimes it wasn't even reported at all. But today every single channel had the same images with the same blazing headline.

Superman Injured!

Lois felt her insides go cold and the remote slipped from her grasp. Skye started to ask something but Jason shushed her as they listened to the news report.

"- still unsure exactly what happened" A young man was saying as he stood at the site of a now extinguished apartment building fire. "All I can tell you at the moment is that Superman has indeed been rushed to hospital. We have no word on his current condition nor what caused his sudden collapse earlier this afternoon." The scene changed to a smartly dressed woman in a studio. She cleared her throat slightly before addressing the camera.

"That was James Morrison reporting live from the scene of this breaking story. For those of you just joining us-" Skye tried to ask something again. But both Lois and Jason yelled at her as they almost missed the next sentence. "- hours ago Superman rescued the last tenant and put the fire out before landing to talk with Sam Olden, the fireman in charge of this blaze. We have no footage available of the event but eye witnesses said that Superman appeared to stumble before collapsing on the ground, unconscious. Mr. Olden yelled for medical assistance. We are informed that Superman was not breathing at the time-" Lois heard Jason gasp slightly beside her "-but the medics were able to resuscitate him. He is currently at Metropolis General Hospital. No official statements have yet been issued but unofficial reports tell us that the Man of Steel has yet to wake up." Lois turned the television off. She needed to do something but she couldn't think.

The sound of quiet sobbing brought her back to the present. She glanced to her left and was horrified to see her little girl in tears. She shouldn't have let them find out like that. But, then again, she hadn't known what she was going to see either.

"Skye, sweetie, what's wrong?" She asked scooping her up under her arm. The triplets didn't leave any room on her lap and Skye was getting too big for that anyway.

"Is Daddy dead?" She asked looking up at her with tearful eyes. The same blue as her father, Lois thought.

"No he's not, he's just-" Actually, she didn't know what he was. Sick? Hurt? Was it kryptonite? "Not well," She decided.

"But- but," Skye sniffed again, "The lady said he wasn't breathing and Jason told me you can't live without breathing-" She burst into a new fit of sobs. Jason slipped off the couch and around his mother.

"Do you know what 'resuscitate' means?" he asked, taking her hands. Skye shook her head. "It means that the doctors made Daddy breathe again. He's alright." He gave his sister a hug.

"Really?" Skye asked, looking at her big brother with complete trust. Lois knew that Skye idolised Jason and would accept his word without question.

Jason nodded, "Really, really," He promised.

Skye sniffed and wiped her eyes. "But why did they take him to hospital? Daddy can't get sick; he's Superman." Lois took a deep breath and tried to clear her mind as she considered how to answer her daughter's question.

Clark was in hospital. No, she realised suddenly, *Superman* was in hospital. So far as everyone was concerned Clark Kent wasn't anywhere. How was she going to explain that to

Perry?

The doorbell rang. Skye and Lois jumped at the sound. Jason looked startled for a moment then ran over, opened the door and pulled Richard inside.

"Are you ok?" Richard asked walking over to her, "I just heard on the way over here," Lois felt relief flood through her body and knew it showed on her face. Without a word Richard drew her into a hug. Jason quietly took Skye to her room to get ready to go to Richard's house and the two adults sat in silence for a moment.

"What are we going to do?" Lois asked, suddenly, "Clark Kent's gone missing, Superman is in hospital and no one knows why, the triplets could be born any moment-"

"Lois, calm down," Richard commanded quietly. "Relax, we'll figure it out okay? You're only seven months and-" He held up his hand as she started to talk, "I know triplets are more likely to be born premature but your doctor thinks it's unlikely. As for Superman," He paused for a moment before looking her straight in the eye, "You're Lois Lane," Lois knew that he, like her, was recalling the last time, almost 7 years ago, when they had been in the same situation. He smiled, "They'll let you in."

Part 2

"Mrs. Kent, this way please." Inspector Henderson led Richard and Lois through the sterile halls of Metropolis General. "We can't tell you much-"

"Can't or won't?" Lois interrupted.

"Can't," Henderson assured her, "All I can tell you is that it's not kryptonite. The doctors are saying it looks to be some sort of virus attacking his system but no one can figure out exactly what it is or why it's only affecting him. Would you prefer to see him or talk to the Chief of Medicine first?"

"Wherever there's a seat I don't have to leave for a while is fine with me," Lois muttered, putting a hand on her sore back. She was incredibly worried about her husband but the pain in her back from carrying three babies was making it difficult to think. She was starting to regret turning down the offer of a wheelchair at the entrance.

"Here, sit down Lois," Richard instructed, seeming to pull a wheelchair out of thin air. Lois was too relieved to protest as she sat down.

"Where did you get that?" she asked as they resumed their journey, with Richard pushing Lois.

"There was a nurse following us with it," he explained, "I knew you'd get tired eventually." She turned around to glare at him only to find him smiling back.

"I don't like you," she grumbled. Fortunately for Richard she was prevented from making any more sarcastic comments by their arrival at the office of the Chief of Medicine.

Dr. Oliver Higgins was a short kindly-looking man. "Mrs. Kent, I was wondering how long until you came for the next exclusive," he greeted her.

Lois didn't bother with any courtesies, her worry for her husband overriding any manners said husband had instilled in her in the last six years, "What's wrong with him?" She demanded, failing to keep her voice as emotionless as she'd hoped.

Politely pretending he hadn't noticed Dr. Higgins picked up a file on his desk. "Just got this back from the lab. They *think* it may be some sort of virus, we don't know how he got it or where it could've come from. They're working as fast as they can but," He removed his glasses

and rubbed his eyes, "Mrs. Kent, these things take time but at the rate he's been deteriorating, time is something we don't have. Now, and I swear this falls under doctor-patient confidentiality, is there anything, absolutely anything at all you can tell us? Maybe he's mentioned something in an interview, just in passing, anything at all about viruses or diseases that can affect him?"

But Lois was already shaking her head. "I'm sorry. I've been trying to remember since the time I first heard about this." She realized with some shock that it had only been half an hour ago that they'd dropped Jason and Skye off with Chloe and come to the hospital, "I'm sorry," she repeated, "as far as I know nothing but kryptonite can harm him, and I think that's what he thought too". Truth was Clark had never made any mention of any Kryptonian diseases or viruses. The only thing he'd ever been worried about was kryptonite.

Dr. Higgins nodded in understanding. "The thing is," he told her, "this is completely uncharted territory. He's not even human, um-" He looked up, a little embarrassed. "No offence to him, of course"

Lois felt a smile tugging at the corners of her mouth for the first time since she'd seen the news. It was always nice to be reminded how much Metropolis loved *their* Superhero, not that the crowd outside hadn't been a big indicator. Clark wasn't human but it was always funny how people would never refer to him as an alien. And it also meant that they wanted him cured, which was good for everyone.

"Can we see him?" she asked and Dr. Higgins jumped slightly when he noticed Richard by the door.

"Well you can't go into the room with him," he explained, "Until we know whether or not what he's got is harmful to humans he's in quarantine."

"Can we see him?" She repeated.

"Yes, follow me." Richard pushed Lois' wheelchair behind Dr. Higgins as the doctor continued talking. "I understand you were scheduled for a check-up?" He asked Lois. Noting her surprised look, he continued, "Jan Heath and I are good friends, she's mentioned you several times. She was surprised by this was she not? I don't believe multiple births run in your family?"

Lois nodded. "Yeah, I think I had some great-aunts who were twins but even on Clark's side they're all loners. This appointment was the last one before they're due, Dr. Heath says I should be fine though."

"We should reschedule anyway, multiple births are more susceptible to complications even with all these medical advancements they've been making. On that note, I don't believe I've yet congratulated you, as I said triplets aren't too common. These will be your...fourth?"

"Third, fourth and fifth," Lois corrected as they turned a corner, "and, while I do appreciate the effort, changing the subject isn't making me forget why I'm here."

Dr. Higgins was saved having to reply by their arrival at the quarantine ward. He opened a door with a large biohazard sign to allow Richard and Lois through, flashing his ID tag at the two policemen standing outside. The sight that greeted them was far from optimistic.

They were in a small observation room separated from the main room by a thick glass window where Clark, or Superman to the doctors, lay on a white hospital bed. His face was grey and the only sign of life, aside from the heart monitor, was the slight rise and fall of his powerful chest. He was alone in the room and Lois felt a desperate need to be in there with him.

Dr. Higgins' beeper went off and he exited, mumbling something about test results.

Richard took Lois' hand in his own. "Are you okay?" he asked softly.

"I don't know," she admitted, "I... When I saw it on TV I didn't quite believe it but now-" She broke off with a sob and buried her face in her hands, "Damn hormones," She muttered as Richard slipped a comforting arm around her shoulder.

Chloe Sullivan glanced at the clock for the fifth time in as many minutes. Lois and Richard had assured her that they would call if there was any news. Once again she had to resist the urge to turn on the T.V. Lois had explained how upset Jason and Skye had been when they'd seen the initial report, Chloe didn't want them to see anything that would upset them further.

The kids were currently busy with a game of Risk, one of Jason's favourites. Skye didn't fully understand the rules but was having fun anyway. She trusted her Mom when she'd said that Daddy would be okay and saw no reason to worry. Jason wasn't as confident but seemed to understand that he had to look after his sister and leave the hard stuff to the adults.

"Aunty Chloe?" Skye asked, in the startlingly random way young children have, "Why's the sky blue? And why is it spelt different?"

"Spelt different?" Chloe asked, unsure what she meant. Skye was forever asking questions about this or that but she sometimes forgot that adults couldn't read her mind.

"Mrs. Van Asselt at school told me off for putting an 'e' in it then she told me off again for spelling my name wrong but," she frowned, "They sound the same. And why doesn't the moon fall out of the sky?"

"Um..." Chloe frowned, trying to recall her vague memories of high school physics. Fortunately, she was saved having to think of an explanation by the sound of her cell phone ringing. "It's your mom," She informed the kids after glancing at the caller ID. She flipped the phone open as she moved into the kitchen in case Lois had anything but good news. "Hello?"

"Hi, Chloe," Lois answered. "We're still at the hospital, they think Superman's been infected with some sort of virus. I need to know if Clark's mentioned anything to you, I can't recall anything but you've known him for longer."

"No, nothing," Chloe answered, shaking her head from habit. "It wasn't kryptonite then?"

"No, I never thought I'd see the day when I *wanted* to hear that my husband had been hurt by kryptonite."

"Better the devil you know," Chloe agreed, "What do you want me to tell the kids?"

"Tell them we're on our way back and that we're staying at your house tonight, I hope you don't mind but Richard offered and-"

Chloe cut her off, "Lois you're pregnant and your husband's in hospital. You are in no fit state to look after two children, of course you're staying with us. Also, I've phoned Perry and told him that Clark's sick and he may not be in for a while so you don't have to worry about that, okay?"

On the other end Lois had to fight back another wave of sobbing, her hormones were quite out-of-control today but then again, she had a good excuse.

To try and keep the kids' minds off their Dad, Lois and Richard picked up pizza on the way home even though Lois didn't feel she could stomach anything. In her mind she was trying to recall every single conversation she'd had with Clark about Kryptonian physiology.

Nothing came to mind, he'd told her stories of the huge crystal buildings they'd had, the science so advanced that they could travel light years across the galaxy in a single day. Jason and Skye had been told about Kryptonian history while Lois listened but out of all that the

only things about Kryptonian medical science she could recall had to do with kryptonite and some sort of device that could heal broken bones in a second, and she only knew about the last one from when Jason was in his tree climbing phase and not yet invulnerable. But that was only supposed to be used for minor physical injuries, it wouldn't help now.

When they entered the house, Lois supported by Richard and missing Clark more than ever, Jason and Skye didn't even wait for a greeting choosing instead to launch straight into the questions.

"Is Dad alright?" Jason asked, "Why did he pass out? Is it kryptonite?"

Skye got the most important question out first. "Did you get Hawaiian?" Richard nodded. "What did Daddy say? Is he gonna be home to help me with my maths? Is he still Superman?"

"Kids," Chloe tried to calm them. When it didn't work she resorted to yelling, "JASON, SKYE!" Both kids stopped immediately and looked at her. "Leave your mother alone, she doesn't need this right now. Go and wash your hands, come back here *quietly* then we can eat and tell you what's going on." Everyone started at her in shock. "Okay?" She asked and the children bolted for the bathroom to avoid her wrath.

"Thank you," Lois told Chloe gratefully as Richard helped her to the couch. "This is just more than I can handle right now."

"We'll take care of the kids and the doctors are going to take care of Clark," Richard promised her, "The only thing you need to worry about is taking care of these three." He placed a hand on her swollen stomach and one of the triplets gave it a firm kick, making them both smile. Richard raised his eyebrows, "I sense soccer in their futures." He joked, clearly trying to take her mind of the day's events.

"That's not going to work," she informed him as Jason came tearing back into the room closely followed by his sister. "But, thanks for trying."

Part 3

Lois only vaguely recalled going to bed, she could remember falling asleep on the couch then Richard and Chloe helping her to bed after a long night spent watching the news for any more information. Jason was curled up next to her, his back against hers. Skye was on the other side, one hand resting on Lois' swollen stomach, the rest of her sprawled across half the bed.

The glowing clock on the bedside table read 7.26am and Lois had a brief moment of worry before remembering that she was well into her maternity leave. Jason shifted against her a yawned, "Mom?" he asked, having to take care not to fall off the edge of the bed.

"Morning." Lois turned around to embrace him in a hug, wondering for a moment what had happened to her curtains before the events of the previous day came crashing down on her.

"Do we have to go to school today?" Jason asked, "I want to stay home with you and listen to the news."

"No, sweetie." Lois swung her legs out of the bed. "You and Skye both have to go to school today. But I promise you, if you go today, you don't have to go tomorrow or the next day, Okay?"

Jason rolled his eyes. "It's Friday, Mom." But despite his complaining he jumped onto the floor and made his way to the bathroom.

Lois turned around awkwardly and gently shook Skye on the shoulder but the girl just turned over and kept right on sleeping. Lois sighed, it had been worth a shot. Clark, Jason and herself were all rather light sleepers but Skye seemed to have taken after her Grandma Ella and her Aunt Lucy, when she closed her eyes she was out like a light and nothing short of a nuclear explosion was likely to rouse her. Fortunately, Lois had something better: Lane Ingenuity™.

Thanks to the triplets she couldn't maneuver as well as she usually did and pull all the sheets off the bed in one go. So instead she reached over to the edge of the duvet and flipped up the end revealing two pink feet. Skye shifted slightly as the cold hit her toes but her eyes remained stubbornly closed. Lois smiled and tugged on her big toe before moving to tickle the bottom of her feet. This time the girl's eyes flickered open and she scooted away from her mother.

"Mo-om," she complained, "Don't do that."

Lois held out her arms and Skye hesitated slightly, wondering if she should forgive her so quickly for waking her up, but she eventually scurried over to give her mom a hug. "Mom?"

"Hmm?" Lois asked, savoring the moment of peace.

"Can I stay home today? I feel sick."

Ten minutes later poor Skye had had her temperature taken more than once, her throat examined, heart rate and breathing timed several times and answered hundreds of questions from Richard, Chloe and Lois.

"It's just my tummy feels all sick," Skye protested when they asked her for the eighth time what exactly felt the matter. "Not like how Daddy fainted."

Lois sighed and Chloe and Richard shared a look. They were obviously not fooling her as well as they'd hoped. "We don't think you've got what Daddy has, darling," Lois assured her, "we're just being very careful."

Jason looked up from his place at the table having just finished his cereal. "If Skye stays home, can I too?"

Lois frowned, she was supposed to be taking things easy. The doctors had given her three different meds to help her pregnancy last as long as possible, triplets had a high rate of premature births, but she still had to keep rested and calm.

Jason saw her thinking and pressed his advantage. "I can take care of Skye and that way Aunt Chloe and Uncle Richard can still go to work and you can rest on the couch like the doctor said." He looked hopefully at her.

Lois looked at Chloe and Richard for help but both of them were looking at her with expressions that clearly said they thought it was a good idea but didn't want to interfere when it was her children. "Okay," Lois relented, not having the energy to argue more, and it really would help to have someone looking after Skye. "But when you're not helping me or your sister, you're doing homework."

Jason jumped up and punched the air. "I will," He promised, running over to unpack the bags that Chloe had brought over for them.

Lois turned back to her daughter. "Do you want to go back to bed?" Skye nodded, looking very pale and unwell. Chloe picked her up and carried her back into the guest room.

Richard looked worriedly at Lois. "We *can* stay if you want. Perry would understand, he thinks Clark's sick remember? We'll just call in and tell him you need help with the kids."

"No." Lois shook her head. "I don't think it's a good idea for all of Clark's closest friends to suddenly take a sick day when one of the biggest stories of the year is breaking. Don't you

think that's a little suspicious?"

Richard nodded. "You're right."

"As usual," she replied, managing to crack a smile for what felt like the first time in days. "I'll need my laptop and cell phone and can you turn the TV onto CNN?" she asked, "I know they're usually hopeless but it's better than nothing."

