

Gofer No More?

By Lynn S. M.

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Rated G

Submitted May 2011

Summary: The *Daily Planet* is starting up again under the auspices of Franklin Stern. Will its new birth permit Jimmy to realize his dream of becoming a reporter?

Disclaimers: The Lois & Clark universe belongs to DC Comics and Warner Brothers. I am just borrowing the characters for a little not-for-profit fun.

My thanks to beta readers extraordinaire Female Hawk and VirginiaR. Thanks to them, the plot unfolds much more smoothly, the punctuation is improved, and some embarrassing errors have not made it to the message board. A virtual Double Fudge Crunch bar to each of you. :) My thanks to my terrific GE, Erin Klingler. I think that in her case 'GE' stands not only for 'General Editor' but also 'Great Eyes.' Thank you for catching all those pesky punctuation errors and extra spaces. :-)

"And what'll it be for you, sir?"

Lois had ordered scrambled eggs, and Perry had ordered eggs over easy with bacon. Jimmy wished that once, just once, he could order eggs, as well. But the one and only time he had ever had a mouthful of scrambled eggs, his throat had started to swell shut and he had gone into anaphylaxis. He had almost died. A quick ambulance trip and some emergency epinephrine had managed to save his life, but the allergist he saw soon thereafter had told his mom in no uncertain terms that Jimmy should never eat eggs again.

The sad thing was, Jimmy had been too young to remember the incident. So although he hadn't been traumatized by it, he also couldn't even remember what eggs tasted like. And he would never know.

But at least he had discovered that his body could tolerate eggs — in small doses — if baked into other things, such as doughnuts. Both his mother and his allergist berated him for taking his life into his hands whenever he ate such things. The allergist emphasized that such a tolerance could switch over into a potentially fatal rejection with no warning. But the allergist didn't have to try to live without eating eggs. And Jimmy planned to eat as normal a diet as he could as long as his body would let him. He knew he couldn't eat eggs straight, nor could he have even a small amount raw — whether it be in a flu shot or in egg nog — but at least he didn't have to forego all baked goods.

Jimmy came out of his wistful reverie. "I'll have an order of sausages and some toast."

Clark, ever considerate of other's feelings, ordered the same as Jimmy.

The four friends were together a few days after Franklin Stern had bought the *Daily Planet*. The official reason Perry had asked them to meet for breakfast was to discuss plans for the new *Daily Planet*. But Jimmy understood that the gruff editor wanted

to make sure that Lois had company while she tried to cope with the recent developments; it was obvious that she needed to be with friends, even if she didn't realize it herself.

Perry was in an unusually good mood. The thought of resuming his editorship had obviously boosted his spirits. Jimmy thought that this would be the best opportunity he was likely to get to ask for a promotion.

"Hey, Chief, some of the Planet's old reporters have found other jobs and probably won't be coming back. You'll be needing some new ones. Do you think maybe I could fill one of the openings?"

Perry looked like he was about to deny the request outright, but then shook his head. "Just what makes you think you have it in you to be a reporter?"

"I've learned from the best, Chief — from all three of you. Just give me a try. Let me write an article or two and see what you think."

"Well, if you write an article, I'll read it. But no promises about printing it! And you'll do your research on your own time. Right now, you're still a gofer, and that's what I want you to be doing during the day — running errands. Is that understood?"

Jimmy's grin rapidly stretched across his face. "Yes, Chief. You got it!"

Clark chimed in. "So, Jimmy, do you have any leads?"

"Yeah. I was reading in the *National Whisperer* —"

"That rag?" Perry exploded, "No self-respecting person with an ounce of intelligence would read it."

Jimmy replied, "Hey, it isn't all bad. It has some really interesting stories in it. Like this one I just read — about animals in Centennial Park acting strange. There was a cat that jumped on its hind legs and rapidly batted its front legs, making it look as if it were trying to fly. And then there was the pigeon that kept pouncing on a mouse the way a cat would. There were other animals, too, that were behaving oddly. And it all started a couple days ago."

