

House Arrest

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Rated PG for allusions to violence

Submitted June, 2010

Summary: Lois' agreement to marry Clark sets in motion a series of unforeseen events culminating in Clark's arrest.

House Arrest begins in the middle of the Lois & Clark episode *Barbarians at the Planet*, written by Dan Levine and Debra Joy Levine. A small amount of dialogue was taken from this episode. This story then rapidly diverts from canon. Warner Brothers, DC Comics, and possibly others have the rights to all of the characters in this story except for Dr. Siegel and Officer Reeves. I am only borrowing the other characters for a little not-for-profit fun.

The song Lex sings is taken from Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Mikado." Dr. Leek is a character from the episode "Vatman," written by Michael Norell.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my tireless BRs, Female Hawk (Corrina) and Ray. Their suggestions over the various iterations of this fanfic made the plot far more coherent, the characters' motivations far clearer, and the story far stronger overall. Thanks!!!

People's thoughts are represented *like this*.

As always, feedback welcomed.

While Clark prepared some oolong tea for Lois, he steeled himself for the discussion which must follow. After their conversation earlier that day, he knew it was time for Lois to learn his secret. He thought back to early that afternoon, when he had professed his love for her.

"Lois, listen to me. I'm not talking about the partnership. I'm talking about us. I have been in love with you for a long time. You had to have known."

Lois looked into his eyes, her heart racing. "I, I mean, I knew... I mean I guess I knew that you liked me, or were attracted to me; oh Clark... I never let myself dream that you loved me! The only men who ever claimed to love me were all creeps. But you're not. Oh, Clark, I love you, too!"

The kiss that followed had been earth shattering, and he hoped it to be but a small foretaste of their future bliss.

Lois used the time Clark was in the kitchen to think about the events of the afternoon. Lex had always been a distant third in her affections. Of course she had dreamed of being with Superman since he flew her to the Planet building after he had swallowed that bomb so long ago. But she knew he was unattainable and, therefore, safe. She had been badly hurt in prior relationships – if she could even dignify those interactions with men with that word.

Having been taken advantage of by so many men who supposedly cared for her, she was wary of feeling anything for someone who might reciprocate those feelings. It had therefore taken Clark a long time to erode her protective barriers. But he had had plenty of opportunities to do so; he was with her every day at work and on many nights and weekends as well. Still, it

wasn't until just a few days ago that she had even realized that he'd succeeded in getting past her defenses. She only realized the extent of her feelings for Clark when she had contemplated marriage to Lex and all the changes in her life that that would entail. She had come to the conclusion that Lex' jealous streak would make even friendly visits with Clark an impossibility, and that had troubled her more than she would have thought possible. From there, it was a small step for her heart to inform her head that, despite her best intentions never to let herself become vulnerable to any man ever again, she had fallen hard for her farmboy hack from Nowheresville.

So when Clark had told her of his love for her, any thoughts of marriage to Lex were immediately discarded. After she and Clark had sealed their new relationship with a kiss, she had reluctantly left him for several hours. She had wanted to see Lex as soon as possible to decline his proposal.

As Lois drove to Lex' office, she thought about the new phase of her relationship with Clark, and her mind drifted back to their most recent "discussions" about Lex. At the time, she had dismissed Clark's concerns about his rival as mere jealousy; but could there have been anything in them? She now did what she realized she should have done before: She gave Clark the benefit of the doubt. She pondered what she knew of Lex and concluded that there was at least a possibility that Clark could be correct. Lex certainly had proven quite secretive about certain aspects of his business dealings. Whenever she tried to learn any specifics of his work, he managed to deflect her questions; and he did it so skillfully that, at the time, she hadn't even realized what he was doing. *And I call myself an investigative reporter? Hah! I was so flattered that a man in his position would be interested in me that I was making mistakes that I normally never would have made even as a rookie reporter.* If Clark were correct, then she was lucky to be disentangling herself from Lex before she had agreed to become his fiancée. She would be relieved when her conversation breaking off her relationship with Lex was completed.

As it turned out, Lex took the breakup much better than she had anticipated. When she had told him that she couldn't marry him because she loved Clark, he'd narrowed his eyes and put on a forced smile. But all he said was, "Well, my dear, if that is how things must be, then by all means go to him. I wish you both everything you so richly deserve." He then had Asabi see her to the door.

Lois' reveries about her breakup with Lex were interrupted when Clark came into the living room, two teacups in hand. His expression was so apprehensive it made her wonder about the conversation to come.