"Will do." He nodded, helping her to the couch, "But even if you must work, try and keep physically inactive at least, we want to keep those three in there as long as possible. You shouldn't even have gone to the hospital, I know they have those new drugs that keep them to full term but-

"Richard, calm down," Lois ordered, "I'm fine and so are the triplets. Dr. Heath knows what she's doing, it's a lot safer now days."

Richard looked about to protest further but he was prevented from doing so by the return of his girlfriend. "Skye's asleep," she informed them, "Out like a light as soon as her head hit the pillow. I've put a drink bottle on the table for her and left the door open so you can hear her." She frowned in thought. "Anything else? We *can* stay if you-

"No, go to work," Lois insisted, "and call me if anything, and I mean *anything* happens, okay?"

Chloe and Richard didn't look happy but nodded anyway. Jason returned from washing his breakfast bowl, "Don't worry Aunt Chloe," he said, trying to sound as grown up as he could, "I can look after Mom and Skye."

"I'm sure you can, big guy." Richard bent down to give the boy a hug. "Just make sure your Mom doesn't work too much, okay?"

"Okay." Jason nodded seriously.

Once Chloe and Richard were gone Lois told Jason to start doing some homework, flipped open her cell phone and called the first on her long list of calls to make.

"Hi, Martha, it's Lois."

The first thing Chloe did upon reaching the *Daily Planet* was to pull up all of Lois's Superman articles from back to the time Clark had first adopted the caped identity the related to him being injured, ill or anything-less than 'Super'. She also pulled up articles about anyone who had had anything to do with kryptonite dealings in the past.

"Five?" Richard said in shock, when she showed them to him, "Only five?"

"*Only* five?" Chloe's eyebrows shot into her hair. "Richard the man's near invincible and the only thing that can hurt him is pretty much the rarest substance on Earth, five is *a lot* for someone like that."

Richard just sighed. "Well, what do we have?"

"Let's see." Chloe opened the first article. "Lex Luthor attacks Superman with kryptonite right after his first appearance, next up is the General Zod incident, Supes gets beat up pretty bad, but I don't think that will help now, then we skip five years...and come to: The New Krypton fiasco, first time he was in hospital, coma, left within two days, absolutely no symptoms like what he's got now. A year after that a teenage girl named Kathleen Quinn tries to shoot him with a kryptonite bullet."

"The doctors have already ruled out kryptonite," Richard pointed out, "and she only got his shoulder, he didn't even need a bandage *and* the cops busted the supplier."

"Yeah." Chloe nodded. "But the supplier was a former associate of Luthor, maybe he knows about other so called 'back-up' plans that could be more effective than selling

kryptonite to teenage criminals."

"Like a super-virus that could cause him to collapse in the middle of a rescue." He nodded, following her train of thought.

"Exactly. But for the moment I don't think this Kathleen thing will lead anywhere so we'll leave that one for now. I think we should check out this one." She held up her last sheet, an article that was accompanied by a picture of a middle-aged man. "Timothy Summers," Chloe announced, "another former associate of Mr. Luthor also connected to the lovely Miss Quinn and her kryptonite buddies but the cops couldn't make anything stick."

"Well." Richard stood up and shrugged on his jacket. "What are we waiting for? Let's go talk to Mr. Summers." He started walking purposefully towards the door.

"Uh, honey?" Chloe called sweetly.

"Are you coming?" Richard asked, surprised to see her still in the same spot by his desk.

"Timothy Summers lives in Canada."

"Oh," Richard felt a slight blush appear on his face. "So, maybe we should phone him then?" He walked back to his desk like that had been when he was going all along.

"That would be a good idea," Chloe agreed with a smirk.

Part 4

Three hours, many phone calls and absolutely no new information later Lois was almost ready to march down to the airport and demand they take her to the Arctic where she could get useful information, 'no flying in the third trimester' be damned.

Jason busy was cooking spaghetti for lunch, one of his favorites and the only thing Lois felt safe letting him make, when a healthy looking Skye emerged from the bedroom.

"Mommy." She bounced over to the couch and threw her arms awkwardly around Lois. "I feel better now. Can I have something to eat?" Lois hugged her back, trying not to let her immense relief show on her face lest it betray how truly worried she had been.

"Your brother's just making spaghetti now," she told her daughter. "Let me look at you." Skye stopped bouncing and held still as Lois put a hand on her forehead. "Your temperature's back to normal, we you lying in the sun?"

Skye nodded. "Daddy told me that sunlight helps make us not sick so Auntie Chloe opened the curtains for me."

"Did she?" Lois made a mental note to thank the woman later. "Well, I still want you to slow down for the rest of the weekend, I know sunlight helps you but until you're invulnerable you have to let your body heal slowly okay?" Lois smiled slightly, never would she have imagined saying those words to her children when Clark Kent first tripped his dorky way into her life. The thought of Clark sobered her instantly. "Go help your brother serve up lunch," she instructed Skye, "I'll just be a minute." She heaved herself off the couch and made her way towards the bathroom, wishing that the triplets would for once just sleep when she was working.

In the kitchen, Jason was trying to make Skye feel useful while keeping her out of the way at the same time. "You can get the plates out." He decided. "But wash your hands first, we don't want to get sick."

"But I'm all better now," Skye told him, "and you don't get sick."

"Well, Mom does," he reminded her, "So wash your hands before you touch anything."

"But-"

"Sky-ye," Jason warned her through clenched teeth while keeping an ear on his Mom in the bathroom like his Dad had taught him. Lois had been more sick with the triplets than she'd ever been with Jason or Skye and Clark had asked Jason to take care of her when he was away, Jason was pretty sure now counted as a time when he was away.

Skye finally washed her hands before removing four plates from the cupboard. "There's only three of us," Jason reminded her as she set the out on the table.

"But what if Daddy wakes up and comes home?" Skye rolled her eyes, "He'll be really hungry after staying in the hospital because when Ashley's Mom was in there she wasn't allowed to eat. So if Daddy wakes up he'll listen and find us here and then he'll want lunch too."

Jason felt a flare of anger inside him at his sister's stupidity, didn't she realise that if their Dad was sick enough to be in hospital he wasn't just going to 'wake up'? "Skye-" he started, glaring at her but before he could continue he caught Lois' eye as she returned from the bathroom. His Mom gave him a look and Jason clamped his mouth shut and watched as his sister laid out four sets of knives and forks, finally understanding what his English teacher had meant when he'd said 'ignorance is bliss'.

Chloe gave a sigh of frustration as she slammed down the receiver. Nothing, not one single clue as to where Timothy Summers had disappeared to after Kathleen Quinn's trial.

The man Miss Quinn had actually gotten the kryptonite from turned into a dead end after Richard had found out he'd been killed in prison shortly after by another inmate over a stolen toothbrush.

However, the notes on his trial indicated that he said he'd received the kryptonite from Mr Summers along with a large sum of money for its successful 'distribution' among Metropolis' lesser criminals. Miss Quinn had confirmed that she'd seen Mr. Summers at the warehouse where the kryptonite had been stored. Mr. Summers had been interviewed by police and had his home searched several times but ultimately got away clean. Then he disappeared, dropped off the face of the planet. No one noticed at the time because no one cared; Superman had just been shot by a teenage girl who was only trying to shoplift some make up, that was what people want to hear about.

His wife in Canada had wanted nothing to do with them, she'd politely explained that Mr. Summers had gone for a drive one day and never came back. Then she'd not so politely told Chloe where she could stick her investigation and hung up.

Chloe leaned her elbows on her desk and buried her head in her hands. It was so useless, nothing led anywhere and they didn't really have all this time to waste, Clark needed them.

Two strong hands were placed on her shoulders and she leaned back with a sigh as Richard started massaging the knots out of her back. "Any luck?" He asked, moving to her neck.

"None, you?" She groaned as he hit a particularly stiff part. "Don't stop," she told him when he paused.

"You need a better chair," he informed her, "and I've got nothing either."

"If I had a better chair you'd never need to give me massages anymore," Chloe tilted her head back and grinned up at him. Richard leaned down and kissed her.

"CHLOE, RICHARD!" Both of them leapt apart as their names were bellowed across the bullpen. Chloe automatically turned towards Perry's office but Richard saw the real cause of

the interruption.

"Jimmy!" He yelled in surprise as the Pulitzer prize winning photographer barrelled his way to their desks. "Don't you have the next few months off?"

Jimmy had taken a leave of absence at the same time his wife, Sarah, who was six months pregnant with their first child. The pair had intended to work right up to the delivery day but complications with the pregnancy had seen Sarah take an extended maternity leave and Jimmy was granted time off to stay with her. Now, however, he was standing beside Chloe's desk looking as if he was ready to rush off after the next big scoop.

"Sarah's Mom's in town, they can survive without me for a few days, how's Clark?" he asked, cutting straight to the chase. "I heard you visited him yesterday." He glanced at Richard, who nodded in confirmation.

"He's in quarantine until they figure out why he collapsed, they don't want to run the risk that whatever he's got is some sort of contagion that could harm humans."

Jimmy nodded. "I know, just got off the phone to Lois she told me but I was wondering what you guys had found out."

"You just talked to Lois?" Chloe looked up, "How is she? She's been told not to work too hard but-" She broke off with a shrug.

"Yeah." Jimmy smiled and Richard nodded as well. "She said to tell you that Skye's feeling better and thanks for opening the curtains."

Chloe and Richard both visibly relaxed at the words. "So it wasn't the same thing as Clark." Richard sighed in relief. "I mean, it was unlikely but..."

"We were afraid it could be some sort of virus," Chloe told Jimmy who nodded.

"But now you think he was poisoned or something," Jimmy completed, "Have you looked into that incident with Kathleen Quinn and Timothy Summers?" he asked.

Chloe nodded, "We were trying to contact Mr. Summers but that went nowhere, the man's disappeared."

Jimmy shook his head. "Damn. But I was actually wondering if you'd read the court transcript of Miss Quinn's cross-examination. When she first claimed Mr. Summers was behind supplying *her* supplier with- just a mo'," he muttered as he pulled a folded sheet of paper out of his pocket.

"She said she got the kryptonite from Mr. Linn but Mr. Summers was the one behind it all," Chloe reminded him.

"Not exactly," Jimmy told her with the grin of a reporter who's found something everyone else missed. "Her exact words were: *'Mr. Linn was giving us the bullets of kryptonite but Mr. Summers sometimes came in and gave some of the other kids more stuff to stop him'*." Jimmy stopped reading and looked up at them expectantly.

Chloe and Richard exchanged mildly confused glances. "He gave more kryptonite," Richard said, "We knew that."

"No," Jimmy groaned in frustration, "she never said he gave them kryptonite, she said Mr. Linn gave them kryptonite and Mr. Summers gave them *stuff*. Not 'more kryptonite', *'more stuff to stop him'*." Chloe and Richard both clicked at the same time but Jimmy was on a roll, "Everyone just assumed it was kryptonite because until yesterday the only thing that could stop Superman was kryptonite but now there's something else, some other-"

"Stuff." Chloe and Richard nodded together.

Jimmy grinned at them but before he could bask in his success Perry stuck his head out of his office and bellowed, "OLSEN! Didn't I order you to stay home and under no circumstances

come in?"

"But-"

"Olsen! Go home! Now!" Perry slammed the door and the bullpen resumed action as if nothing had happened.

"Jimmy you should go, Sarah needs you." Surprisingly the photographer didn't even argue instead just giving the pair tense nods and walking back to the lifts.

Chloe shrugged on her jacket. "Well, let's go pay the lovely Miss Quinn a visit shall we?"

"Hello, Kathleen. My name's Chloe Sullivan, I'm a reporter for the *Daily Planet*."

"Hey," replied the bored looking English girl behind the glass. "Haven't seen you lot in a while."

"Us lot?" Chloe asked.

"Reporters," Kathleen explained, "When I first took a shot at Superman everyone was all 'Oh, oh, talk to me!' Now you're all gone."

"Um," Chloe wasn't sure how to reply to that so moved straight on to her reason for coming. "Kathleen-"

"Kat," the girl corrected with a grin that didn't seem like it belonged in a prison.

"Right, Kat. When you were first arrested you mentioned you knew a man called Timothy Summers?"

"Yeah, what about him?" Kat shrugged.

"I'm aware the police haven't been able to pin anything on him but you said that he was the one supplying the kryptonite."

"Yup," Kat confirmed.

Chloe waited but when the girl didn't elaborate she pressed on. "Did he ever mention anything else? Any other way of stopping Superman?" It was a long shot she knew, but they were quickly running out of options.

"Umm." Kat thought for a moment. "Actually, yeah." Chloe felt her heart sped up. "Oh, hey! Does this have anything to do with how he was all, like, sick yesterday?"

"Kat, I need to know what those other ways were," Chloe sidestepped the question but Kat noticed her eagerness and took her time getting to the answer.

"We-ell." She bit her lip, grinning at Chloe through the glass. "There was this one guy, he was, like, tall and stuff." She paused for a moment and pretended to think, keeping an eye on Chloe who tried not to show her agitation. "I have no idea who he was but he got, like, a vial of something and he said that Mr. Summers said it would make him really sick."

"Superman?"

"Yeah, but it was real weird." Kat seemed to have gotten bored of teasing Chloe and continued without further prompting, "This kid was all freaked that if he had something that could make Superman sick then he'd get sick too so I don't think he ever wanted to do it. Wimp," she muttered.

"Did he say anything else?" Chloe asked, hurriedly scribbling everything down.

"Nope," Kat shook her head, "That's all. Oh, look I have to go." She grinned again as the guard came to fetch her. "Bye, Chloe." She hung up without waiting for a reply and practically bounced to the door, waving cheerily over her shoulder as she did.

"Anything?" Richard asked when she got back into the car.

"Maybe." Chloe frowned with annoyance. "I only got about five minutes to actually talk to her, although the security check took ages. She mentioned something that could possibly

have made Clark sick but she didn't remember who got it or exactly what they said about it."

"So we don't know who had it or what it was but only that it could make him sick?"

Richard asked shaking his head, "That's not very helpful, we already know he's sick."

"Look, that's all she told me, if that's not good enough why don't you go in yourself,"

Chloe snapped irritably. The traffic on the way to the prison had been terrible and it would probably take them another hour or so to get home, she wasn't in a very tolerant mood.

"Sorry," Richard apologised, and Chloe found her annoyance retreating, "We're both worried about him, I was just thinking out loud."

"That's alright." She was already feeling a bit embarrassed at the outburst. "It's coming on four o'clock, why don't we call Perry and then just go straight home. I hope Lois managed alright today."

Richard nodded, "You call Perry, I'll make dinner tonight, I think we've got some pasta in the cupboard."

"Sounds good." Chloe smiled.

"Dinner's ready!" Richard called as Skye and Chloe settled themselves at the table and Jason retrieved the coke from the fridge.

"Coming," Lois replied from the bathroom where she was washing her hands after the triplets had sent her there for the hundredth time that day.

"Mom, can I have coke too?" Skye asked, watching her brother pour himself a large glass. She wasn't allowed sugary drinks on school nights until she was ten, something Jason loved flaunting in front of her.

"Not tonight, dear," Lois told her, even though it was a Friday, "You've been sick."

"I feeling better," Skye protested, looking enviously at Jason's glass, "And coke doesn't make you sick."

"Well," Lois sighed, thinking that it wouldn't hurt to cheer her up a bit, "Maybe just one."

"I'll get you a glass," Jason offered, slipping off his seat and heading to the kitchen.

Skye shot her mother a confused look as Jason disappeared around the corner as if she couldn't understand why her brother was acting so nice to her all of a sudden.

"Mom?" Jason appeared again with a glass in his hand and a strange look on his face, "I don't feel so well." And before anyone could respond the glass that Jason had been holding smashed on the tiles as the boy's eyes rolled into the back of his head and he collapsed in a heap on the floor.

Part 5

Lois felt like the world had stopped moving for a very long second as everyone stared in shock at Jason's still form on the floor. Then Richard launched himself from his chair and onto the floor beside the boy. Lois stood up suddenly, almost overbalancing until Chloe steadied her from behind.

"Call an ambulance," Richard ordered, checking for a pulse. Chloe helped Lois onto the floor beside her son before rushing to get the phone.

Lois felt like she was moving in a haze, Jason's face was so pale. Just a few seconds ago he'd been perfectly fine and now his breathing was coming in ragged gasps and his skin was grey and clammy to the touch. Lois stroked his hair, willing him to open his eyes and jump

back up as if it had all been a big joke.

"Richard," Chloe's voice sounded so distant, "Should we call an ambulance? What if it's the same thing Clark's got, I think we should take him down to the hospital ourselves. I know several doctors we can blackmail, I mean trust."

"I didn't think of that." Richard sounded closer but still so far away, Lois continued stroking Jason's hair, trying not to notice how still he was, the only thing moving was the labored rise and fall of his chest.

In the background someone was screaming, Chloe was talking loudly then she heard her name over and over again. But none of it made any sense, the only thing she wanted was for her son to just open his eyes and be okay.