"And you believe that cockamamie tale?"

"Yeah, Chief, I do. But not just because of that article. I was walking home the other night, and I saw a beagle stuffing its cheeks with nuts that some kids had thrown on the ground for the squirrels. Dogs don't eat nuts, and they sure don't stuff their cheeks with them. But this one did."

"All right, Olsen. Let's just suppose — just suppose, mind you — that you weren't hallucinating, or seeing a dog that had been trained to do that trick, or any of a hundred more rational explanations. Just suppose that for once in its existence, the *Whisperer* actually got a story right. If all of that really did happen, then you've been scooped."

"But that's just it, Chief. All the *Whisperer* wrote was a few anecdotes about odd animal behavior. I want to probe deeper. See just how many animals are behaving oddly, how long this has been happening, what's causing it, that sort of thing."

Jimmy was relieved to see that Perry was actually considering his idea.

"Olsen, if you can get a real story from this urban legend — a documented, verifiable and verified story, mind you, complete with photographs and quotes from reliable sources — and if you can turn in professional-quality copy on it — you'll have earned yourself a reporting position."

Jimmy crouched behind a bush and took a few final photographs of the 'flying' cat. He stashed that roll of film into a canister and put another one into the camera. Over the past four evenings, he had taken pictures of several oddly behaving animals. He had also spoken to numerous people in the park who had seen various animals performing weird antics.

One fact stood out for him: None of the animals in question seemed to belong to anybody. Not even the cats or dogs. He also

noticed that although the animals wandered throughout Centennial Park, there seemed to be a greater concentration of them in one particular area of it. He decided to spend the next few days there to see whether he could find anybody releasing new animals.

Justin Luthor grinned in self-satisfaction. Phase One of his plan was complete. Being a young science whiz meant that Justin had been able to do what dearest Uncle Lex's researchers could not. He had known that all those hours he spent with Asabi would pay off. He had learned a great deal from him. Justin had been particularly fascinated by Asabi's recounting of a stone which legend said could be used for soul transference. Although Asabi had sought the stone for years, he had not yet found it.

Uncle Lex had heard Asabi talking to Justin once and had decided to see whether science could do what magic purported to achieve. He had had some of his best scientists attempt to perfect a soul transference machine. They had been coming close to a solution when Lex had hurled himself off this building last week. Apparently, they had succeeded in transferring souls, but the host bodies suffered a transplant shock similar to organ rejection and died within minutes.

The first thing Justin did when he found out that Uncle Lex had died was to fire the researchers and take over their work solo. His personal studies of biochemistry and anatomy, coupled with his more arcane knowledge learned from Asabi, had almost immediately revealed to him the solution to the transplant shock. A simple injection would prepare the body to receive the new essence. (Justin preferred that word over the less scientific "soul.")

Justin had tested his theory on several animals, and all of his experiments had proven successful. He had initially planned to destroy the animals afterward, but a better scheme entered his mind.

An essence transference machine would be perfect for his intended career. He had no intention of acquiring wealth the way his uncle had — with slow and subtle machinations. Instead, he would be able to rob a bank and switch bodies before he was caught. Once in a new body, he could kill the old one and make sure it looked like suicide. The police would find the 'bank robber' dead and would end their search for him. It would be the perfect crime. Fast, easy, and lucrative. What was not to like?

But what if he could not find a suitable body? After all, he had a pretty good body now, if he did say so himself. He had just finished his teen years, was in excellent health, reasonably buff, and his American-as-apple-pie face gave the illusion of boyish innocence — a very useful asset for one embarking on a criminal career.

That's when the stroke of genius came to him. Why settle for a human body? He still had some of his uncle's Kryptonite. With some proper planning, he could have an almost unstoppable super-body instead.