Several hours earlier:

As soon as Lois left his apartment, Lex summoned Nigel. "Did you know that I was once a Boy Scout?"

"No, sir."

"It's true. I hated every second I was forced to attend. But there is one, and only one, thing I do agree with them about... Always be prepared. As soon as I became aware of Mr. Kent's inconvenient curiosity about my affairs, I arranged to receive a coffee mug from his desk at the Planet so that I could create a clone from his DNA on the mug. The clone has been in suspended animation awaiting the time when it would prove useful. That time has now arrived. Please ask Dr. Leek's protege, Dr. Siegel, to see to its revival and send it to me as soon as it is ready."

"Very good, sir."

In the two hours it took to revive 'Clark' and make him presentable, Lex had come up with a most satisfying plan - one which would not only rid him of his competitor for Lois' attentions, but which would also permit him to even the score

against someone else who had had the temerity to stand up to him.

When ‘Clark’ appeared before him, Lex told him what was expected of him.

“Now, Clark, do you see this picture? It is of a very bad man named Perry White. You know that bad men must be punished. I’m going to give you a gun, and I want you to go to his house and kill him. He’s married to a woman named Alice. Be sure that Alice sees you shooting him. She’ll be very happy with you. And you do want to make the nice Alice happy, don’t you?”

‘Clark’ hesitated. “Yes, but I’m afraid. I never shot anyone before. Isn’t shooting people bad?”

Lex put a fatherly hand on the clone’s shoulder. “That depends who you are shooting. It would be very naughty of you to shoot me, because I’m your father and I love you. But it is all right to shoot bad people.” Lex could see that ‘Clark’ was still hesitant. *The things I have to put up with! Well, let’s start him off slowly.* “I tell you what, why don’t you take the gun and go find some cats to shoot for practice. Oh, and one other thing. If you are going to survive in this world, you have to be strong. If necessary to achieve your goals, you must be able to do things that will hurt others. You must overcome any empathy you may have for your enemies. Here’s a knife – before you shoot the cats, hurt them – a lot. That will give you practice ignoring their cries. Don’t come back until you have three dead cats for me.”

“All right, father.”

Present time:

Clark put both cups of tea on the wooden table in front of the sofa and then sat down beside Lois. He took her hand in his and looked lovingly, if nervously, into her eyes. “Lois, I am so glad you’re here. There’s something I’ve wanted to tell you for so long, but I never quite knew how to. If you start to get mad at me, please remember that I *am* telling you now. You see, I am - ”

Just then, there was an insistent pounding at the door. Clark mentally cursed the Fates as he got up from the sofa. As soon as he opened the door, a police officer stated, “Clark Kent, you are hereby under arrest on three counts of cruelty to animals. You have the right to remain silent...”

In a daze, Clark permitted himself to be escorted to the police station and then into a jail cell.

“Father, I did as you asked. I tortured and killed three cats...” ‘Clark’ bowed his head in shame, “but I couldn’t bring them all here. Some men saw me shooting the third one and they started running toward me. They looked mean and they scared me, so I ran away from them and came right back here where I knew I’d be safe. I only have the cat I had been holding.” He proffered the lone feline corpse as a peace offering.

“Oh, Clark, Clark, Clark. I am disappointed in you. The only person who is supposed to see you shoot anything is Alice. Just for that, young man, you will go to bed early tonight.”

Lex called Dr. Siegel in and instructed him to settle ‘Clark’ into his ‘special bed.’ Lex was confident that the doctor understood that ‘Clark’ was to be placed into suspended animation again. Lex was pleased with the excuse he had given ‘Clark’ for returning him to suspended animation – an action which he had had every intention of doing regardless of the outcome of the clone’s mission. After all, clones had a very short lifespan, and they cost a lot to create. Every minute ‘Clark’ was out of suspended animation depreciated one of Lex’ valuable assets. And he did so dislike asset depreciation.

Clark’s first thought the following morning was that his bed seemed a lot less comfortable than usual. When he realized that he was not, in fact, in his own bed, he remembered the events of the prior night and instantly became fully awake.

The more he thought about his current situation, the more apprehensive and frustrated he became. How was he going to keep his Super side to himself when he was under 24 hour surveillance? He’d have to grow a beard and moustache and not cut his hair for as long as he was in jail. He grimaced as he imagined himself sporting a pony tail. For that matter, how could he even let himself sleep? What would happen if he started to sleep-float? Oh, no! What if he had done so last night?