"Lois." Someone was definitely calling her now. "Lois, are you okay?" Jason's head moved and Lois felt a sudden flare of hope before she realized that he was just being picked up by a tall woman with blond hair. "Lois," the voice called again but Lois had stopped listening, why was the lady taking her son? "She's gone into shock, we need to get her some water."

"Richard? Jason's shivering, we need to go," someone called. A glass was placed in her hand and raised to her mouth water ran down her dry throat and reminded her how thirsty she was, she grabbed the glass and drank the rest in one gulp. The world came rushing back as she struggled to straighten up and follow Chloe and her son.

"Lois, take it easy," said the voice she now recognised as being Richard. "You were in shock. Lois!" He exclaimed as she continued to struggle, "Calm down!" Lois stopped trying to get up and took a deep breath.

"Where's Jason?" she asked first, realizing Chloe was no longer in the room.

"She's taking Jason and Skye to the car." He helped her up and led her to a chair. "We didn't want to call an ambulance because we weren't sure who would come. And we don't want just anyone to look too closely at Jason." He retrieved their jackets, helping Lois into hers. "This may be a stupid question but are you sure you're up to..." he trailed off under her glare. "Nevermind, c'mon," He moved forward to help her.

Chloe was in the front, holding a shivering, greyish Jason on her lap. Richard drove while Lois sat in the back trying to stay calm for her daughter. "Has Jason got the same thing Daddy's got?" Skye asked, blinking away her tears as she clung to Lois' neck.

"I don't know sweetie," Lois admitted as Richard broke several road rules and speed limits. The triplets seemed to be aware of Lois' mood because she could feel them moving restlessly inside her.

"We're here," Richard announced, ten minutes later as they pulled into the carpark. He drove to the drop-off point, "Hey, Skye." He turned to his niece with a somewhat forced smile. "Do you want to come get some food with me while your mother and Aunt Chloe take your brother in?"

Skye glanced quickly at her mother, then nodded. "Okay," she agreed, climbing into the front seat. "Can we get McDonalds?"

Lois didn't hear Richard's reply as she clambered out of the car. Chloe was still holding Jason and talking to a dark-haired doctor with glasses. Lois couldn't hear what Chloe was telling him but he looked annoyed before nodding and leading them down a short corridor into a darkened room. "Put him on the bed," He instructed Chloe. "Who are you?" He asked Lois as she lowered herself heavily into a chair.

"This is Lois Kent, Jason's mother," Chloe explained, "Lois, this is Dr Trevor Marlin. He's kindly agreed to look at Jason in exchange for my silence on certain matters he's rather not

have his wife aware of." Dr Marlin shot Chloe a dirty look but continued to examine Jason.

"What happened?" he asked finally, having recorded Jason's heart rate, breathing, temperature and blood pressure.

"He collapsed," Lois explained, looking closely at the man. Chloe seemed confident her threat was enough to dissuade him should he find any evidence that Jason was not a normal boy but Lois wasn't as trusting.

"Chloe, can I speak to you alone?" She shot a glance at Dr. Marlin but he just looked blankly at her before returning his attention to Jason. Chloe moved forward to help Lois up instead. "And find me a wheelchair," She muttered as they exited the room, "I can't -" Suddenly the world seemed to blur in her vision and everything went quiet.

"Lois!" Chloe's frightened cry broke through her haze and she snapped back to reality.

"I'm fine," she assured her friend, "Just a dizzy spell." She noticed that she was sitting in a wheelchair, Chloe must've put her in it when she wasn't with it.

"Lois, when was the last time you ate?" Chloe asked but before she could say anything Chloe continued, "We never had dinner, did we? Oh, my God, Lois, you need to eat, you're having triplets this can't be good. We'll go -"

"Chloe," Lois interrupted her friend's rambling. "I'm not leaving Jason."

"But -"

"You can get me something from the café. It's bad enough that I can't be with my husband the way I want but I'm not leaving my son for a second. Now, I need to know how much we can trust this Dr. Marlin."

Chloe sighed, knowing it was pointless to argue. "Dr. Marlin is having an affair with his cleaning lady, I found out after I went to his house to interview him about the proposed budget cuts for the hospital last year. And believe me he's the type of man who'll do anything to stop his wife finding out."

Lois frowned, still not entirely convinced but she couldn't see any other way to get Jason looked at without running the serious risk of someone discovering their secret.

"Mrs. Kent?" Dr. Marlin opened the door and joined them in the hallway. "Jason's condition is...well, I'm not quite sure what it is," he admitted, "I've given him oxygen to help with his breathing. He seems to stable but I'm concerned that he may get worse. You said he was fine today?" He looked at Chloe.

"Yeah." It was Lois who answered, "He was perfectly healthy then just before dinner he went to get a drink then collapsed two seconds later."

Dr. Marlin leaned against the door, thinking for a moment. "Mrs. Kent, I may need to talk to you alone for a moment."

"Anything you need to say can be said in front of Chloe."

Dr. Marlin nodded. "Then please," He directed them back into the room, Lois felt her dread grow.

"And what drink would you like with that?" the spotty college student behind the counter asked.

"Ummm," Skye frowned, "Fanta," she announced finally, "but with no ice," she added quickly.

"Fanta, no ice," He nodded. "And what does Dad want?" He looked up at Richard.

"Oh." He blinked. "Just her Uncle actually," he corrected, "I'll have a double cheeseburger combo, a vegetarian wrap and..." He bit his lip, trying to recall what Lois could

and couldn't have. She'd been having an aversion to poultry but he didn't know if that was over yet, she needed something though, he knew that much, "Make it two vegetarian wraps," he decided to play it safe.

"Is that all?" Richard nodded and handed over the money. "Have here or takeaway?"

"Takeaway," Richard replied, glancing at his watch. It had been twenty minutes since they'd dropped Jason at the hospital and after a few years in the business he was well aware that no news wasn't *always* good news.

"Uncle Richard?" Skye asked as they climbed back into the car with the food.

"Yeah?" Richard answered a tad apprehensively; last week she'd asked him what Chloe had meant when she'd jokingly told him to 'strap on a pair'.

"Do you think Jason has what Dad has?"

"I don't know, sweetheart." Richard leaned over and ruffled her hair, forcing what he hoped was an encouraging smile. "Why don't we leave the hard questions to the doctors, okay?"

"Okay." Skye didn't look too encouraged but she didn't ask again, turning her attention to her dinner. "Can I use your scissors to open my toy?" she asked, already taking them from the glove box.

"Um, yeah," Richard muttered, checking his cellphone again, still nothing. He started to back out of the crowded carpark, Friday night wasn't the best time to get fast food. He looked down for a moment to check on the drinks.

Suddenly a loud horn sounded behind him and there was sudden jerk followed by a worrying crunch. "Damn," He muttered. Slamming on the brakes, he anxiously looked at Skye. "Are you okay?" She looked a little shaken but as far as Richard could tell she was unharmed. "Okay, just stay here, I'll be right back."

The crash had drawn a few onlookers who seemed to decide rather quickly that no one had been hurt and lost interest. The driver of the other car, a young woman, was already out and assessing the damage. She didn't look angry, much to Richard's relief but as soon as he rounded the back of the car, he saw why. "Aw, damn." He shook his head.

The woman laughed, "Yeah, looks like you got the worst of it." The rear bumper of Richard's car was crumpled, having just caught the towbar of hers as she reversed to let out another car, her car on the other hand didn't even have a scratch in the paint. A few honks alerted them to the fact that they were blocking the path out so they quickly exchanged phone numbers and returned to their vehicles.

"Just what I needed," Richard muttered as he got back in beside Skye. As if he didn't already have enough to worry about, at least the car was still drivable. "You alright?" He asked his niece, who hadn't spoken since he got in. "Skye?" He turned to check she was alright, expecting her to still be a little shaken at the least but not expecting the massive grin plastered across her face.

"Look." She held up the scissors, still grinning excitedly. Richard had a brief moment of panic as he wondered if she'd hurt herself but he soon realized it was exactly the opposite. The small pair of scissors which until a moment ago had been perfectly fine now had one blade bent at an almost ninety degree angle. Skye proudly held up her other unblemished hand to show him. "I'm im-vin-ri-dable."

"Invulnerable," Richard corrected, taking the scissors from her. He was a bit startled to say the least. Jason's invulnerability hadn't kicked in until he was nine, although it had been just as sudden. He turned the scissors over in his hands for a few moments wondering if there

was anything peculiar about it or maybe all half-human half-kryptonians developed differently. He frowned in thought for a few more moments before he realised Skye was looking at him rather apprehensively, waiting for his reaction.

Richard grinned back at her. "That's wonderful, sweetheart. You can keep these if you want." He handed the scissors back to her, not really sure what else to add, maybe he should ask her not to tell Lois she was using them in the car, but Skye seemed content with that and continued to examine her uninjured hand.

Only once they were out of the chaotic carpark and heading towards the hospital did Richard relax his grip on the wheel. It was turning out to be a very interesting day.

"Now, Mrs Kent, you have to understand that what I am about to ask you is very important and strictly confidential. I may have made some mistakes in my personal life." Dr. Marlin shot a look over Lois' shoulder at Chloe, who just nodded. "But my first priority right now is to my patients and right now that's your son."

"What is it?" Lois asked, growing impatient.

Dr. Marlin took a deep breath. "Mrs Kent, it's very important but...I need to know who Jason's real father is."

Part 6

"You know what's wrong with him." Lois fixed her eyes on Dr. Marlin and pinned him with her gaze. "You said his situation was unique but it's not is it? There is one other person with similar symptoms."

The man shot Chloe a some-what pleading look before seeming to remember who she was and what she knew and turned back to Lois. "Mrs Kent, please tell the truth. Is Superman Jason's father?"

"You tell me something first," said Lois, tired of not being in control, "Is this the same thing Superman has?"

"Yes." Dr. Marlin nodded. "It's manifesting itself in the exact same manner and we know it isn't yet harmful to humans. So it's true then? Jason is Superman's son?"

"Yes," Lois admitted, it would've been pointless and not at all in Jason's best interests to lie.

"So it's true?" Dr. Marlin repeated, but this time with a different look in his eye. "You two were together, you had an affair with him."

"Not everyone is like you, Doctor," Chloe spoke up, "Lois was married six years ago, Jason's eleven. You do the math."

But Dr. Marlin didn't want to listen. "This is amazing!" He exclaimed, "Your son is a-a...a *hybrid* of two separate species, we wondered if it was possible for Superman to reproduce with an Earth woman but most people dismissed the idea as preposterous..."

Lois tuned out the man's rantings and shot a worried glance at Chloe who bit her lip. It seemed even she was doubting how the information she held on Dr. Marlin would weigh in his mind against a discovery like this.

"...but here's actual proof!"

Lois snapped her head around and narrowed her eyes. "Dr. Marlin," she said in the same voice that made Superman shrink and corrupt politicians call their lawyers. "If you breathe a

single word of this to anyone, I will personally call your wife and inform her of your affair, then I will go back to the *Daily Planet* and set about ripping you in to so many pieces your own mother will be ashamed to have known you."

Dr. Marlin opened his mouth to say something but all that came out was a strangled squeak. He gulped then tried again, "Mrs Kent, I have no intention of..." He trailed off as Lois continued to give him her patented Lane Glare. "Should I get the Chief?" he asked, edging towards the door. "He's personally taken over the Superman case and..." Lois nodded once and Dr. Marlin bolted from the room.

"Are you sure he won't tell?" Lois asked Chloe again.

"I think you took care of that," Chloe said with awe in her voice, "That was amazing."

"Well-" One of the triplets kicked unexpectedly and Lois blinked, losing her train of thought. She put her hands on her swollen stomach and sighed, "Don't worry guys," she assured the three tiny Kryptonians inside her, "We're gunna get through this." She only wished she felt as certain as she sounded.

Chloe put a comforting hand on her shoulder and looked over at Jason's unmoving form on the bed. "It'll work out, you'll see," she promised. "And I'll go spin a nice story for Dr. Marlin so he only thinks there's one Kryptonian/Human. But for the record, I think you should be honest with Dr. Higgins."

Lois nodded as Chloe left the room, although it was more of an acknowledgement that she'd heard what Chloe had said rather than an agreement. She and Clark had interviewed Dr. Higgins many times over the course of his time as Chief of Medicine and although she felt she'd come to know him reasonably well, she still wasn't sure about revealing Clark's secret. Jason's was out no matter what, there seemed to be no choice in that but also telling him the clumsy reporter who regularly smashed his coffee mugs just trying to get out the door and the superhero lying upstairs in a critical condition were one in the same? Not even her parents knew about that.

The triplets moved again and Lois placed her hand on her stomach just in time to feel one give another firm kick. "Calm down in there," she whispered softly, "If telling Dr. Higgins is going to help Daddy and your big brother then that's what I'll have to do." She looked over at Jason on the bed, his face now obscured by an oxygen mask.

Her thoughts were interrupted by the Chief himself entering the room, he closed the door carefully behind him then turned to look at Lois, eyes wide in shock. "Mrs. Kent, is it true?"

"I can't wait to tell Mom." Skye grinned at Richard, still proudly holding the bent scissors. "Does this mean I'm gunna get to fly soon?"

"Um." Richard blinked, concentrating on the traffic. "It was quite a while before your father could fly, I think. Maybe just wait a little longer." He sighed and ran his fingers through his hair. Chloe hadn't called with any news and he was getting worried, it didn't help that the traffic was barely crawling along the roads at a pace that would annoy snails.

"Uncle Richard?" Skye asked as she finished off the last of her fries. "Are Mommy and the babies going to get sick?"

"I don't know," Richard replied, "But the doctors are going to do everything they can to stop that and to help you Dad and brother, okay?"

"Okay," Skye nodded and sat quietly for a moment before, "Uncle Richard?"

"Yes?" Richard sighed, wishing he was back at the hospital where they could get some real answers.

"What would happen if the babies got sick in Mommy's tummy? Would she get sick as well?"

"I don't know," Richard repeated but before he could say anything else his cellphone buzzed in his pocket. "Hang on," he muttered, checking the caller ID, "It's your Aunt Chloe," he informed Skye, flipping it open. "Hello?"

"Ask her if Daddy and Jason are awake yet." Skye tugged on his arm.

He shushed her, missing Chloe's reply, "Sorry, what was that?"

"Dr. Marlin knows Jason is Superman's son," Chloe repeated. Richard felt his jaw drop, he hadn't thought today could get much more surprising, apparently he'd been wrong. "The virus, poison, whatever it is," Chloe continued, "only affects Kryptonians and seen as Jason's symptoms were exactly the same as Superman's it didn't take him much to put two and two together."

"*Exactly* the same?" Richard asked, finally recovering from his shock enough to get out a coherent sentence.

"That's what Dr. Marlin said. Don't worry about Skye and the triplets though, I told him Lois and Superman had a thing before he left and Jason was the result but he believes the others are Clark's. Lois gave him her glare of death too, and said something about ripping his reputation into so many pieces his own mother wouldn't admit to knowing him. But, despite some bad personal choices, I think he's a good person."

"You're sure he won't tell?" Richard asked, holding up his hand as Skye tried to ask something else.

Chloe sighed on the other end. "I don't know for sure," she admitted, "But I'm looking into his job and life a bit more, maybe there's something else we can uncover on him. The more we have over him the better."

"Maybe," Richard agreed, "We're about two minutes away, is there anything else?"

"That's about it," Chloe told him, "Lois is talking to the Chief of medicine now. I told her it might be best to tell him the whole truth but I don't know what she's going to do...Richard?" She asked when he didn't reply.

"Sorry, just thinking. I -hang on-" He turned to Skye who'd been tapping him on the shoulder. "Your Dad and brother aren't awake yet," he told her, "We're going to meet Aunty Chloe at the hospital." Skye nodded and went back to examining her scissors. "Skye's invulnerable," he informed Chloe, deciding it was her time to be shocked.

"What? Already?" Chloe gasped, "Jason's only had it for two years, maybe it's different for girls..."

"That's what I was thinking," Richard replied as he pulled into the carpark. "I'm just outside, looking for a park, whereabouts are you?"

"I'll come out," Chloe replied, "It'll be easier. Did you get Lois something to eat? She almost fainted before."

"Vegetarian wrap," Richard answered absently, his mind still turning over what Chloe had said. "What *exactly* did the doctor say again?" he asked, pulling into a park.

"I see you, be over in a sec," Chloe replied before hanging up.

"Yes," Lois heard herself say, "Superman is Jason's father."

Dr. Higgins sat down rather suddenly in a chair opposite her and glanced over at the young boy. "Does Clark know?" he asked and Lois raised an eyebrow, that hadn't been the first question she'd expected. "I'm sorry." Dr. Higgins noticed her look and shook his head.

"That's entirely between you and your husband." He looked over at Jason again. "Half-human, half-alien," he said to himself, "Amazing."

"There's something else," Lois blurted out before she could think about it. Dr. Higgins looked at her expectantly and she bit her lip, would it really make a difference if he knew the whole truth about Clark?