So instead of killing his experimental subjects, he had purposely let the animals out near the lab. His hope was that their behavior would lure Lois Lane to investigate. Once he had her, getting Mr. Goody Redboots here and subdued would be a piece of green-glowing cake. Everyone knew that he came at her beck and call.

At least, he had thought it would be easy. But that was three days ago. And still no nosy Planet reporter in sight. Wasn't she supposed to be the best investigative reporter in town? Where was she? It looked like he would have to help her do her job.

He reached for the phone.

Lois listened to her voice mail messages.

"Hello, Ms. Lane. My name is Justin, and I have a story you might be interested in. I am sure you have heard of the strange

behavior of various animals in Centennial Park. I know what is causing them to act as they are. Would you please meet me this afternoon at 3:00 at 401 Vine Street? Thank you."

A year ago, Lois might have followed up on the story personally, or at least she probably would have if she had actually believed there to be a story worth having; but she had learned her lesson about stealing other people's stories. She wrote out the relevant details from the message and went in search of Jimmy.

Jimmy left the Planet building at 2:40 with some trepidation — not for what he was about to encounter, but for how Mr. White would react to his pursuing his research during working hours. But Mr. White was always going on about how a reporter had to have initiative and had to seize the opportunities that presented themselves. He only hoped the chief would remember his own words.

Even so, Jimmy would have liked to have had a partner with him now. But Lois had her hands full with Senator-gate, and she had mentioned that C.K. was out of town following a lead for his own story and was likely to be gone most of the afternoon. So Jimmy was flying solo.

Jimmy double-checked his equipment. His recorder had a tape in it, and his camera had film. He let out a deep breath and then knocked on the door of 401 Vine Street.

Justin had everything planned. Lane would come, and before she knew what was happening, he'd sedate her and tie her up. When she came to, she'd shout for Superman. Then Big Blue would swoop in to rescue her, and Justin would open the lead-lined box that he would be holding. Blue would fall, and Justin would bind the glowing green rock to his chest. Justin would use a trolley to convey both of his 'guests' to the basement where he had already prepared the transference machine.

Justin's musings were interrupted by a knock on the door. 3:00. Lane was punctual, he'd give her that. He held a chloroform-soaked rag behind his back. With his free hand, he felt his pocket again for the box with the kryptonite, and then opened the door. He cursed to himself. Whoever the kid standing there was, he sure wasn't Lane.

"What do you want?"

"My name is James Olsen. I am a colleague of Ms. Lane's. Since I was already working on the animal story, she suggested that I come over here in her stead."

A quick change of plans. Lane wasn't coming, and this James kid probably wouldn't work as well as a lure for Superman. But all was not lost. He would switch bodies with James. If he, in James' body, could convince Lane to come out here, then he could resume his Plan A. And there was the added bonus of having a dry run with this kid's body before going to the big leagues and changing with Superman. This might work out well, after all.

Justin turned on his most unctuous voice. "Ah, Mr. Olsen, I'm so glad you could come. Please call me Justin. Won't you come in?"

As the boy went to enter the building, Justin swiveled nimbly to put an arm around James's neck and to shove the chloroform-soaked rag under the boy's nose.

Jimmy awoke to find his wrists tied together behind him and his ankles tied to the chair. Where was he? He looked around, but didn't recognize the room. Well, wherever he was, it obviously wasn't a good place to be. He especially disliked the looks of the device that dominated the room; it looked too much like a mad scientist's interpretation of Star Trek's transporter for his comfort.

Jimmy attempted to break free; unfortunately, his fruitless struggles must have attracted Justin's attention.

"Ah, good. You're awake," the auburn-haired man said,

glancing over at him. "I need you to be conscious for the process to work properly."

"What process? What are you gonna do to me?"

"I'm going to give you the opportunity to participate in a groundbreaking experiment — an essence or 'soul' transplant, you might say. We're going to change bodies."

Oh, terrific. Jimmy had been captured by a mad scientist. He shuddered to think about what Justin would do to him when the crazy device failed to work. (At least, he sure hoped it wouldn't work!)