And how would Metropolis survive without Superman? He was trying desperately to turn off his super-hearing, to ignore each call for help; but with each unfulfilled request for his aid, he felt more helpless. He ached for those he could not assist. Each death he could have prevented weighed him down still more.

And what was happening in the rest of the world? Were there earthquakes in Europe or mudslides in Asia? He realized that he could, at least, be informed – the guard at the main entrance had tuned his radio to a news-talk channel. Clark focused his attention on the talk show host’s latest rant. Clark had never liked that particular host, but at least the absence of emergency news bulletins was reassuring.

He concentrated on that reassurance. He knew Lois would come to see him as soon as she was allowed to do so, and she would be extremely upset about his imprisonment. They wouldn’t have much time together, and they would need to spend it productively if they were going to make progress at finding the real perpetrator. Clark knew he would have to be calm enough for the both of them; or if he couldn’t manage that, he thought ruefully, he would at least have to appear that calm.

Lois drove to the jail to see Clark as soon as he was permitted to have a visitor. En route, she pondered the unfairness of his situation. Not only had he been charged for crimes she knew he was incapable of committing, but also, thanks to the political machinations of the governor, he was not even allowed to post bail. To increase his own popularity during this election year, the governor had persuaded the state senate to pass a “tough on crime” bill which prevented anyone charged with violence toward other people or toward animals from posting bail. The animals clause was added as a result of lobbying by the popular organization People for Accountability to Animals. Just for this, Lois would never contribute to PATA again. She doubted the law would remain on the books for very long. It would likely be ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court; but undoubtedly the elections would already have been held and the governor would have achieved his personal aims with the bill. Lois had no intention of voting for the incumbent in that particular race.

Lois’ thoughts returned to Clark as she pulled into the jail’s visitor parking area. She was soon escorted to the visitation room, and Clark was brought in shortly thereafter. She was pleased to see that, except for the stubble on his chin and cheeks, he wasn’t looking too bad. She guessed that, given the nature of his alleged crime, they weren’t allowing him anywhere near a razor.

She opened the conversation. “I can’t believe they arrested you on charges of cruelty. You are the gentlest man I know!”

“Thanks for your vote of confidence, Lois. But while you know I didn’t do it, and I know I didn’t do it, the officers said they had three witnesses who claimed to have seen me do it. And since you last saw me, the witnesses all independently picked me out of the lineup. We both know that that’s more than enough evidence to hold me until trial.”

Lois couldn’t understand how Clark could take his situation so calmly. She would just have to be indignant enough for the both of them. “Well, I’m not going to let them get away with it. It’s a travesty to hold an innocent man. We’ll get to the bottom of this. Now, unless the witnesses lied, the perpetrator must look a lot like you.”

Lois was surprised to see the faintest hint of a smile appear

on Clark's face.

"I think it's safe to assume they were telling the truth. The witnesses had just left an inter-faith prayer service for the victims of last week's earthquake in Kazbekistan. The witnesses were a priest, a minister, and a rabbi."

Lois grimaced. "That sounds like the start of a sick joke."

"Tell me about it. They all claim to have seen 'me' shoot a cat. When the perp saw them, he ran off carrying that cat and leaving two other ones, both dead, behind him. I understand that the officers who handled the crime scene said that they had never before seen animals that had been so cruelly tortured. Shooting the poor creatures was probably the kindest thing the perp did."

"Those poor cats." Lois paused a second while contemplating that fate could be fickle even to felines. She then refocused on the problem at hand. "OK. So the person who committed the crimes looks a lot like you. Enough like you for you to be picked out in a lineup. Clark, you don't have any twin brothers you never bothered to tell me about, do you?"

"Ha ha, Lois. Very funny."

"Wait a minute – a twin that's not a twin. That's it! It's so obvious!"

"Um, Lois, perhaps jail life has clouded my brain, but I'm not following."

Lois figured that Clark must have been having a tougher time in jail than he was letting on; he usually kept up with her leaps of logic. She explained her thought processes to him, "Superman's twin, remember? A clone! Now, who would clone you? Why would they do it, and how? Who has the money necessary to have a clone made and who dislikes you so much they'd be willing to spend that kind of money?"

As one, they said, "Lex Luthor!"

"Lois, DON'T try to take him on by yourself. He's too dangerous. Tell the police your suspicions and have them handle him."

"Clark, you know perfectly well that all we have now is a theory; the police would need evidence before they would act."