"Mrs Kent?" he asked, "What is it?"

No, it wouldn't she decided. He would still be treating the same person, knowing another name wouldn't help. "Nothing." She shook her head. There was a third kick in her stomach and Lois felt the blood drain from her face as she realized something. "Clark is Superman." Dr. Higgins looked stunned but Lois continued. "Clark is Jason's father. He puts on glasses and trips over things so people won't recognise him."

"Why are you telling me this?"

"Because," Lois continued, placing a hand on her stomach, "He's their father as well. And Skye." She clenched her other hand to stop it shaking, "Dr. Marlin said this only affects Kryptonians."

"Yes," Dr. Higgins confirmed, "We've moved him out of quarantine. He's not contagious."

"Not to humans," Lois corrected. "But now there are six people who this could affect, not just the two already sick, and I'm not prepared to lose any of them. You got that?" Dr. Higgins nodded silently and Lois nodded as well, strangely enough she felt oddly calm now. She had a purpose, a clear purpose:

"Good, now tell me everything you know." Lois Kent was going to protect her family, and heaven help anything that got in her way.

Part 7

Things moved rather quickly in the following ten minutes after Lois revealed Superman's true identity as her husband and father of two- soon to be five. Jason was discreetly moved into the quarantine ward, joined shortly by his father. Dr Higgins gave no explanation to his staff, only telling them that if they informed anyone outside the hospital about what was happening they would be fired without hesitation.

"Is that going to be enough?" Lois asked worriedly. "I know how valuable information like that would be to the press, what if someone thinks it's worth their job?"

"I don't know," Dr Higgins admitted, "but all the doctors and nurses working this case are ones I trust personally and only a very few are allowed to see them, the rest are just under the impression we missed something and maybe the virus is harmful to humans."

"Will they believe that?" Lois asked as they made their way back to Dr Higgins' office.

"Well." Dr Higgins shrugged. "It *is* an alien virus, they'll probably believe anything." His pager beeped and he checked it, "Mr White and your daughter are waiting with Miss Sullivan in my office," he informed her.

Lois cursed silently to herself. She had forgotten that she still had to look after Skye, the girl couldn't stay in the hospital that much was obvious. There was no way Lois was leaving Clark and Jason. Jimmy and Sarah, the kids' usual babysitters had enough to deal with right now what with their own pregnancy complications, her parents were out of town, Perry was in New York and Martha and Ben were in Kansas with no fast way out.

That just left Richard and Chloe, but they would want to stay and help and, although Lois'

irrational pride would never let her admit it, she didn't want to be alone at a time like this.

Skye grinned when she saw Lois and ran over to her, waving a pair of bent scissors. "Look, look!" She jumped up and down excitedly.

Lois raised an eyebrow at the pair on the other side of the office, Chloe looked confused and Richard looked...guilty? She turned back to Skye, trying to look happy for the girl. "Hey, sweetie. Careful with those," she warned, nodding towards the scissors, "you might hurt yourself."

"Nuh-uh." Skye shook her head. "Not any more-" she broke off suddenly, looking wide-eyed at Dr Higgins as if she had only just noticed him.

"I think he knows who your Dad is," Richard told Skye, nodding in Dr Higgins' direction.

"Knows?" Lois asked in confusion wondering what that had to do with what Skye was so excited about.

"I'm- in- in," Skye started excitedly before pausing and scrunching up her face in concentration, "In-vul-n-er-able," she sounded out slowly before returning to her usual million-miles-an-hour pace. "We were in Uncle Richard's car but the lady hit us and the scissors almost cut me but instead they bent like this, see?" She grinned expectantly at Lois, clearly hoping for her to show some excitement as well.

Lois stared at the bent scissors as her mind caught up with Skye's revelation. She was invulnerable, already? According to everything Clark had told her and everything they had experienced with Jason, Skye shouldn't be invulnerable for another few years. A stray thought entered her mind but she pushed it aside, it would be unlikely that what was happening with Clark and Jason was related to this, Skye was just developing faster because she was a girl. Lois nodded, that was all, she told herself.

"Mom?" Skye asked and Lois pulled herself back to the present to find her daughter and the three adults looking at her with concern.

She forced herself to smile and look happy for Skye, even though it was the last emotion she had after the last two days. "That's brilliant, sweetie," she praised the girl. Skye didn't seem to notice her heart wasn't in it and lit up with pride, still holding the scissors aloft like they were a trophy.

"Why don't we all sit down," Dr Higgins suggested, looking at Skye strangely as she twirled the evidence of her unique heritage around her finger, Richard and Chloe took the office chairs and Lois remained in her wheelchair.

"Before I forget, you need to eat this," Richard pulled out a wrap from the bag he was holding and passed it to Lois, "Chloe mentioned you had a dizzy spell earlier."

"Thanks." Lois took the wrap but merely placed it on her lap, she knew she needed it but she was too worried to have any appetite left. "We have to find somewhere for Skye to stay," Lois told Chloe and Richard before Dr Higgins could start, the girl needed to know the doctors were helping her brother and father but she didn't need to know the details.

"I wanna stay here and help," Skye protested, "I wanna see Daddy and Jason."

"You can't, sweetie," Lois tried to explain, "Daddy and Jason are very sick-"

"I wanna see them," Skye interrupted her voice rising dangerously close to a whine.

"Skye," Chloe tried, "You can't stay here right now, you can come home with me and we can come back tomorrow, okay?"

"No!" Skye yelled, the day finally getting to her as she threw her scissors on the ground and crossed her arms, "I want to see Daddy!" She yelled, her face reddening, Lois knew she was revving up for a full-blown tantrum, clearly over tired and not liking being unable to see

her Dad.

"Skye Annabel Martha Kent," Lois snapped, drawing herself up in the chair as much as she was able and fixing her daughter with a stern gaze that the 6-year-old tried to match, "Stop this. Both your father and brother are very sick right now and no one knows why. I am trying the best I can to help the doctors find out what's wrong but his is not helping, so shut up and stop being so selfish!" Lois finished, her voice rising nearly to a yell.

Instantly she could tell she had been too harsh, if not from the looks Richard and Chloe were giving her then from the way Skye's face crumpled and her eyes filled with tears. Almost immediately all of Lois' anger disappeared only to be replaced with a hollow guilty feeling, "Oh, sweetheart," she said softly as Skye began to sob, "I'm so sorry, come here." She held her arms wide and Skye ran into them, throwing her arms around her mother as best she could with the added bulge of the triplets. Lois rubbed her daughter on the back as her small shoulders heaved with tears, "I'm sorry dear, I didn't mean that, Mommy's just under a lot of stress lately, okay?"

Skye pulled her head away and nodded. "But why can't I see Daddy?" She whispered, understanding her mother's stress but not why she was being kept away from her father.

Dr Higgins cleared his throat, causing the four others in the room to jump, he had been sitting in his chair, observing the scene so quietly they had completely forgotten he was in the room. "Skye," he said softly, drawing her attention, "You can't see your Dad or brother because we're afraid you might get sick too," he explained, "You know what Kryptonian means don't you?"

Skye nodded. "Something from Krypton. That's what Daddy is," she whispered, wiping her eyes, "And me an' Jason too, but half of us is Mommy as well."

"Exactly, now this thing that's making your Dad sick," Dr Higgins continued, "It's Kryptonian too, and that means that you could get sick too. So that's why you can't see them, okay?"

"I could get sick too?" Skye asked softly, looking fearful. She seemed calmer now that she had an explanation and Lois wondered why she couldn't have done that rather than snapping and driving her to tears. "But Daddy and Jason are going to get better, aren't they?" She looked hopefully at Dr Higgins and Lois, "Like I did today?"

"That was just the flu, sweetie," Lois told her, stroking her hair, "Your Dad and Jason have something far more serious."

"But they're going to get better aren't they?" Skye asked again, this time looking to Dr Higgins for an answer.

He didn't have one.

Part 7

Chloe, Lois, Richard and Dr Higgins eventually managed to get Skye calmed down and the little girl agreed to leave after she was assured that they were doing everything possible to help her father and brother get better. Lois and Richard also had to promise Chloe that they would call her the second they had any new information before the woman felt comfortable leaving with the very tired little girl.

But now that they were finally able to talk properly about the virus and how to stop it, Lois found herself unwilling to begin. What if there was nothing they could do? What if she

was here only to watch her husband slowly drift away, followed soon after by their son?

"- what I thought." She suddenly became aware of Richard talking. "It's not normal."

"Normal?" Dr Higgins shook his head. "It's hardly even natural."

"What?" Lois asked sharply. "What's not natural?"

"The virus," Richard answered, "Jason and Clark's symptoms are exactly the same and occur in the same order, almost down to the second."

"How do you mean?" Lois asked, trying to ignore the feeling of dread in her stomach.

"Well," Dr Higgins started, "we have, of course, been keeping careful track of Superman's symptoms and after his collapse, it took an hour and twenty-four minutes until he developed a significant fever that refused to go down, even with antipyretics and cooling measures. Then, sixty-seven minutes later, he developed a heart arrhythmia called Ventricular Bigeminy that caused his heart to throw extra beats," he informed them, hoping to avoid an overly technical explanation. "It's not serious, just unexpected."

"I know his symptoms," Lois interrupted, wishing he'd get to the point.

"Lois," Richard told her softly, "Jason collapsed at 6.12 pm tonight and at 7.36pm, one hour and twenty four minutes later-"

"He developed a fever," Lois said, looking to Dr. Higgins for confirmation, not surprised by the doctor's answering nod, he nodded. "And sixty-seven minutes later?" she asked.

"His EKG changed to Ventricular Bigeminy, which is what alerted us to the similarities and progression of the symptoms," Dr Higgins explained as simply as he could.

"Just like that?" Lois asked. She had never had anything beyond basic first aid training before in her life, but even she knew something was wrong about this. "But how do you know that's strange?" she asked, "You said before that you think this is an alien virus, maybe that's how they worked on Krypton."

Dr Higgins didn't look convinced. "It may well come from another planet but the basic laws of science should still apply. In humans, fevers are the results of the body's immune response, not the virus itself. In your husband and son's case, this doesn't seem to be true. I think the virus itself is causing the fever and this is definite cause for concern, especially since we don't know exactly what we are dealing with or how the prolonged fever is affecting them. Since both of the symptoms have followed a definite progression, it's not something that is naturally occurring. Something is causing this."

"But you said that the heart thing wasn't too serious?" Lois asked, looking at Dr Higgins hopefully.

"No," he sighed, "but they're continuing to get worse and so far, we haven't found anything to help them get better."

"And the symptoms are so precise..." Richard muttered, almost to himself. Lois and Dr Higgins both turned to look at him and he continued, "It's almost acting more like..." He trailed off again.

"Like what?" Lois asked impatiently. Right now she was willing to take anything she got, no matter how far-fetched.

Richard grimaced nervously. "It's kind of silly, but I was thinking it was acting almost like a machine rather than a virus. All the symptoms occurring so exactly in order and time - reminds me of a finely tuned machine."

"You aren't suggesting that my family's coming down with some sort of... computer virus, are you?" Lois asked incredulously. "Sure you haven't been watching too much Sci-fi?"

"Nanites," Dr Higgins announced abruptly, startling the other two with his sudden

outburst.

"What?" Lois asked.

Before the doctor could explain, Richard interrupted with an enthusiastic, "Of course!" He turned to Dr Higgins. "That makes complete sense and a civilization as advanced as Krypton's would have had no trouble developing a nano-virus. They had faster than light travel for Pete's sake!"

"And," Dr Higgins said, pulling some paper from a folder on his desk, "it would also explain the strange readings we've seen in their blood work. We've been running chemistry panels every two hours and the one abnormal thing we've noticed is an increase in the serum iron levels. We've also noted some changes under the microscope, but we weren't really sure if that was normal for Kryptonians or not, I mean we really have nothing to compare it to, but-

"Wait!" Lois yelled, reassured by the excited looks on the men's faces. "No one's going any further until you both explain to me what the hell nanites are."

Dr Higgins barely even looked in her direction as he replied, "Nanites are machines, robots actually, created on a microscopic scale. They're very hypothetical, but the theory is that if we had the advanced technology, it would be possible to create machines small enough to function inside the human- or Kryptonian- body."

"Could they simulate the effects of a virus?" Richard asked.

"Probably." He shrugged. "As I said they're mainly hypothetical at the moment, at least on Earth."

"So you're saying my husband and son have tiny *machines* inside them?" Lois asked in disbelief.

"It would explain a lot," Dr Higgins continued, "Like why we haven't be able to find the virus yet. So far all we can see is the symptoms but if it really is some sort of robotic nano-virus then it could be hundreds of times smaller than a normal virus."

"Does this mean you can treat it?" Lois asked eagerly, "Now that you know what it is, you can treat it, right?" But she could see from the look on Dr Higgins face that it wasn't going to be that easy.

"As I said before, nanites are largely theoretical on Earth, *if* this is in fact what it is," he tried to explain. "We can't confirm it yet, but I'll order more tests done immediately." He got up straight away and walked out the door without another word.

Richard and Lois sat in silence until something occurred to her. "If it is nanites, why would Kryptonians use this technology to create a virus so harmful to themselves?" she asked. "Surely they could have put it to better use?"

Richard didn't answer immediately but leaned forward in his chair, drawing Lois' attention. "I've been thinking about that," he began, "And the only thing that really makes sense is biological terrorism."

"You mean this is some sort of terrorist attack?" Lois felt another tendril of fear creep around her heart. "But you said it couldn't have originated from Earth."

"No," Richard agreed, "But if these really are nano-machines, couldn't they be, well, 'programmed' to systematically-" He hesitated for a moment then pressed on, "-kill a Kryptonian. I mean just think, it would be the perfect way to cause mass panic, wouldn't it?"

"Would it?" Lois prodded him with a question when he paused.

"Well, look at how everyone reacted when Clark collapsed, then he *slowly* gets worse and every time he does, it causes more panic and fear. Imagine that on a worldwide scale, if this had been programmed to attack humans then people could be forced to watch their friends and

family die slowly, all the while wondering if they could be next."

Lois folded her arms protectively over her stomach at his last words. "Yeah," she agreed.

Dr Higgins walked back into the room only a moment later, "They're running all the tests we can think of," he told them, leaning on his desk heavily and for the first time Lois noticed how tired he looked.

"What are we going to do?" Lois asked. "What are we going to do if no one knows how these nanites things work because we don't have them here? What are we going to do if you can't treat it even when you know what it is?" Her voice was slowly becoming louder, "What are we going to do if it changes? What are you going to do if someone figures out how to tell these machines how to kill all of us?" The last sentence left Lois' mouth in a hysterical rush, adrenalin leaving her just as quickly. Suddenly weary, she buried her face in her hands. Richard placed his arm around her and tried to give what little comfort he could.

There was a heavy silence in the room while everybody thought about her words. Dr Higgins cleared his throat nervously. "Well, we have no reason to worry right now since there is absolutely no evidence that it is harmful to humans. Because of the sensitivity of some of our equipment, the walls of this hospital were designed to prevent interference from the outside, so it would be incredibly hard to re-program the nanites remotely, If that is what we are dealing with here."

"Are you sure?" Richard asked, looking around the office as though he could see some sort of invisible radio signals ready to strike.

"No," Dr Higgins replied.

Part 9

Chloe rubbed her eyes as she waited for her coffee to kick in. It was past midnight and she was still browsing the internet looking for more information on nanites, she had no doubt Lois, Richard and Dr. Higgins were doing the same (Although she really hoped someone had told Lois to get some rest) but she couldn't sleep and she needed to do *something*.

...still largely hypothetical...A swarm of benevolent nanites could increase our quality of life immensely... she read, snorting softly, "I wish." She muttered, continuing to browse the websites. *...nano-robots intended for use in medicine are posited to be non-replicating, as replication would needlessly increase device complexity and reduce reliability.* She frowned and noted that particular sentence down on the pad next to her laptop, hoping it was true.

She rubbed her eyes which were starting to itch from staring at the screen for so long. Her vision started to blur slightly and she closed the lid with a sigh before getting up to get a cup of coffee, planning to return to the search in a few minutes when she could actually read the words.

But someone else had other ideas, "Aunty Chloe?" Skye asked softly, startling her.

"Hey, sweetie," she said, turning to look at the girl standing in the doorway, still in her pyjamas, "can't you sleep?"

Skye shook her head, hugging her small teddy bear closer, "I miss Daddy and Jason," she said quietly. Chloe didn't know what to say so she just knelt down and held out her arms, Skye ran into them hugging her tightly, "Did Mommy call?" she asked, her voice muffled in Chloe's shoulder, "Are Daddy and Jason coming home soon?"

Chloe had a brief moment of indecision, she didn't want to lie to the girl but she also

didn't want to explain that, yes Lois had called and they did know what was wrong but had no clue how to fix it. She compromised. "Yes, she called to say they're still working very hard to make them better, okay?"