Jimmy realized that he needed to buy himself some time while he tried to loosen the knots restraining him. He knew from every James Bond movie he had ever seen that the bad guys loved to talk about their plans. He only hoped that that strategy worked in real life. "Why? What's wrong with your body? Are you dying or something?"

Justin chuckled. "Nothing's wrong with my body. I'm perfectly healthy, and a whole lot more fit than you, that's for sure. Have you ever even seen the inside of a gym? But if all goes well, I'll only be stuck in your body for a little while. Why am I doing this? Let's just say that this switch is a final experiment before I go big time."

Jimmy was too concerned about his situation to let the insult to his physique get to him. "Big time"? What do you mean?"

"Just imagine the sorts of things you could do if you knew you'd never have to take the blame! Once I can body hop, the world will be mine!"

That confirmed it. This guy was a certifiable nutcase! And apparently one with serious criminal intent, to boot.

Jimmy saw Justin remove two syringes and four vials from a drawer. "What are they for? What's in them?"

"You need to be awake for this operation, but I have a little problem. You see, I need your body to be restrained now, but after we switch bodies, I'll need my new body to be free."

Justin drew the contents of one vial into a syringe.

"So how are you going to do that?"

"Oh, I've devised a clever solution. You need to be conscious, but you don't need to be mobile. One of Uncle Lex's research lackeys had developed a neural inhibitor which could be made into a potent immobilization serum. In about five minutes, this injection I am giving you will paralyze your body for approximately 15 minutes. When it has taken effect, I will untie you and move your body to your pad in the essence transplant machine."

Jimmy persisted in his surreptitious attempts to free himself. They didn't seem to be working, but at least Justin seemed too preoccupied touting his own cleverness to notice Jimmy's movements.

The braggart continued, "Approximately five minutes before its effects wear off on you, I will inject my own body with the same solution. I will then inject each of our bodies with this second solution, which functions as a catalyst for the transplant process. Shortly before I become paralyzed myself, I will move to my pad in the machine and flick the switch. I calculate that I will regain mobility in your current body with plenty of time to take care of the final detail."

Jimmy didn't want to give Justin the satisfaction of asking the obvious question, but his desire to know his fate won out. "Which is ...?"

"My machine has one shortcoming. Its effects wear off. The essences return to their original bodies after a few hours. We'll be the first humans to use the machine, but I have experimented extensively with animals. And I have discovered that there is only one way to make the transplant permanent — one of the transplantees must die."

Jimmy could think of only one response to that. At the top of his lungs, he screamed, "Superman! Help!"

Jimmy's surprise that Justin did not try to stop him was quickly overwhelmed by the realization that Superman wasn't responding. Where *was* the Man of Steel when you needed him?

Jimmy continued to scream until the injection prevented his body from obeying him. Then all Jimmy could do was contemplate in horror his imminent demise.

Finally, Justin dragged Jimmy's body onto one of the machine's pads and plunged the needle into his arm a second time. Jimmy realized almost immediately that something was very wrong. His lips started tingling and he felt his throat constrict. That injection must have had raw egg as one of its ingredients! Just as he thought he was about to pass out, he felt his essence yanked from his body and hurled across the room into Justin's body.

He suddenly felt heavy as he recorporeated in Justin's body, but he could not move. He started to panic, but then remembered that the paralysis injection in this body would not wear off for several minutes yet. But thank goodness he could breathe easily once again. His face was turned to the other pad. How odd to look at his original face without a mirror! It just seemed 'off' somehow. But his old body was so still. Surely the effects of the paralysis injection should have worn off that body by now. His own new extremities were starting to tingle, and he could just twitch his fingers. If he was able to move a little, surely Justin should have become fully mobile already.

He was amazed by how quickly the neural inhibitor lost all potency. In less than a minute, he was able to move freely. His new body felt odd — the proportions were all wrong, and he had to admit that it was more muscular than his old body. Even so, he managed to stumble over to where his old body lay — still inert.