"Lo-isssss, PLEASE promise me you won't do anything foolish."

Lois rolled her eyes. "OK. I promise."

But they both knew that her definition of "foolish" included far fewer things than did Clark's. Still, they also knew that she would spend at least several days trying to investigate Lex from the safety of her home and the local library. Had the Planet still been in operation, she would have taken advantage both of Jimmy's wizardry with computers and of the Planet's morgue. As it was, she had to make do with her own, more limited, online investigative skills and with the local library's microfiche. Jimmy had mentioned to her that he was going somewhere out of town on a business trip for a client of his new company, so she couldn't ask for his help. What would have taken Jimmy a few hours to discover would, she knew, take her at least a few days.

The guard unlocked and opened the cell door. "All right, Kent, come on out. You're going home."

Clark's face lit up. Five days in jail had been five too many, as far as he was concerned. Five days of having to hear calls for help and not being able to answer. Five days of not being able to protect Lois, or to hug her or even to talk freely with her. Five days of agony. And all coming so soon after they had finally expressed their love for one another. "Great! Does that mean they've found the real perp?"

"No, it means you're now going to be under house arrest. No one's seen Superman the past several days, and the criminals have taken notice. Crime has skyrocketed. Our officers have been working overtime making arrests. The jail is overcrowded and there's no longer room for any cat killers." The guard paused, then said as an afterthought, "I'm sorry," not sounding sorry at

all, "I should have said, 'alleged cat killers'." He made very sarcastic air quotes around the phrase.

The guard led Clark into a room containing an officer, two chairs, and a table. On the table was a bag holding all of the personal possessions Clark had been carrying at the time of his arrest. The officer put an anklet on Clark's left leg and explained its use. He recited his litany in a bored monotone. "This anklet will track your location at all times. At the start of each week, you are to submit a written request for all of the trips you wish to make outside your premises for the week. The request must include all of the dates and times you wish to leave and when you will return, as well as the locations you wish to go to and the reasons for your requested outings. Should you leave your premises at any time or for any destination that has not received prior approval, you will be in violation of house arrest and will be considered a fugitive. Should you remove your ankle bracelet, you will be considered a fugitive. Reasons for leaving your abode are generally limited to activities such as going to work or school, attending therapy or rehabilitative or recovery meetings, and taking care of basic necessities such as grocery shopping. You will also be called at random times for additional confirmation of your location. Do you understand the terms of your house arrest?"

"I do."

"Do you have any questions?"

"Only one. What if the anklet gets wet? Do I have to try to keep it dry when I shower?"

"No. The anklet was designed to be water resistant. If you have no other questions, Officer Reeves will escort you back to your residence."

Five days. Lois had spent five days investigating any connection Lex might have had to cloning. Five days of poring over old newspapers, reading Wall Street reports, skimming science journals, and making discrete enquiries. And she had nothing to show for it; at least, nothing that would convince the police to investigate him themselves. She had managed to keep the promise she had made to Clark not to do anything foolish, and look what it had gotten them: Five wasted days. The time for prudence was long past. Now was the time for action. She needed evidence against Lex, and she knew just where she had to go to get it. If Clark wasn't happy about that, then that was just too bad. At least he would be happy when the evidence she gathered exonerated him.

As she drove toward Lex' office, she further contemplated the situation. She again wished Jimmy were available. She didn't know how long he would be away, so she'd tried calling him each day, but he never answered. She even wished that she could have enlisted Superman's help in gaining evidence against Lex. She thought he would be willing to help; after all, wasn't Clark his best friend? But where was Superman? He had disappeared about the time that Clark was imprisoned. She nearly ran off the road as she was struck by a wild idea – Superman hadn't been seen in public since Clark was imprisoned. Come to think of it, had she ever seen the two of them together? Could CLARK possibly be Super-? She refused to let herself complete that crazy thought. She shook her head. *Lois, get real! You're tired and stressed out. You're letting your imagination run amok. What you're thinking is too far-fetched even for you.*

Lex was surprised that it had taken five days for Lois to make an uninvited visit to his office. He was disappointed in her; he had thought that surely she would have put the pieces of the puzzle together long before then. He had in fact been keeping an eye out for her the full five days. When he saw her grasp the handle of a filing cabinet drawer, he stepped into his office. "Lois, my dear, this is a pleasant surprise. To what do I owe the

honor?”