"Okay." Skye nodded, pulling away and looking at the TV which was currently muted but still showed headlines reading *Superman's condition still unknown, hospital refusing to comment*. "Can I stay up with you and watch the news?" she asked, "I don't have to go to school tomorrow." She turned to Chloe hopefully.

Chloe sighed. "Sure, kiddo," she agreed, seeing it would be hopeless to send her back to bed, "I could use some company." If she was lucky Skye would fall asleep on the couch and she could continue her search for information.

Chloe's plan worked with Skye falling asleep as she curled up beside her Aunt however Chloe never got the chance to implement the second part of her plan as she decided to rest her eyes for a moment but found herself being woken a few hours later by the shrill ringing of her cell phone.

Skye barely stirred as Chloe got up, annoyed at herself for having slept so long when Clark needed her. The phone stopped mid-ring as Chloe picked it up and raised it to her ear, "Hello, Chloe Sullivan speaking," she said with false cheer.

"Chloe? Good," a gruff voice barked on the other end, "I need you in here ASAP."

"Good morning to you too, Chief," she replied, "Why are you calling so early?"

"Early?" Perry sounded confused, "It's almost 8 o'clock, where are you?"

"I- are you sure?" Chloe asked, looking at the clock in shock and realising he was right, she had overslept.

"Of course I'm sure," he replied sharply, "now, look, I need you in my office as fast as humanly possible, alright?"

"Sure." Chloe nodded, walking over to Skye and shaking her gently. "What's the emergency?"

"There's a man here claiming he's got hard proof that Superman has a son."

Chloe froze. "Let me guess," she said angrily, shooing Skye into the bathroom, "Dr. Trevor Marlin."

"Yes," Perry answered grimly, not sounding at all surprised, "now, I know Lois and Richard are still at the hospital and I don't want to worry them more so you're going to have come in and help. This may be the biggest news story of the year but the Kents are the nicest family I've ever known and I'll be damned if the *Daily Planet's* going to help ruin their lives."

"I'm on my way," Chloe replied. It was only after she had hung up that a part of Perry's speech registered in her mind, she stared down at the phone in shock. Had he just said what she thought he did?

Lois turned sleepily, stretching an arm out to the other side of the bed to feel for her husband, hoping he hadn't had to dash off on an early-morning rescue and they could spend a lazy morning in bed for once. But her arm was stopped suddenly by a cold hard wall and the groaning of springs beneath her definitely didn't come from her own bed.

Her eyes snapped open and the hard grey of a hospital on-call room greeted her. She closed her eyes and covered them with her hands as the memories of the previous two days came crashing down on her.

Clark wasn't out on some before breakfast rescue, he was two floors up fighting for his life with their son.

The clock on the wall told her it was 9.04am and her eyes widened as she struggled to get up. How on Earth had she slept so late when Clark needed her? How had she even managed to sleep at all? She thought back but she couldn't recall ever coming into the on-call room herself.

"Richard," she all but snarled as she heaved herself up and waddled towards the door to find her traitorous friend.

She frowned as she noticed a restroom across the hall and her body registered the weight of the triplets on her bladder. She decided she could deal with Richard after she dealt with more pressing matters.

The restroom was mercifully empty but the water from the taps was positively freezing, she hurriedly turned the hot tap on high but as she waited for the water to warm up slightly she glanced up and caught sight of herself in the mirror.

She looked completely unrecognisable, there was really no other way to put it. Her usually neat hair was a frizzy cloud framing her pale face, there were bags under her eyes and her mouth seemed to be almost permanently turned down at the corners. She couldn't remember the last time she had smiled, had it really only been two days ago the she had turned on the TV to see her husband being rushed to hospital?

She didn't realise how long she'd been standing there until there was a sharp kick in to ribs from the inside. She blinked and shook her head, bringing herself to her senses, "Okay," she assured the three tiny children inside her, "I'm going." She washed her hands, splashed some water on her face and ran her fingers through her hair in an attempt to make herself look at least a bit presentable.

The door creaked open and a nurse peered around the corner, "Are you Lois?" she asked. Lois nodded. "Well, there's a man out her looking for you," she informed her before disappearing.

Lois took one last look at herself in the mirror before shuffling out to join Richard in the hall. She had been ready to pounce on him and demand an explanation of why she had woken up in an on-call room but he looked even worse than she had and her anger disappeared completely only to be replaced with intense worry. "Damn hormones," she muttered to herself before looking up at him. "You don't look so good." She smiled, trying to sound joking but not quite managing it.

"Neither do you," he shot back, the corners of his mouth twitching upwards slightly before he became serious again. "Lois, you were practically asleep on your feet last night and Dr. Higgins and I am both worried, not only about you but also about the triplets. Dr. Heath is waiting upstairs for your check up."

"No." Lois turned in the opposite direction to the one Richard indicated. "I need to go upstairs and help Clark and Jason."

"Lois." Richard darted in front of her, barring her way. "You've been through a lot of stress in the last two days, not to mention you and the babies have been exposed to a virus that could seriously harm them, we need to see if they're alright."

Lois met his gaze with a steely glare of her own. "I *need* to help my family." She tried to move past him but he blocked her way again.

"These babies are you family!" He cried, drawing a few strange looks from passers-by. He lowered his voice, "Lois how much can you really do for Clark and Jason anyway? You're not a doctor, you're a journalist. Now look, there is a whole team of doctors and scientists up there searching for a cure now the best thing that you can do is make sure they have something to wake up to, okay?"

Lois didn't say anything, not trusting herself to speak in case she burst into tears. Richard sighed and placed a comforting hand on her shoulder. "Lois, I care about Clark and the kids as well, but right now we need to go find out if the triplets are okay."

"What if they're not?" Lois whispered, finally voicing a fear that had plagued her since she had first stepped into the hospital, "What if something's wrong and-" She stopped, unable to continue. She didn't know if she would survive finding out something was wrong with the triplets as well.

Richard didn't say anything, only drawing her into a strong embrace. Lois just stood there and allowed him to comfort her, a small part of her mind remembering why she had fallen for him all those years ago when Clark had disappeared the first time. She pushed the thought away and tried to gather her courage, pulling away from Richard. "Let's go." She nodded. "You're right, we need to give them something good to wake up to." And with that she lead the way towards Dr. Heath's office, determined that if she couldn't help he husband directly she would at least take care of their children.

Part 10

"Alright, now I'm going up to see your Uncle Perry, okay?" Chloe told Skye as they pulled into the *Daily Planet* parking lot. She continued without waiting for an answer. "Now your Uncle Jimmy and Aunt Sarah aren't here today so do you think you'll be okay just sitting at you Dad's desk for a while?" Skye nodded but remained silent.

They got out and headed up to the bullpen. They must have been even later than Chloe thought because they had the lift to themselves. Skye watched the numbers change with unusual intensity. Chloe was starting to be worried by the usually energetic girl's silence, she hoped it was just because she hadn't gotten much sleep last night and not due to worry. Skye was too young to be burdened with things like that.

There was a 'ding' as the doors opened to reveal the chaos of the *Daily Planet*. It was strange how relaxed Chloe became when she stepped from the quietness of the lift into the loud rush of the bullpen. But there was a familiarity in the raised voices and hurried footsteps, it was comforting to know that life had continued outside the sterile walls and tense atmosphere of the hospital.

"Okay," Chloe said as they reached Clark's empty desk, Skye climbed into the seat and Chloe knelt down so she was at the same level, "I'm just going to be in Uncle Perry's office, come straight in in you need anything. Okay?" She waited for Skye to show that she had heard but her attention was elsewhere.

"Are they waiting for Daddy?" she asked softly. Chloe followed her gaze to one of the TVs on the wall which showed an aerial picture of the crowd outside the hospital.

She nodded. "They sure are. See how many people are thinking of him and want him to get better?" She smiled reassuringly, "Everything's going to be fine."

Skye didn't look too convinced. "Do they want Jason to get better too?" she asked.

Chloe sighed, "They don't know about Jason sweetie," she reminded her, "but I'm sure if they did they'd want him to get better just as much as they want you Dad to get better." She smiled again, being careful to keep her voice low enough that they weren't heard by passing reporters. "Now are you going to be okay while I talk to your Uncle Perry?" This time Skye nodded and started to get her Nintendo out of the bag she had bought.

Chloe wasn't usually too worried about leaving her in the bullpen, Skye, like her brother, had almost grown up in at the *Planet* and there was barely a person on the staff who didn't know her. However, today she would have to keep an eye on the news in case something came out about Superman's condition that could cause Skye to react in a suspicious way. She was careful but she was still only six and she was already behaving far quieter than usual. Maybe Claire Ivans would bring her twins in shortly and the kids could play together, that would take Skye's mind off the news.

"Sullivan!" A loud yell interrupted her musings and snapped her back to the present. Perry's head was stuck out his office door and he was glaring at her. "Are you going to come or not?"

"Coming," she called, glancing back at the too-quiet Skye one last time before heading into Perry's office. "Where is he?" she asked in surprise when she saw that Perry was to only one in the office.

"He's in one of the conference rooms telling everything to Jimmy," Perry explained, "I didn't want to have to call him back in but I couldn't see any other choice. As far as I'm aware he's the only other one who knows everything already."

"Yeah, he does." Chloe nodded. "But speaking of knowing things..." she trailed off and raised a questioning eyebrow.

Perry laughed. "I'm insulted," he said, shaking his head, "I've been a reporter for over thirty years, I may be getting older but I'm still sharp enough to know *exactly* who's working for me."

Chloe had to admit he was right, she'd never known the man to be caught by surprise in the five years she had worked there. He hadn't even raised an eyebrow when Lois had announced they were expecting three babies instead of one. She quickly recovered from her surprise and moved onto the more pressing matter. "So what are we going to do?" she asked, glancing nervously towards the conference room.

"Well, we're not printing this story, that's for sure," Perry told her, "but we need to stop him from taking this story to another paper, especially some rag like the *Star*. That's why I called you, Dr. Marlin told me you'd brought Jason straight to him instead of calling an ambulance, I'm assuming you did that because you've got something on him and you hoped it'd be enough to guarantee his silence."

Perry gave her a questioning look and Chloe was slightly relieved to see his seemingly omnipotent powers didn't stretch to mind reading, although she honestly wasn't sure she'd be surprised if they did. "He was cheating on his wife," she explained, "I found out when I was looking into those budget cuts he was working on last year."

Perry's head snapped up. "He worked on the hospital's budget cuts last year?" he asked sharply, with a familiar gleam in his eye. "The same budget cuts that mysteriously lost over one million dollars?"

"Yeah," Chloe frowned, not quite sure what Perry was getting at, "but he can't have been involved in that, the police investigation was meticulous and he came out clean."

"Maybe he wasn't," Perry agreed, "but it certainly wouldn't help his career or his credibility if a very reliable source said he was."

Chloe felt her jaw drop, "Chief, you can't be thinking what I think your thinking," she said in disbelief.

"Well, I don't know what the cause for concern is," Dr. Heath said, looking at the

ultrasound image, "but all I see are three perfectly healthy babies."

"Oh, thank God." Lois leaned back and closed her eyes, sighing with relief. She felt Richard relax beside her as well.

Dr. Heath smiled and started putting away the equipment, "So," she began, "where's Clark? He hasn't missed a single one of these appointments." She laughed, "sometimes I think he's more excited about this than most of the mothers I get in here."

It was an innocent enough question but Lois's heart still gave a jump in her chest, "Oh," she said, trying to sound natural, "he's just feeling a bit under the weather lately, he's decided to keep his distance for a while."

"Oh, is that what you're worried about? You think Clark could somehow make the babies ill?" Dr. Heath seemed surprised. "Well, I can tell you that there is almost no chance of that happening, even if you got sick it would have to be very bad to affect the triplets, I've seen women come in here with all sorts of flus and viruses, convinced that their baby is somehow going to catch it too but believe me, it almost never happens."

"Almost?" Lois asked nervously, "So it could happen?"

"It won't," Richard told her before Dr. Heath could reply, "Lois, look the kids are fine now and you've been around Clark a lot more than Jason lately."

"Oh, is Jason sick too?" Dr. Heath asked. She had developed a soft spot for the boy during Lois's pregnancy with Skye and enjoyed seeing how excited the future big brother had been. "Well, I have another appointment now but you tell both of them I hope they get better real soon, okay?"

"Well, she kicked us out of there quickly," Lois commented as they took the elevator back up to where Clark and Jason were.

"Well, you can't blame her, we were the ones that rescheduled, not her," Richard reasoned. "And it's pretty hectic in here right now, the police are doing security checks on *everyone* that goes in or out."

"She still could've been nicer about it," Lois snapped, clearly determined to be annoyed. "Have you heard anything from Chloe?"

"Not since I talked to her last night, I'll go out and check my cell after we've checked in with Dr. Higgins."

"So you haven't heard anything from him either?" Lois asked, twisting around in her wheelchair to look at him.

"I was just with you and I can't have my cell on, why would I know more than you do?" Richard replied, raising his eyebrows.

"Because *you* weren't asleep in the on-call room for the last eight hours." She turned again to glare at him.

"Actually," he corrected her, "I was asleep in the on-call room for seven of those hours, I helped you to bed- and don't glare at me, you were practically asleep already- then I went to bed in the bunk above you before getting up to talk to Dr. Higgins an hour before you did."

"So you did talk to him," Lois stated triumphantly.

Richard sighed. "I did, and we need to talk about something but I think it'll be better and make a lot more sense if he tells you."

"What's it about?" she asked, fear curling around her chest, "Did something happen to Clark and Jason?"

"Not exactly." He frowned, "They're fine for the moment, it actually has to do with Skye- I mean she's fine too," he added hastily as Lois started turned around again, looking shocked.

"I think it's better if he told you though, he can answer your questions better."

"Why are we getting off here?" Lois asked as the lift stopped at a different floor from the one Clark and Jason were on.

"Dr. Higgins has moved his notes down here," Richard explained, keeping his voice low as they passed several other people, "they've increased the security on Clark's floor and it's easy enough to explain one visit as getting a story and our extended stay in the hospital can be attributed to your risky pregnancy, we can always make up something about how they wanted to keep you under observation. But people are going to start ask questions if you keep returning to see him, especially when your husband is supposedly ill as well. I know Dr. Higgins trusts all the doctors and nurses he assigned to keep their mouths shut but there's still the security personnel to worry about. And not to mention the possible danger to the triplets, they may be perfectly fine now but why risk it?"

Lois didn't reply, as much as she wanted to argue and be as close to her husband and son as possible she could see that Richard had several valid points.

"So what's all this about Skye, then?" she asked, changing the subject. Lois could put up with being pushed around a hospital like an old woman by her ex, but she *hated* to admit someone else was right.

"Dr Higgins thinks he might need her to help find the nanites," Richard told her as he pushed the wheelchair into the Chief's temporary office.

"Where is he?" Richard asked no one in particular as he looked around the empty office, "he said he was going to be... here," he finished just as the man in question walked in, closing the door firmly behind him.

Lois could tell the man had gotten little sleep last night, his hair was unbrushed, his eyes had bags under them and his face had lines that hadn't been there yesterday. He was also wearing the same clothes as the previous day but Lois could talk- both her and Richard were the same.

"Oh, my." Dr. Higgins shook his head as he sat down. "I was just downstairs- it's absolute chaos out there. I had to give them information to give to the press and because of the crowds outside we're having to divert all by the most urgent cases to St. Mary's or Bakerline Central. And the police are searching everyone who goes in or out. Most of the on call rooms were full with people who thought it was too much trouble to go through to get to or from work."

"You made a press release?" Lois pounced on the first part of Dr. Higgin's ramble. "What did you say?" she asked, narrowing her eyes almost unnoticeably but enough to convey her meaning.

"Miss Lane, I meant what I said about your son," he assured her, "very few people know he's here and the ones that do only about three know why. And I'm the only one that knows who his father is."

Lois relaxed slightly, satisfied that he was telling the truth. Richard slid into a seat next to her and repeated her question, "So what *did* you tell them then?"

"I told them the truth - that Superman was in a serious condition but we had a good idea on what had caused it and were working towards, well, making him better."

"Making him better?" Lois asked, surprised at hearing a phrase like that from the usually wordy man.

He shrugged. "It's easier for the general public to understand," he said with just a hint of superiority.

Lois and Richard shared an amused look before Lois cut straight to her questions. "What

this Richard was telling me about Skye being able to help?"

"Ah, yes," Dr. Higgins shuffled a few papers but it seemed to be more something for his hands to do as he didn't pull out anything before he folded his hands and continued. "I need a sample of Skye's blood, I believe it may help us more accurately pin-point exactly where in Clark and Jason's bodies the nanites are."

"How?" Lois asked, "and try and speak English this time," she warned, tired of the medical babble.

"Well," Dr Higgins started, frowning as he tried to put it in words Lois and Richard could understand. "I suppose the simplest way to say it is, while we know the nanites are there and we can detect them, we can't *find* them."

"Okay, maybe a little more information then," Lois conceded, "What do you mean you can't *find* them and what does that have to do with Skye? She hasn't been sick."