Not even breathing.

Of course — the egg in the serum! He had been going into anaphylactic shock when he changed bodies. Even as he fumbled for his epinephrine and injected it into the prostrate form's thigh, he knew he was too late. His old body had died before he could even begin to move his new one.

He recalled Justin's words. "There is only one way to make the transplant permanent — one of the transplantees must die." That meant that this new body would now be his.

Permanently.

He stared at his former body.

He was shocked.

Numb.

Paralyzed emotionally just as surely as he had recently been paralyzed physically.

How does one suddenly begin to live in a new body? What would he tell everyone? What if he couldn't get used to this new body? His old body might not have won any Mr. Universe pageants, but it had been his. And now it was dead. How do you grieve the passing of your own body?

As Clark enjoyed a leisurely flight back from Smallville, he reflected contentedly on the day's accomplishments. His interview had gone well, and the time that he was allegedly riding the train back to Metropolis, he had actually helped his father with some farm chores. He would walk into the Daily Planet building right on time.

A few minutes later, back in his office suit and tie, he alit from the elevator and approached Lois.

"Hi Lois, anything happen while I was gone?"

"Oh, hi, Clark. Four phone interviews, three trips to the morgue, two Elvis stories. The usual."

"What? No partridge in a pear tree?"

Both partners chuckled.

Lois continued, "Oh, there is one thing new. Jimmy is speaking with his first source, a fellow named 'Justin', about the weird animal antics. Jimmy had been pretty nervous and had

wanted one of us to go with him. But there's no way I could have gone and still made this afternoon's deadline." Lois looked at her watch. "He must be having a productive interview. He's been gone quite a while. I'd have thought he'd be back by now."

Clark pondered this a moment. "Hmmm ... Did he say where the meeting was taking place?"

"401 Vine Street."

"Thanks. If he hasn't come back by the time I type up and turn in my article, I think I'll wander over to see if he still wants any help. I had plenty of time to think about my piece on the trip back here, so it shouldn't take very long to write it up."

Forty minutes later, as Clark approached the rendezvous building, he started to have second thoughts. Would his coming to the interview this late undermine Jimmy's credibility? Would it seem as though Clark lacked confidence in the young man? He decided it would be best to use his super senses to see how the interview was progressing. That way, he could make an intelligent decision about whether to join the interview. He started by opening his hearing. Odd. Only one heartbeat, and it wasn't Jimmy's. He nudged his glasses down his nose and peered into the building. What he saw nearly stopped his own heart.

Jimmy was in there.

Prostrate.

Unmoving.

Silent.

The lone heartbeat emanated from a youth who was just sitting near Jimmy and staring off into space.

As quickly as he could, Clark verified that no one was nearby to see him, spun into the Suit, crashed through the basement's ceiling and approached Jimmy. Or what was left of him. He had arrived too late.

No pulse.

No breath.

Nowhere near enough body heat.

How could he have let this happen to Jimmy? Why hadn't he been here to stop it? Why hadn't he flown right back to Metropolis right after the interview?

He hesitantly reached out to touch his shoulder.

Jimmy had no idea how long he had remained in a daze, but he came to himself when he heard an abrupt crash and saw Superman, shoulders drooped, crouching beside the corpse.

Jimmy barely heard Superman whisper, "Jimmy. Aw, Jimmy. I'm so sorry. I should have been here."

Superman turned, visage grim and eyes flashing.

Jimmy realized Superman's misunderstanding. "Wait, Superman! It's not what you think! I am Jimmy. Justin had captured me and used this machine to have us exchange souls. My old body died, but it was Justin's soul that went, not mine."

Jimmy could see the emotions warring on Superman's face.

Disbelief.

Hope.

Doubt.

How could Jimmy prove to Superman that he was who he claimed to be?