Lois assumed the stance of a soldier at attention. “Lois Lane. Former reporter for the Daily Planet. No serial number.”

“Ah, how lovely to see that your sense of humor remains intact despite all of the most unfortunate circumstances in your life. And how has your new boyfriend enjoyed his first week of his long, all expense paid, ‘vacation’? You know, it’s a scary world out there. Anything can happen. As your former fiancé, I would be remiss not to keep you here for your own protection. You will even have the comfort of your own apartment; did you know I preserved the one I had had built for you during the Nightfall crisis, just in case you ever wished to have it? Oh, I did make one, small, change – I had the locks moved to the outside of the front door.” Lex turned to his intercom, “Mrs. Cox, please have Asabi escort Miss Lane to her chambers.”

While pondering the recent turn of events, Lex started to sing to himself, “My object all sublime, I shall achieve in time – To let the punishment fit the crime – The punishment fit the crime; and make each prisoner pent unwillingly represent a source of innocent merriment, of innocent merriment.” *Yes, the real Clark is in a public jail and Lois is in my private one. What could be more appropriate? After all, Lois stole my heart and then trampled on it because of her feelings for Clark. Their punishment does fit their crimes.*

As Asabi led Lois out of Lex’ office at gunpoint, Lois recalled that ‘her’ underground apartment was in a lead-lined, soundproofed shelter. Once confined to it, she would be completely on her own. So even though she knew that Superman hadn’t been seen for days, she still couldn’t resist crying out in desperation, “HELP, Superman!!!”

Clark was thrilled to be back home, but his delight soon turned to worry. The first thing he had done when he had arrived home an hour ago had been to call Lois’ apartment and leave a message on her answer machine. Lois would surely contact him as soon as she returned home. But she still had not called back. Clark shuddered when he thought about how much trouble Lois could get into in an hour, especially considering that she was tracking down Metropolis’ answer to Moriarty.

He tried to assure himself that she was probably just out buying groceries. Maybe she had to stock up on ice cream and Double Fudge Crunch Bars. Yeah, that was it; it had to be... Oh, who was he trying to kid? Of course that’s not what she was doing. This was Lois, after all. She had to be off doing something incredibly brave and incredibly foolish, and all on his behalf. How could he just stand idly by in his apartment while she was out who-knows-where possibly getting herself killed? But what choices did he really have? If he flew out the window with his anklet on, not only would he be breaching house arrest, but his secret would also be revealed. And even if he took his anklet off first, he would still be considered a fugitive. Either way, he would be returned to the jail, and then any sentence he were given would be made even longer by his actions of the day. Would Lois wait until he were freed? Would it even be fair of him to ask her to? By leaving the apartment, might he lose Lois? But wouldn’t it be better to lose her that way than to lose her because she had died trying to find evidence to free him?

As he was debating his next move, he heard the one voice that his super-hearing could never tune out- the voice of his beloved - screaming for assistance. He instantly made the only decision possible – he reached down and tore off his anklet. He dropped it on the floor as he spun into the Suit. He flew out his window and was in Luthor’s office almost before Lois had finished screaming.

When Lois saw him, she entered full babble mode, “Oh, Superman, thank God you came. I didn’t know whether you

would. I mean, you’ve always come before when I needed you, but no one has seen you in days. I had figured you were off somewhere taking a vacation; I mean, everyone needs a vacation sooner or later, right? And you hadn’t had any time off since you arrived here a year ago, so I figured you were due. But I didn’t know...”

Clark always marveled at how much Lois was able to say before she needed to stop for breath; but amusing as her babbling always was, now was not the time to engage in such indulgences. “Excuse me, Miss Lane, but would you please hold that thought?” Clark left Lois, her mouth still open from babble interruptus, so that he could capture everyone who had been in the offices. In the seconds it took him to tie up Luthor, Asabi, Nigel, Dr. Siegel, and Mrs. Cox, Lois had recovered enough to pick up the phone on Luthor’s desk. He watched her dial Inspector Henderson and instruct him to come at once.

That evening found Clark once again sitting beside Lois in his apartment.

Clark saw Lois eyeing his legs.

“Clark, didn’t you say you needed to wear a security anklet? Where is it?”

“Ah, that’s a long story. And there are more important things to discuss, like just what you were doing on your own in Luthor’s office.” *Dumb, Kent. Dumb, dumb, dumb, dumb, dumb. Lois just handed you the perfect opening to tell her your secret, and in a way that might actually have kept her from getting mad at you. And what do you do? You deflect her question. Old habits die hard. But let’s see if we can get the conversation back on track...*

“How did you know I was there?” Lois asked.