"Exactly." Dr Higgins nodded. "From her we can get a completely clean sample of Kryptonian blood. Well, half human, half Kryptonian blood but it's the only choice we have."

"What good will that do?" Lois asked, glancing nervously from Dr. Higgins to Richard and back again.

"It will help us figure out what parts of Clark and Jason's blood samples are normal for Kryptonians and which parts are not, i.e. which parts contain the nanites."

"Can't you find them under a microscope? Just look for the little machines that are slowly killing them," Lois suggested.

"It's not that easy, Lois," Richard said, drawing her attention. "These nanites are just small or even microscopic they're... they're..." He frowned. "Nanosopic," he explained.

"That's not a word," Lois muttered, narrowing her eyes.

"Well it should be," Dr Higgins said, coming to Richard's defence. "The nanites are far too small to be seen by any instruments we have on Earth. To be sure we know exactly *where* these nanites are in their bodies we need an untainted sample of blood to compare it to. Clearly we can't get untainted Kryptonian blood but Kryptonian/human blood will help with Jason and it may be good enough for Clark as well."

"May be good enough?" Lois asked sceptically. "And besides, Skye's invulnerable now, how do you expect to be able to draw blood?" the men's silence gave her the answer. "Oh, no." She shook her head. "There is *no way* you are exposing her to kryptonite. She's *six*," Lois cried, looking at Richard and Dr. Higgins like they were crazy.

"Lois," Richard was the one who spoke this time, "I reacted like that when Dr. Higgins first told me but it may be our only chance. It would only be a very small amount for a very short time."

Lois was silent for a very long time. She was torn, on one hand if this could save the lives of her husband and son was saving her daughter a little bit of pain worth what she was denying them. On the other hand Clark had once described Kryptonite as being the most awful thing he'd ever felt.

"How bad are they?" she asked finally, "Clark and Jason, how much worse did they get overnight?" Richard and Dr. Higgins shared another look, confirming Lois' suspicions that Richard had been lying to her earlier. "Tell me the truth," she demanded.

Dr. Higgins pretended to find a particular spot on the wall behind her very interesting as he explained, "Clark stopped breathing around 2.28am, he had to be put on a respirator. We've also been detecting more arrhythmias in both of them, we have no idea what they mean or why they're happening but they're still identical times apart from the moment they fell ill."

"How long before Jason needs a respirator?"

"Soon," Richard took over again, Lois knew he thought it would be easier to hear if it came from him but she didn't think anything could make this easier.

She nodded, closing her eyes and silently hoping her little girl would understand. "Call Chloe," she told Richard, "tell her to bring Skye here."

Part 11

Jimmy Olsen shut the door to the conference room firmly behind him, resisting the urge to slam it. He'd been in journalism for almost fifteen years now and he still couldn't understand how some people could be so selfish and greedy. Here was a man who was willing to put an innocent child in danger to make a few dollars.

And there was no doubt in Jimmy's mind that if Jason's secret got out it would put him in terrible danger, and it wouldn't be long before someone figured out the secret and then everyone would be in danger. Lois, Skye, Richard, Chloe and himself... Jimmy was worried about the rest of them of course, but the people he most feared for were his wife, Sarah, and their unborn baby girl. It might be a little selfish of him, the Kents would of course be the most effected, but Sarah had just been through too much lately- what with the problems with the pregnancy and being hospitalised to look after the baby- and if something like this happened he didn't know how she'd cope if their friends went through something like this.

"Jimmy," Chloe's voice called, pulling him from his thoughts. "Are you okay?" she asked when she saw his face.

"Yeah, I'm fine," Jimmy assured her, "I was just... thinking."

"How's Sarah?" Chloe asked.

"How did you know that was what I was thinking about?" Jimmy smiled at her as he lead the way back to his desk.

"You think Perry hired me just for my looks?" She flicked her hair over shoulder and raised an eyebrow at him.

Jimmy nodded. "Reporter, of course. Sarah's fine- but this," he said, waving the notes he'd taken down during his talk with Dr. Marlin, "would not help in the slightest if it got out, especially seen as Dr. Marlin has his suspicions about Skye as well and how long until they trace this to Clark and Smallville then all of us?"

Chloe was immediately all business again. "Is it that bad? How much does he know?"

"A lot," Jimmy told her, giving her his notes, "And he claims he's got infallible evidence to back him up but he refused to say what unless the Chief told him they'd print the story."

"We may not need that," Chloe said, frowning towards the conference room. "Perry and I have a plan which has a good chance of working. Thanks for stalling him for us. Perry's going to talk to him now- we just need a few more minutes."

"Hey, anything for C.K. and his family," Jimmy replied honestly.

"You're a good friend, Jimmy," Chloe said, "Clark's lucky to have you." Jimmy grinned in a rather embarrassed way at her praise. "But now you need to get back to your family, we'll handle this Dr. Marlin for now."

"Are you sure?" Jimmy asked.

Chloe merely glared at him and pointed to the elevator. "Go," she ordered him, "go and look after your wife, I swear I will call you the second something changes."

Jimmy looked like he wanted to protest more but he seemed to realise she wasn't going to let him stay and nodded a goodbye before heading towards the exit.

Chloe headed straight to her desk and began typing before she thought too much about what she was doing and became so nervous she made a mistake. It wasn't the first time she's hacked into the MPD database to get accesses to restricted files and it probably wouldn't be the last but it was the first time she'd actually try to modify those files. "It's not like I'm not going to put it back exactly how it was," she reasoned quietly to herself as she pulled up the budget investigation file on Dr. T. Marlin.

She looked up to check Skye was still sitting at her Dad's desk and that the TV wasn't showing anything new before she started typing. "Let's see how bad you look now," she muttered as she set about changing the official file.

"So when will you print it?"

Perry looked up from his notes to frown at the man across the table. "You do realise that what you're claiming is pretty far-fetched. The *Planet* is known for upholding the truth, I don't know if we can be seen printing something like this."

"But that's why I came to you," Dr. Marlin explained, leaning forward. "People will believe it if they read it in your paper. People will know what he's done."

"And what exactly is it you believe he's done?" Perry asked curiously.

"He's contaminated the human gene pool," Dr. Marlin said as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

Perry had to look up again to make sure the man wasn't kidding. He'd seen and heard a lot of things in his time as a journalist and the fact that anyone could make such a claim with a straight face ranked among the most unbelievable. "Really?" he raised an eyebrow, "How so?" Perry might have been out of the hands-on reporting game for a while but he still knew how to hide his true feelings.

Dr. Marlin didn't catch his disapproval and leaned further forward, and spoke in a low voice as though he was sharing a huge secret. "This boy, Jason, is a true *hybrid*- half-human, half-alien. That's unnatural- how do you defend the creation of a child like that? He doesn't completely belong to either species. This could be the first step to a full on invasion."

Oh, he's one of those conspiracy theorists, Perry thought with an inward sigh. It was hard to understand how, after all the years Superman had been helping Earth and doing nothing but good, people were still claiming he was evil and here to take over the world.

"You should be more vigilant as well," Dr. Marlin continued, "It's your reporter he's using to make his super-race. And to think they always denied having a romantic relationship." He shook his head in a disgusted way.

Perry pretended to take a few more notes, looking out of the corner of his eye to the bullpen where he was pleased to see Chloe heading towards his office. They hadn't wanted to alert Dr. Marlin too soon to the fact that she was here- it was clear he'd been hoping he could go over her head by calling the Editor in Chief.

"Hello, Trevor," Chloe said politely as she stepped into Perry's office, pulling the shades down to block the view in.

"What's *she* doing here?" Dr. Marlin hissed as he jumped out of the chair.

"Sit down, doctor," Perry instructed, rising out of his chair to look the other man in the eye. "We need to talk about a few things."

"What's going on?" Dr. Marlin glared at Perry, "You said you'd print my story."

"No, I didn't," Perry corrected him, "I said I'd ask one of my reporters to listen to you, then if you were telling the truth I said I'd talk to you personally. I never once promised to run your story."

"Then I'll take it somewhere else," he said, turning to leave.

Chloe stepped in front of him. "If you do that then not only will your wife find out about your affair but we'll be forced to run these." She handed him a folder which he opened curiously.

"But this isn't true," he cried, staring at the reports in front him. "The police can tell you've changed it."

"Actually, they can't," Chloe informed him, "What it looks like from their side is someone got in shortly after the report was filed and changed it *from* this. If we tip them off they'll pull up the "real" records and find out where that extra one million dollars disappeared to."

Perry raised his eyebrows. "I can't imagine that would be too good for your career. No doubt you'll lose your license as well as spending a few years in prison."

"But you can't do this," Dr. Marlin spluttered in disbelief, "It's not true, I'm innocent."

"You'll have a hard time proving that in court," Chloe told him, "I'm very good at what I do- there's no way the cops will find out that's false, in fact, because it looks like someone's been tampering with the files and add on the suspicious disappearance of the original officer who filed these, it'll probably only convince them further of your guilt."

"Why are you doing this?" he asked, looking at Perry. "I thought your newspaper was all about telling people the truth, sharing knowledge-"

"It is," Perry interrupted him, "But the difference between a good journalist and a great journalist is not just the quality of work. It's knowing when to run with a story and when to sit on it. If I run your story- no matter how true it may be- I'd be painting a bullseye on the chest of an innocent boy for every criminal Superman has ever ticked off to see and I can't do that. So either you stop this right now, or we will tear you into so many pieces your own mother won't believe you."

Even Chloe felt slightly shaken by the Chief's speech and she could see the edited files shaking in the doctor's hands. "I have proof," he said, but his voice wasn't as sure as it had been.

"It could be fake," Chloe responded, nodding at the folders in his hands as an example, "Even the most convincing evidence can be forged by an expert."

"But-"

"There are no 'buts', Dr. Marlin." Perry sat back in his chair and looked at the man over the top of his fingers. "We've told you your choices, now it's up to you."

He was quiet for a few moments and Chloe could see sweat beading on his forehead. Finally he slumped in defeat. "Fine." He threw the documents on the table. "You and the alien win this time- but one day people *will* find out what he's done."

"Good." Perry smiled at him as if he hadn't heard the last part of his sentence. "Now go home to your wife and destroy all this so called 'evidence' you claim to have. I can assure you when Superman gets better he'll be checking your house, don't make us hurt you," he warned, tapping the files to indicate what he meant by 'hurt'.

Dr. Marlin didn't reply, he just turned on his heel and stalked out of the office.

"Clark isn't going to do that," Chloe told Perry as soon as the doctor had gone. "you know him and his ridiculous 'right to privacy' morals."

"I know," Perry said with a shrug.

"And I know you'd never have printed any of these articles in the *Planet*, given we never

print anything that's not true."

"Of course," Perry agreed, sitting down and calmly checking his e-mails. "Was there something else?" he asked as he notice Chloe still in his office.

"What would you have done if he'd called your bluff?" she asked impatiently. "We couldn't have printed these files- first off it's fraud and second, it's completely untrue and the *Planet* only prints the truth."

Perry shrugged. "He didn't so there's no reason to worry."

"But what if he did?" Chloe persisted.

"He didn't and he won't," Perry told her, "I know his type, greedy but complete cowards when faced with anything too real. I'm thinking it isn't the fear of losing his career so much as the fear of losing the lifestyle that income and career brings that'll be keeping him quite. I can almost guarantee he's out of our hair for good this time. And I'll keep an ear out at the other newspapers and networks in case he shows up."

"But-" Chloe began once more before her cellphone cut her off. "It's Richard," she muttered, flipping it open. "Hello?"

"Hey, Chloe. Can you bring Skye to the hospital as soon as you can?"

"Why? As something happened?" she asked, her heart jumping in her chest as she looked out the blinds to where the young girl was now being distracted by the seven-year-old Ivans twins. She desperately hoped that they weren't being called back to say goodbye.

"No, Clark and Jason are pretty much the same but Dr. Higgins thinks Skye might be able to help them find the nanites or something."

"Find them?" Chloe ducked out of Perry's office and headed off to collect Skye.

"I'll explain when you get here. Just hurry okay? Time isn't really something I think we can afford to waste right now."

Part 12

"Will it hurt?" Skye asked quietly as she watched Dr. Higgins prepare the needle and place a small lead box beside her arm.

"Just for a little," Richard told her, "then it'll all be over and you'll be helping the doctor's find out what's hurting your Dad and Jason okay?"

"So this means they're going to get better?" she asked excitedly. "because of me?"

"Well, not just yet," Chloe said, jumping in before Skye's hopes got too high. "This will just *help*," she explained, trying no to think how it would affect the girl if this didn't somehow help Clark and Jason.

She wasn't one to tell anyone else how to raise their children but Lois had certainly gotten Skye's hopes up with how she could help her dad and brother. Really there was only a small chance this would cure them completely and Chloe didn't want Skye to feel she had failed her family if it didn't work.

"Alright, I think we're just about ready," Dr. Higgins checked everything once more and looked at Skye. "Are you ready?" he asked.

Skye nodded silently. She had no idea what kryptonite would feel like but the fact that it was the only thing that could hurt her Dad terrified her and she squeezed her Uncle Richard's hand harder.

The kryptonite in the box didn't come from Krypton- it had been confiscated from a

criminal who'd dredged it up out of the bottom of the ocean from the remains of the failed experiment known as New Krypton. No one knew quite how it worked but it seemed ordinary kryptonite had no effect on human-Kryptonian hybrids, however the kryptonite that had been grown on their birth planet seemed to have the same effect the regular rock did on full-blooded Kryptonians. They also had no idea at all what any type of kryptonite would do to the unborn children inside Lois so she had been exiled to the hallway while her daughter tried to act like she could be brave without her.

"Alright, here we go," Dr. Higgins said softly, opening the box to reveal a glowing green stone.

Skye moaned as she was suddenly overwhelmed by a feeling of nausea. Her head started throbbing and she was afraid she might throw up.

"Hang in there," Richard said, "It's for your family, okay?"

Skye squeezed her eyes shut as she started to sob from the pain. She felt her Aunt Chloe wrap her arm around her. "You can do this, Lara Kal-El," she said, using the girl's Kryptonian name in an attempt to remind her why she was there.

It seemed to work as Skye relaxed slightly into her embrace. Suddenly there was a click and Skye sighed in relief as the kryptonite was locked safely back in its lead box.

"Whoa," she breathed as she straightened up. Her head was still achy but she didn't feel like she was going to throw up anymore.

"C'mon, let's get you some sunlight," Chloe suggested as Dr. Higgins packed up the blood he'd taken.

"I'm going to take this straight to the lab," he informed them, "I promised Mrs. Kent no one would see this but myself."

"Bring us back some good news," Richard called as he and Chloe helped Skye down off the bench. They were in an x-ray room which wasn't generally used for taking blood but had the advantage of being lead-lined to protect Skye's three unborn siblings and their mother from harm.

"Mommy!" Skye called as soon as they stepped out of the room, wriggling out of Richard's arms to embrace her mother.

"Oh, sweetie, are you okay?" Lois leant over in the wheelchair awkwardly to hug her daughter.

"She was very brave," Richard told her, smiling at Skye, "but we think she should get some sunlight on the roof and something to eat just to make her feel better."

"That's probably a good idea," Lois agreed as they made their way towards the lift, Skye clutching Lois' hand tightly. "Did Dr. Higgins take the sample himself?"

Richard nodded, pushing the button for the roof. "He said you'd made him promise no one else would."

"I think he's sensible enough to figure that out by himself but I'm not taking chances," Lois explained before returning her attention to Skye. "Are you sure you're okay? It didn't hurt too much did it?"

"Nope, it was fine," Skye lied, smiling at her mother.

Chloe frowned, she couldn't tell who the little girl was channeling at that moment, was she trying to be tough like Lois or trying to protect her mother like Clark would? Before she could think on the matter further the lift door opened directly onto the roof and sunlight flooded in.

Skye's sigh of relief was audible as she rushed out into the fresh air and sun. "Don't go

near the edge, sweetheart," Lois called, wheeling as fast as she could after the girl. "We don't want that crowd to know we're here."

Richard started to follow them but Chloe caught his arm and pulled him back as the doors closed behind them. "We need to talk," she told him in a low voice.

"What about?" Richard went from smiling to serious in a split second as she turned towards her. "Did something happen-" he started a bit too loudly.

"Clark and Jason are fine as far as I know," she cut in before he could draw Lois' attention. "It's about Dr. Marlin."

"Dr. who- oh you mean the one that knew about Jason?" Richard's eyes widened in fear, "Is he telling-"

"He wanted to," Chloe interrupted, "and keep your voice down," she hissed as they both glanced towards where Lois was trying to stop Skye from being too loud. "He stopped by the *Planet* this morning and..."

A huge variety of emotions crossed Richard's face as she recounted the story, finally settling on grim satisfaction. "Serves him right," he said once Chloe finished telling him of Dr. Marlin's reaction to the tampered files. "I can't believe he would do that, we need to tell Dr. Higgins, maybe he can fire the bastard."

"We can't do that," Chloe reminded him, "No matter how satisfying it would be- if he loses his job what's really going to stop him then? Any punishment for breaking doctor-patient confidentiality would be nothing compared to the money some papers would pay for this."

"I guess you're right," Richard sighed, "But I still don't like that man."

"If it help, you're not alone there," she said, recalling the doctor's affair with his gardener- she doubted a man so dishonest and greedy had many friends at all.

On the other side of the roof the mood was quite different, Skye was bouncing around so much Lois was almost afraid she'd take off. The kids had always been affected by the sunlight thanks to their father's genes but she had never seen her daughter so energized by it before. Maybe it was a reaction to the kryptonite or maybe she was just coming into her Kryptonian heritage earlier than Jason had. Her son hadn't truly been affected by the sun until just last year but then again Skye had gotten her invulnerability sooner as well.

"Do you think it's working?" Richard asked after almost half an hour of watching the girl. The group watched Skye attempt a cartwheel before bouncing over to them.

"I feel bouncy," she informed them with an ear-to-ear grin, illustrating her point as she bounced on the spot.

"We can see that," Chloe said, grinning back at her. "But I think we should go inside, I heard some of the news channels were thinking of bringing their helicopters in to see if they can't get a shot through the window."

"That's a waste of time, he's not even near a window." Lois rolled her eyes. Although she knew the networks would try anything they could to keep the story alive in lieu of any official updates. It was like Perry always said, sex, tragedy and Superman were the three things that sold. And in the absence of the first two they would be going all out on the last.

"Still shouldn't risk it," Richard said, taking Skye's hand as they walked back to the lift. "I want to see what the doctor found and we can sell the story that you're at the hospital to look after the triplets but they're going to wonder how frolicking on the roof is related to preventing premature birth."

"What's frolicking?" Skye asked as they descended back to into the hospital.

"Well-" Lois started but she was interrupted as the lift doors opened Dr. Higgins rushed

by in the direction of the quarantine ward. "What's happening?" Lois yelled after him.

He didn't slow down instead just called back over his shoulder, "It's Jason."

"Oh my God," Chloe gasped, "I'll see what's going on," she called as she set off after him.

"Oh god," Lois breathed, clutching the arms of her wheelchair until her knuckles turned white. She could feel the fear clench around her gut as she watched Chloe disappear after the doctor.

"Lois, breath," Richard's voice came from somewhere next to here and she realized she'd been holding her breath.

"Mommy are you okay? Is something wrong with Jason?" Skye asked, tugging on her arm.

"I don't know sweetie," Lois snapped back to the present long enough to reassure her, "I'm sure it's nothing," she lied as her stomach clenched again.

"Maybe we should go wait in Dr. Higgin's office," Richard suggested, "I'm sure whatever's going on will be fixed shortly, remember it's already happened to Clark and he pulled through."

Despite his very unconvincing tone the thought did somewhat calm her down. He was right, Clark was the one in the most danger- no one knew what was going to happen to him but Jason was following his symptoms to the second so as long as Clark was pulling through then Jason would too. "You're right," she agreed. "Your brother's going to be fine," she assured Skye, hoping she was right. "Now, we should go wait in Dr. Higgin's office so they can give us news when they come back."

"Okay," Skye replied, still looking down the hallway. She had gone still and quiet again which Lois found immensely more worrying than her almost jumping off the roof. Jason and Skye were the most energetic children she had ever seen, even her sister, proud mother of six, had commented on it.

They didn't even get halfway to the office when Dr. Higgins and Chloe reappeared. Lois let out a sigh of relief from the relieved looks on their faces. "He's alive," Chloe told them, but Lois didn't miss the unsaid 'just'.

"Now what?" Richard asked, looking from Dr. Higgins to Chloe and back.

"Actually I was just coming to find you," the doctor said, "come to my office and I'll try to explain."

"Can I come or this more adult stuff?" Skye asked, clearly not as oblivious to the adults charades as Lois had hoped. Clark would've known how to distract her properly she thought before refocusing on the situation at hand, ignoring the clenching feeling that once again rose in her gut.

"You can come," Dr. Higgins surprised everyone by answering for them. "This is good news!"

"About time," Lois sighed out loud, causing Richard and Chloe to smile. "Can't you tell us here?" she asked, eager to hear something that didn't involve the two most important men in her life drawing closer to death.

"Well-" he started but at that moment two nurses emerged from a nearby door, talking in hushed whispers, stopping suddenly when they caught sight of Lois.

"Of course, triplets have a much higher risk of complications but a c-section is not *always* necessary although in the majority of cases..." Dr. Higgins started loudly, trailing off when the nurse continued around the corner.

"Yeah, we should talk about this in your office," Chloe agreed, giving Lois no choice by grabbing her wheelchair and pushing it down the hall.

"Won't they think it's a little odd the *Chief* was talking to me personally about my

triplets?" Lois asked, glancing back at the where the nurses had gone.

"They might," the doctor agreed, "But you are Lois Lane, I'll tell them you wouldn't take anything less and bullied me into it," he suggested with a smile. "And those two nurse are taking care of your husband so they've signed the most airtight secrecy agreements, if they did mention seeing you on this floor you could hire the most useless lawyer alive and still get a conviction. Does that help?"

Lois just shrugged, unable to answer as her stomach clenched again. She frowned, placing her hand on it only to find it had gone quite tight and hard. A brief thought flickered through her mind but she shook it off, it was probably just false labor she reasoned. The last month with Jason had been almost entirely made up of false alarms, so much so that she almost gave birth in the cab when the real thing happened because she didn't realize it was real until her water broke.

"Okay, doc, what's the good news?" Chloe asked when they finally reached his office.

"I think I've got the first step in figuring out a cure," he announce, unable to keep the grin off his face.

"So Dad and Jason will wake up?" Skye asked excitedly.

"It's a possibility," he replied, "and it may be thanks to you. You see," he placed his hands on his desk in a ready-to-launch-into-a-lecture mode that the three reporters recognized from years of seeing it on Perry. "I was examining Skye's blood sample when I realized something rather impossible, well it seemed impossible at first. You see, Skye's blood showed the *exact* same readings as Clark's and Jason which meant either one of two things, one Clark and Jason aren't sick-

"But they are," Skye interrupted with all the bluntness of a child.

"They are," the doctor agreed, "clearly. Which leaves us with the other explanation that Skye is also infected by nanites."

"But she isn't, *clearly*," Lois stated, narrowing her eyes as she wondered if this had a point. "What are you saying? That the nanite theory was wrong, were back to square one?"

"No, no, no," Dr. Higgins shook his head, "in fact I'm almost certain Skye *was* ill, you mentioned it did you not? When you first brought Jason in?"

"But that wasn't anything like what Clark and Jason have-" Lois started, annoyed by all the time wasting.

"No, no, no," Dr. Higgins interrupted her, "please let me explain. Skye was not invulnerable before she was sick but imagine this. Skye is infected by the nanites and her body reacts in a Kryptonian way by, shall we say, for lack of a better word, 'activating' her powers. You said Jason's powers started to come in around puberty?" he looked to Richard for confirmation and he nodded. Lois wondered what else the two men had been talking about but Dr. Higgins was already barreling on with his speech. "So Skye's body is forced to 'activate' hers sooner and somehow this 'activation' sends a signal to the nanites telling them to shut down and they merely float harmlessly in her bloodstream."

There was a stunned silence following the doctor's words before Lois broke it asking the one question they were all think, "How can you be sure?"

"I can't," he admitted.

"Maybe the nanites weren't designed to attack Kryptonians, maybe they were designed to make them stronger," Richard suddenly sat up straighter, "Look at it this way," he said excitedly, "if this was some sort of Kryptonian technology designed for warfare, why make it attack their own people, why not make them stronger? Why not make them practically

invincible? Of course in Clark and Jason's case the sun had already done that and there was no way they could become invulnerable again so the nanites saw them as an enemy and started attacking them-

"Stop!" Lois and Chloe both cried at the same time.

"Um, you go," Chloe nodded to Lois who didn't need any prompting.

"This is all just pure speculation, you have no proof," she snapped at the two men, "you can't just look in a microscope for two seconds and suddenly know the history of a long-dead planet."

"I didn't-

"But can't we try and wake them up?" Skye interrupted softly. "Is it going to hurt them more?"

"Sweetie we can't just go injecting your blood into other people based purely on a *theory*," she glared at her former fiancé and the doctor as she put emphasis on the last word. "I'm happy we're finally getting somewhere but you can't just jump to conclusions and rush into things."

"We're not wanting to do that at all," Dr. Higgins assured her, "Look at it more as Skye having an immunity to this 'virus' and we merely wish to replicate its effects. It doesn't matter how or why at this time only that it's there and we can use it."

"So if Skye's giving off some sort of signal to shut these machines down can't you just, run a Geiger counter over her or something to find it?" Lois suggested.

"Well, the 'signal' may be chemical in nature or it may be something entirely different from anything on Earth," Dr. Higgins tried to explain.

"Wait," Chloe decided to throw in her thoughts, "this may sound like a good theory, especially to your sci-fi loving brain," she said, rolling her eyes at her boyfriend, "but what evidence beyond the samples having identical readings do you have? It seems to me that it's just as likely that there are no nanites in Clark and Jason and that we need to start looking elsewhere."

"Do I have to go near kryptonite again?" Skye asked, unable to keep the fear of such a prospect out of her voice.

"No, we won't do that," Lois assured her, "we'll-" suddenly she had to stop as another wave of pain rolled through her.

"What's wrong?" Richard asked. Chloe and Dr. Higgins leaned forward as well.

"I think I'm in labor," Lois admitted, finally deciding to stop denying what she had realized in the hallway, "because this just wasn't complicated enough before."

Part 13

Richard felt numb as he stared at the faces of his nephew and friend. Not that they had always been like that, once- what seemed like a lifetime ago- Jason had been his son and Clark his rival for Lois' affections.

Lois had sent him to check up on the pair as she was forbidden to even be near them and especially not at the moment. The triplets were trying their hardest to come now but the doctors said it was too early and Lois was determined that Clark had to be there for it, and so the doctors were trying to stop her labor although a nurse had warned them they should be prepared for the worst.

His eyes rested on Jason again, he remembered the frightening fortnight during which Jason had clung to life in the NICU. Lois and Clark had been told for the start that the triplets would most likely have to spend a few days there when they were born but if they came this early they might not even survive. The longer they were inside Lois the better, he only hoped Clark woke up before Lois went into labor they couldn't stop.

There was a soft knock on the door and Chloe entered looking as stressed as he felt. "Hey," Richard greeted her with a frown, "aren't you supposed to be with Lois?"

"She sent me to come see where you were."

"How's it going?" he asked, hoping for good news.

"The contractions have slowed down, the Dr. Heath is pretty certain that she'll be fine so long as she stays in bed and keeps her stress levels low for the next few weeks until they're ready to come," Chloe told him.

"Wow," Richard chuckled, "bet she was thrilled to hear that, we should get picture so people will actually believe this happened."

"If you do that don't expect me to talk at your funeral," Chloe joked, trying to lighten the mood.

"C'mon, we should go tell her how they are," he suggested, not wanting to remain in the depressing room too much longer. "How's Skye?" he asked, the girl had been rather upset that her Dad and Jason wouldn't be there when the babies were born but had calmed down a bit when Richard explained that the triplets didn't necessarily have to come at that moment and the doctors were going to try and keep them inside Mommy for a bit longer.

"One of the nurses took her down to get something to eat," Chloe told him, "when I left she was just coming back covered in chocolate."

"Wow, Lois is stuck in bed and her daughter's hyped up on sunlight and sugar. This should be interesting."

However when they entered the room, Skye was sitting quietly in the corner watching as Dr. Heath looked at a few of the machines hooked up to her mother. Richard and Chloe shared a surprised look before Richard noticed the little girl's legs were bouncing up and down and she was shifting in her seat every few seconds. Obviously she was highly energized but trying very hard to control herself.

"How's it going?" Richard asked, stepping around the bed to put a hand on Skye's shoulder.

"Well, they seem to have stopped," Dr. Heath answered him, checking Lois' IV drip. "If she doesn't have anymore within the next two hours or so, I'd say we stopped it. However she will have to-"

"Remain on bed-rest for the rest of the time, I know," Lois interrupted rolling her eyes. Dr. Heath looked a bit offended as she left the room and Richard frowned. "Don't start," Lois warned him, correctly interpreting the look. "I've had enough of people talking about me like I'm not here then telling me the same thing over and over again like I'm some sort of imbecile."

"What's an imbecile?" Skye asked, still trying not to bounce off the walls.

Lois frowned at the girl as she wriggled around in the seat. "Did that nurse give you chocolate?" she asked, narrowing her eyes.

"Nooooo," Skye lied, eyes wide as she shook her head rapidly.

"Uh-huh, sure I believe that." Lois rolled her eyes as Chloe and Richard watched with amusement. "An imbecile is someone who isn't very smart," she answered her previous question before turning back to Richard and Chloe. "How are they?" she asked anxiously, her

hand unconsciously moving to rest on her stomach.

"They're the same," Richard said, trying to relax her without giving too much away.

"What if they change?" she asked, "I know no one's going to bother telling me, I'm supposed to be relaxing and they're going to wonder why I need updates on him."

Richard and Chloe shared another look and a mutual understanding passed between them. "I'll go keep an eye on them," Chloe offered, "I'm a journalist so I can just say I'm there for the story."

"They're not letting journalists in," Lois reminded her, her tone challenging.

Chloe knew Lois wasn't trying to reject her offer but testing her. "Well if Dr. Higgins isn't there to back me up I'll just remind them I'm a resourceful person with more than a small police record," Chloe reminded her, "I'll tell anyone who presses me that I got in by visiting you and snuck my way past the guards."

Lois nodded, clearly satisfied that Chloe wouldn't let anything slip. Under normal circumstances Chloe would probably have been a little offended at her friend questioning her abilities but she knew Lois was only thinking of her family.

It was rather strange, Chloe thought as she made her way back to the quarantine ward, if anyone had told her Lois Lane would one day be married to her childhood friend with five children she would have made a serious enquiry into their mental health but now it seemed hard to picture Lois and Clark as anything but together and Lois, against all her (and everyone else's) expectations was a brilliant mother.

Granted some of her methods and beliefs about how to raise kids were a bit different, such as the fact that both her children had been taught about and knew how to disarm and completely dismantle the handgun Lois kept in three pieces in three separate safes around the house. And even that had horrified Clark but Lois maintained if they knew how dangerous it was they'd stay away in the first place.

"Miss Sullivan, what are you doing up here?" Dr. Higgins asked, startling her as he appeared suddenly behind her. "Sorry," he apologized as she jumped, "what were you thinking so deeply about?"

"Oh." Chloe shrugged, *children playing with handguns* hardly seemed an appropriate response so she just answered, "I was coming to keep an eye on everything up here. Can you get me past the guards, Lois wants me to watch Clark, Superman and Jason," she corrected as she spotted a nurse coming towards them.

"Of course she did," the doctor chuckled. "Well I was just on my way to the lab, if you don't mind a detour there first I can get you in again. The guards are under strict confidentiality agreements so they won't even ask why this is your second visit in under ten minutes," he assured her as they walked down the hallway. "And," he added, lowering his voice as if he was about to tell her a secret, "I was looking at their files and I noticed that all of them are native Metropolitans and all had either themselves been saved or had a close family member saved by your friend in his blue tights."

Chloe felt better after hearing that. She always knew Clark inspired people but she hadn't realized the devotion Metropolis had towards their hero until she had moved there a few years previously. In fact, she had a very clear memory of one of her first interviews for the *Planet* where a man she had been interviewing on the street was attacked by another for suggesting Superman wasn't as great as everyone made out.

"Here we are," he said as they turned into a rather cramped room filled with various machines and microscopes. "This was originally an office but I've been using this because it

was the closest," he explained as Chloe almost banged her elbow on a rather sinister looking metal apparatus.

"Here we are," he muttered picking up a folder and rifling through the pages.

Chloe notice a vial sitting on the bench and moved closer to read the label. *S. Kent*. So it was Skye's blood then, she winced, remembering the pain on the girl's face as it was extracted.

"Are you sure you can't just inject a little bit of Skye's blood into them?" Chloe asked, remembering the conversation from earlier. "I mean people get blood transfusions all the time and aren't family memebers often the best match?"

"I'm testing that right now," Dr Higgins explained, "but we don't know if Kryptonian blood even has types like we do, let alone how a full-blooded Kryptonian would react to having human elements put in his body."

"But you wouldn't need very much would you?" Chloe pressed, "I mean if you and Richard are right about this whole 'signal' thing then wouldn't you only need enough for even one nanite so that it can tell the others to shut off."

The doctor paused for a moment in his shuffling of papers. "That's not a bad theory, but like everything else is just a theory, I'll look into it though. Now however I need to-" he was interrupted by his pager beeping. He took a quick look before his face turned serious. "Code blue," he muttered, shoving past her and running down the hall.

Chloe felt her heart skip a beat as she realized what he'd said. Code blue meant a cardiac arrest and it had to be Clark. They'd only just managed to save him last time, what were the chances he'd pull through twice?