“Because I was there, too.”

“What? I never saw you there.”

Clark took her hand and looked at her with all the gentleness and love he could muster. “Actually, Lois, you did see me. In fact, you spoke to me. And that’s the reason I’m not wearing my anklet. I had to take it off so that I could go to you.” He saw her look of confusion. What he had already said should have been enough for her to figure out his secret; so he concluded that she was in denial and needed further clarification. He smiled wryly as he provided her a more explicit hint, “And my Mom tells me I’m kind of hard to overlook in my blue spandex and red cape.”

“What? Wait! You really are...?” Lois sputtered incoherently.

“Yes, Lois, I really am. And that’s what I had been trying to tell you just before I was arrested. I know it’s a lot to take in, and you have every reason to be mad at me, since I didn’t tell you earlier; but remember that I did *try* to tell you then, and you’ve kept secrets from me, too, so -”

Clark was startled by Lois’ laughter. “Clark, you’re babbling!”

Clark’s responding laugh was a mixture of relief and joy.

“Does this mean you’re not mad at me?” he asked hopefully.

“How could I be? By rescuing me, you sacrificed your freedom. You just became a fugitive. I’m glad you came for me when you did; but now they’ll put you back in jail! Any minute now there might be a knock on the door. Oh, Clark, what are we going to do?”

“Hadn’t I told you? Remember that this afternoon in Lex’ office I gave the officers my statement before you gave them yours? I had mentioned in my statement that while scanning the building preparatory to rescuing you, I saw the clone labs, including one body that looked very much like “the reporter Clark Kent.” After I flew off, I changed back into my Clark clothes and immediately turned myself in to Inspector Henderson. He told me that Cloark had indeed been found in suspended animation in the clone labs.”

“‘Cloark’ Your clone was named ‘Cloark’?”

“Well, that’s my name for him. I never learned his real name,

if he even had one, and “Clone Clark” was a bit cumbersome, so ...”

“So...Cloark. Makes sense. Do you know what’s going to happen to Cloark now?”

“Some scientist from S.T.A.R. Labs was called to try to revive Cloark. Unfortunately, cloning is still highly experimental, and the clone’s body apparently was an imperfect copy of my own. It therefore had some inherent weaknesses. Cloark died during the revival attempt. Probably the only person who could have revived the clone successfully was the doctor Lex had hired to create Cloark in the first place.”

Both remained silent for a while, contemplating Cloark’s short and tragic life. The heinous acts he had committed were surely more a reflection on his creator than on him; he hadn’t been alive long enough to know right from wrong. Clark thought about losing his second “brother” so soon after having lost the first one. At least he had gotten to know the first clone a bit; he had never even had a chance to meet this second one. In some ways, that actually made the loss harder to bear.

Lois finally broke the silence. “Clark, I just had another thought – Cloark was a clone of you; he might have done something Super. Do you think Lex knows your secret?”

“I think my secret’s safe. If Lex thought he had cloned Superman, he would have had some kryptonite nearby as insurance of his own safety. There was no kryptonite anywhere in the building. I double-checked that myself after I left Henderson’s office.”

“What if someone saw him do something Super in public?”

“I don’t think he did do anything Super in public. The only time he had been seen in public was the night he shot the cats. I suspect that Lex was after bigger game than felines, and hadn’t been happy that Cloark had been spotted. That may be the reason Cloark was put back into suspended animation. In any event, the whole time I was in jail, I listened to the news via a radio that one of the guards had kept on. Had any Super activities been noticed by the public, the station would have mentioned them. The only discussions about Superman were about his absence.”

“Speaking of ‘absence,’ you still haven’t finished telling me why you aren’t worried about being taken in as a fugitive. It is wonderful that Cloark was found, but that by itself wouldn’t be enough to exonerate you.”

“Not by itself, but there was also the fact that the gun used in the shootings was found in the clone lab. In light of this evidence, the original charges were dropped. And since I had had a clean prior record, the fugitive charges were dropped as well.”

“That’s fantastic! But you couldn’t have known it would turn out this way. You risked your freedom to come save me.”

“Lois, my love, if you had been killed, I would never have been free. I’d have been a prisoner of guilt and grief for the rest of my life. I will always be there for you. I love you, Lois.”

He took her into his arms and proceeded to demonstrate just how much he did love her.

THE END