She was just about to follow the doctor when a thought occurred to her and she snatched up the vial on the bench before dashing down the hallway in pursuit.

She caught up to him just as he ran past the guards, she must have looked like she belonged because they only glanced at her briefly before returning to their duty.

As she entered the room she saw another doctor and a nurse trying desperately to resuscitate Clark. Dr. Higgins called out a series of confusing instructions and the nurse set about fiddling with the machines attached to him while the other doctor started chest compressions.

"He's not responding," Dr. Higgins stated and Chloe resisted the urge to yell in frustration.

Of course he wasn't responding, the time had gone to treat an alien problem with conventional means. Chloe looked back towards where Jason lay peacefully, completely unaware of the disaster unfolding only meters from his bed. Clark didn't seem to be responding this time, the incessant tone of the flatline drilling into her head.

She spied a syringe and a bottle in a plastic wrapper on a shelf underneath the IV drip. Glancing back to check that the others were occupied she ripped open the package and grabbed the syringe. Pulling out the vial of Skye's blood she pushed the needle into the top and drew out a small amount.

Then silently praying to whoever may be listening she turned and, before anyone could protest, jammed the needle into Clark's arm and pushed it down.

The nurse and both doctors stared at her in horror as they tried to understand what she'd just done but the moment was interrupted by a beep from the monitor as Clark's hear started pumping blood again. Chloe felt her knees go weak with relief but apparently she was the only one.

"What did you do?" the other doctor half-yelled, half-screamed.

"Uh, Dr. Lin, Nurse Donna, could you please leave the room while I talk to Miss

Sullivan," Dr. Higgins requested as he checked all of Clark's readings with ever widening eyes.

The other two left without saying anything, Chloe supposed they'd be used to following orders and keeping their mouths shut working on a case like this. As soon as they left she asked, "Is he okay?"

"Yes," Dr Higgins said, "he appears to be recovering *remarkably* rapidly. However," he turned suddenly to her with a look that made Chloe feel like she was a student who'd been sent to the principal's office, "do I really need to tell you how incredibly irresponsible and possibly dangerous that was?"

"More dangerous than his heart stopping?" Chloe shot back, still trying not to collapse in relief as she glared back. "He was practically dead and nothing you were doing was working, I was trying to save my friend."

"You shouldn't have even followed me in here," the doctor yelled back. "If he had not responded-"

"You would have what?" Chloe cut him off, clenching her hands into fists as she tried to stop them shaking, "gone to your lab and run more tests, I'm sure there was time for that. Look, admit it, you've really had no idea what's going on this whole time have you? This is an alien virus or nano-virus or whatever and you've been treating it with Earth methods. I can understand that with all the pressure you're under you may not have been thinking clearly."

"No matter how clearly I was thinking at the time I never would have injected a patient with a sample of blood that had only undergone preliminary testing- and where did you even get that needle?"

Chloe pointed to the empty wrapper and was about to defend her actions again when a confused sounding voice asked, "Chloe?"

"Clark!" She gasped, sinking to the floor as familiar blue eyes looked at her in confusion.

"My best guess," Clark said two hours later as he sat beside Lois' bed with Jason and Skye on his lap and Richard, Chloe and Dr. Higgins hanging on his every word. "Is that the nanites were some sort of way to strengthen Kryptonians living under a red sun. I don't think they were created for war - the most likely situation is that they just hadn't been programmed on how to deal with Kryptonians that were already invulnerable, which is understandable because there weren't any when these were made."

"Isn't this a bit too easy though?" Richard asked, "I mean one second you and Jason are at death's door then you're up and about? And even if all this is true, whoever released this knew that would happen and most certainly meant you harm but all we needed to do was give you two a little bit of Skye's blood and is literally seconds you're fine."

Lois snorted and rolled her eyes. "It's never that easy," she said before Clark could reply, "sure they're not dying anymore but whoever released the nanites is still out there and what's stopping them from figuring out how to 're-program' them or something and come at us again?"

"Also," Clark answered Richard's question, ignoring Lois' outburst for the moment, "it's very likely whoever actually released this virus had no idea how it really worked and had no knowledge of either Jason or Skye."

"Then how do you think they knew it would hurt you?" Chloe asked, recalling her conversation with Kathleen Quinn.

"Someone else must have told them," Jason said, looking to his parents for confirmation on his guess.

Clark nodded, "Someone smart and probably back before Skye was born, most likely

Luthor."

"But he's dead, isn't he?" Dr. Higgins asked, "they found his body on that island just after New Krypton."

Clark nodded. "But he clearly organized more than we'd realized." He made a mental note to check with Jor-El *exactly* what was missing from the Fortress since it had been robbed. He'd thought Luthor's only interest had been in the crystals and it was because of him that someone had been running around with these nanites for the past seven years, ready to try and kill his family.

"So it's not over yet?" Chloe asked, even though she knew the answer.

"Not by a long shot," Lois replied, just content for the moment that her family was alive and okay. But when she got out of this bed whoever tried to kill her husband had better watch out because she was coming for them.

"In a press conference earlier today, doctors admitted they had found and administered the cure five days ago but they waited until Superman was awake to announce his recovery. There have been no further statements released on what exactly the problem was or who was responsible, only the assurance that it is seemingly gone for good and it was not at any stage harmful to humans. Sources inside the hospital tell us that doctors are still researching the case despite their public assurances."

"He managed to hold out for a while," Clark commented but was shushed by his wife as the news continued. Dr. Higgins had allowed them all to leave the hospital a day after they had woken up and promised to try and hold off the official announcement for as long as possible so that Clark could establish his presence and so that he could completely erase any evidence of Jason's stay.

"And what did they say about the details of Superman's recovery?" the studio reporter was asking, "do we know when he'll be in the skies again?"

"Well, Dr. Higgins has said he has no concrete time frame but he says they're expecting him back to normal within a week or so."

"Thank you, Jim." The reporter smiled at the camera. "I don't know about you but I'm glad to finally get some good news and I for one will feel just a little safer when I can look up to that flash of red again." She and her co-anchor shared a fake laugh before moving onto another story involving some celebrity drug-scandal.

Lois muted the TV and looked towards the armchair where Clark sat with both children. It was a rather cramped arrangement but Lois had been ordered to remain lying down for as long as she was still pregnant and so was currently taking up the whole sofa. They really needed to replace the other armchair which had been broken in a incident involving a broken toy and a burst of super-strength.

"So when do you think Superman will be ready to come back?" she asked.

The kids also looked towards their father, eager for an answer. Clark shrugged. "I feel fine now but I think a few days to get back to my best would help. Actually I was thinking of trying to go up and catch a bit more sun this evening," he said, . Looking towards the horizon where the massive ball of gas and fire that gave him his unique abilities was hovering, ready to disappear for the night.

"Are you sure?" Lois asked.

While at the same time Skye cut in, "Can we come?"

"Sure," Clark said, "in fact I think it would do both of you some good." And before Lois

could protest he'd scooped both children up and was out on the balcony.

She had to settle for calling, "Be careful," after them although she knew Clark wouldn't have taken the kids without being certain he could keep them safe.

Clark faltered slightly as he rose but the children didn't seem to notice. However, as soon as he broke through the clouds he felt strength rush through him and sighed with relief. He heard Jason do the same beside him as he stretched away from Clark and towards the sun, the healing rays working to rid any remnants of the nanites from their systems.

Skye wriggled in his grip as the sun energized her as well, Clark tightened his grip on her so she didn't slip but remained silent not wanting to break the peaceful silence. But someone had other ideas, or more accurately, three someones.

"Clark," Lois' anxious voice called from below, breaking the peaceful silence, "The triplets are coming, and I don't think they'll stop this time."

Part 14

Clark set Jason and Skye down on the balcony before rushing into the room where Lois was busy throwing some last minute items in her overnight bag. Clark quickly took over, gently pushing her down onto the bed and anxiously looking her over.

"Hey," Lois covered her stomach with her hands even though it wouldn't matter to him, "we agreed, no peeking."

"But, Lois, you're in labor."

"Really?" She rolled her eyes, "Who's the one that's done this twice before? Now go get my bag and call Richard and Chloe to ask if they can watch the kids."

"Lois, the only reason they let you come home is that I promised them you wouldn't be moving," Clark reminded her.

"That was so I wouldn't go into labor but now that my water just broke it kinda doesn't matter."

"Why, what's going on?" Jason asked as he walked into the room, closely followed by Skye.

"We're going back to the hospital," Lois explained, "Your siblings have decided to make their appearance."

"How do you know?" Skye asked looking confused.

"Because I do," Lois replied shortly as another contraction hit. "Whoa, that was a big one."

"A big *what*?" Skye asked again, frowning when no one gave her an answer. "How do you know the babies are coming?"

"I'll explain when I come to get you two later," her Dad told her, zipping up Lois' bag. "Will you be okay while I go and get Richard and Chloe?"

"I think I'll survive," Lois replied sarcastically.

"Don't let her get up," He told the kids, eliciting another eye roll from his wife.

"Are we not coming?" Jason asked, looking disappointed, "I got to come when Mom had Skye."

"That was different, sweetheart," Lois explained as Clark blurred into his Superman outfit and disappeared. "It's a lot more complicated with triplets and we don't want to have to worry about you and your sister wandering around the hospital. Richard and Chloe are going to be

here and I promise you Dad will come to pick you up to meet you new brothers and/or sisters as soon as he can, okay?"

"But what are we going to do?" Jason asked, "I want to come, please."

"Not this time, Jason," Lois told him sternly, "and no arguing."

The boy sighed, knowing when to accept defeat. "C'mon, Skye. Wanna play on the PlayStation?"

Ten minutes later Richard and Chloe were putting their bags in the guest room and Clark had called a cab to take them to the hospital. He wasn't prepared to risk flying with Lois while she was in labor but Lois had refused calling an ambulance given that they lived only five minutes from the hospital anyway.

"Alright, kids." Lois couldn't bend down to give her children proper hugs but she patted them on their heads and ruffled their hair. "You be good for Aunt Chloe and Uncle Richard, okay?"

"Promise we can come as soon as the babies are born?" Jason asked, still looking disappointed that he wasn't coming.

"I will come and get you as fast as I can, okay?" Clark assured them, appearing in the door. "Lois, the cab's waiting and I think we have to pay more if you have them in it."

"Just calm down, I know what I'm doing" she said, wincing as another contraction hit. "I've done this before."

"Not three times on the same day," Clark reminded her. Richard and Chloe grinned as they heard the argument continue out the door and most likely all the way to the hospital.

After they were gone the apartment settled into a comfortable but expectant silence punctuated only by the sounds of the TV as Skye and Jason took turns on the PlayStation.

It was only when Jason yelled angrily at Skye for getting unnecessarily killed on screen that Chloe realised the poor girl had fallen asleep sitting up. The kids had adamantly refused to go to bed and Richard and Chloe hadn't argued much, it was hardly a normal night. But now that it was in fact morning and even Richard was getting tired Chloe decided enough was enough. "Alright you two, bed," she ordered, holding up a hand as Jason opened his mouth to protest. "No arguments, your Dad said he'll come and get you when it's time but if you want to be awake to meet your new brothers and/or sisters then you're going to need to get some sleep."

Jason sighed, knowing he'd never get to sleep because he was so nervous to meet his new siblings but not wanting to cause a fuss. He lay in bed for over an hour just staring at the ceiling and wondering what was happening at the hospital. It was kinda hard to imagine that there family was soon about to be almost doubled in size. He wanted at least one brother, Skye was alright, she had just saved his life, but she only ever wanted to play with her ponies or practice putting her toy make-up on him. Not that he'd *ever* admit to participating in that last activity to anyone.

He was about to turn over and try staring at the wall to see if that made a difference when there was a creak and his door opened slowly. "Jason?" his sister called quietly, poking her head around the door. "Are you awake? I can't sleep."

He didn't say anything, just rolled over and lifted up his sheets. Skye closed the door and hurried over, jumping in beside him and curling most of the sheets around her, leaving Jason with hardly any. "If you're going to stay you have to give me back some of those," he warned.

"I saved your life," Skye protested.

"Only 'cause you didn't have any powers beforehand," Jason shot back, "now give me my

sheets."

Skye sighed and relinquished her hold allowing Jason to recover enough to keep him warm. "Now I'm cold," Skye complained as Jason got comfortable.

He wrapped an arm around his sister and pulled her closer to him to keep her warm. "Better?" he asked, "But it's hardly my fault, you know this bed was only built for one." It was a conversation they had every time Skye climbed into his bed when she had a bad dream or just couldn't sleep.

"I know," Skye answered with a giggle. "Jason?" she asked a moment later, her tone more serious.

"Mmmm?" Jason replied.

"I'm glad you're better now, I missed you," she said quietly.

Jason felt himself grin in the darkness, sure Skye could be really annoying sometime but she was his sister. "I missed you too," he replied, "thanks for saving my life."

Much to Jason's surprise he must have managed to fall asleep at some point during the night because the next thing he knew Superman was standing over his bed, shaking him awake. "Jason, Skye, wake up."

"mm up," Skye muttered beside him, "what's going on?"

"I think the babies are here," Jason said, throwing the sheets off them and ignoring Skye's yelp when the cold hit her.

"Yup." Jason could hear the grin in his Dad's voice as he spoke. "Thirty fingers and thirty toes, now, hurry up, I don't want to leave your mother alone for long."

"So what do we have?" Jason asked five minutes later as the flew towards the hospital, looking very different without the huge crowd that had surrounded it earlier. "Brothers or sisters or both?"

"I want three girls," Skye informed them before Clark could reply, "Dad, did Mom have three girls? Boys are icky."

"Why don't we got meet them?" Clark suggested as he landed on the roof and quickly changed out of his super-suit. "Come on, it's not too far."

"Are Uncle Richard and Aunt Chloe coming?" Jason asked, realizing he hadn't seen them at the apartment when they were leaving.

"They're coming a little later in a cab, now just one thing before we meet them." He stopped a knelt down so he was at eye level with them. "They came a little early and they're not quite strong enough to survive on their own so they've put them in a place called the NICU, it looks a little frightening but it's nothing to worry about, okay?" Jason nodded even though he knew it was more for Skye's benefit, he had looked up multiple births on the internet when his parents had first told them they were getting three baby siblings at once.

"Okay," Skye said softly, looking a little worried now despite Clark's assurances.

"Here we go," he said as they turned the corner and stopped beside a large window.

Jason and Skye feel silent as they looked at the three tiny children in the incubators. Each one had a label, *J. Kent*, *N. Kent* and the smallest, *T. Kent*. "So what are they?" Jason asked, he frowned, they didn't look like boys or girls, they looked like babies.

"They're boys," Clark told them, pride evident in his voice as he said it.

"All of them?" Skye asked with wide eyes while Jason grinned wider.

"Yup. All three, that one," he said, pointing to the first, "is Jonathan Pete Kent, then," he pointed to the middle one, "comes Nathaniel Hiram Kent, and last but not least," he pointed to

the smallest baby, "is Tobias Jerome Kent."

"Jonny, Nathan and Toby," Jason said in a decisive voice, "those names you picked are too long. And Hiram?" he asked, wrinkling his nose.

"After my grandfather," Clark explained, "it's a noble namesake."

"He'll get teased," Jason informed him, turning back to watch his new brothers.

Skye was silent for a while but Clark could see her mouthing their names as she looked from one baby to the next. Finally she trend to her Dad and leaned in before quietly asking, "Do they have *other* names, like we do?"

Clark quickly checked that no one was listening before nodding. "Of course they do. Sol-El," he placed a hand on Jason's shoulder as he said the boy's Kryptonian name, "and Lara Kal-El," he grinned at Skye, "I'd like you to meet your brothers, San-El, Von-El and Jor-El."

Skye grinned. "I like those," she said, "can we see Mom now?" she asked, apparently bored with her new siblings.

"Of course, she wants to see you too." Clark stood up a lead the way to a small hospital room not far from the triplets.

"Mom!" Skye cried as soon as they entered, jumping up onto the bed.

"Careful!" Clark and Lois both loudly warned her, causing the girl to stop in tracks and look at the in confusion.

"Sorry, sweetie," Lois apologized, carefully hugging the girl, "but I just had an operation and I'm still a little sore."

"Sorry." Skye sat careful on the side, still looking a little confused.

"Hey, Mom." Jason went to the other side of the bed and kissed her on the cheek. "We saw the triplets, they're really small."

"They'll get bigger," Clark assured him, ruffling his hair, "just you wait."

"So did Chloe and Richard find out anything more about the nanites?" Lois asked Clark.

"Lois, you just had three children within a very short time span, please rest for a moment," Clark said, frowning.

"Yes, but-"

"But nothing," Clark warned her, holding up his hand. "Whoever released the nanites is still out there and we will find them but for now just calm down and relax, okay?"

"Mom?" Skye asked suddenly before Lois could reply, as if something had just occurred to her.

"Yes?" Lois asked, fighting back a yawn.

"Next time can you have three girls?"

Clark almost feel over he was laughing so hard at the look on his wife's face and for the moment all was well.