"Superman, take me to C.K. and Lois. Have them ask me questions that only Jimmy would know how to answer. I know this is whole situation is weird. Believe me, I feel pretty bizarro myself right now. But I really am Jimmy."

"I'm taking you to Inspector Henderson. I'll bring Lois and Clark to the precinct afterward." Superman's steely voice revealed his skepticism, but his words gave Jimmy hope.

Five minutes later, Lois had joined Jimmy and the inspector. Superman had gone to find C.K.. A few minutes after that, C.K. walked into the inspector's office by himself, explaining that Superman had to go answer a cry for help.

Inspector Henderson initiated the conversation. "Now that we're all here, what is this cockamamie story about you being James Olsen?"

"It's true. Weird, but true. I went to follow a story lead and a man named Justin had a machine that switched our bodies. But first, he gave me — in my old body — a shot that contained egg. I could feel myself going into anaphylaxis as we switched bodies; but even in my new body, I couldn't give my old body — Boy is this confusing! — an epinephrine injection because both bodies were paralyzed from a different shot he had given us."

"Lane, your babbling is rubbing off on him," Henderson observed dryly. He turned back to the man in question. "Mind taking it again from the beginning? Slowly, this time?"

Jimmy recounted his experiences again, this time filling in enough details so that everyone could understand him. But a glance at his listeners' faces showed that while they understood him, they didn't believe him.

"Look, ask me questions — anything you think only Jimmy would know the answer to."

Lois took the initiative. "Folks at the Planet call me something behind my back. They think I don't know it, but I do. What is it?"

Jimmy hesitated. "Promise you won't get angry if I say it?" When Lois nodded, he sheepishly replied, "Mad Dog' Lane."

A little of the doubt left the others' faces, but Henderson commented, "You've done your research, I'll grant you that. Lane, Kent, ask him about something that the rest of the office doesn't know."

Lois tried again. "Why wouldn't Cat sleep with you?"

"We're related."

It was C.K.'s turn. "You once thought Perry was going to try to commit suicide. What was he really doing?"

"You guys sure ask the embarrassing questions! He was bungee jumping off the Metropolis Bridge to celebrate his fiftieth birthday. He yelled 'Great Shades of Elvis!' when he went over."

Back to Lois. "All right. Here's one that's not embarrassing. What toppings were on our pizza the last time we went out to eat?"

Jimmy was puzzled. "The last time we went out to eat was for breakfast. You and the chief had eggs, but I had sausage and toast. C.K. did, too."

Lois sat back. "I'm convinced. It's crazy, but he does know things only Jimmy would." Clark nodded. Henderson just raised an eyebrow.

Jimmy chimed in, "And another thing I know is that if I don't get back to the office soon, the chief'll kill me. Let's go."

It had taken a while to explain the day's events to the chief and to convince him that he really was Jimmy. Given everything that had taken place, Mr. White had decided to let him spend some work time writing up his story, after all. As soon as Jimmy had finished writing his copy and developing his photographs, he had given them to his editor.

Then he waited outside the editor's office. And waited. And waited. Had it only been five minutes? More waiting. Finally, after another five minutes, he could bear the suspense no longer and was about to knock on the editor's door, when Mr. White himself opened it.

"Oh, uh, Jimmy. I was just going to call you. Well, what are you standing there for? Get in here!"

Jimmy nervously complied. "What do you think of the story, Chief? Did you like it? Am I a reporter now?"

"Well now, son, a reporter not only needs to be able to get the story, he also needs to be able to write it up so that it sings. You did get the story, but your writing is more like a hound dog howling."

Jimmy barely managed to choke out, "Oh. Thanks anyway

for giving me a chance, Chief.”

He slowly turned away and slumped toward the door.

Perry White continued, “Come back here, son. I’m not done yet.”

Jimmy turned back to the chief and braced himself for further humiliation.

“Now as I was saying, your writing falls flat, but you did see a news story where none of the rest of us did. You researched it well and your pictures complement the story perfectly.

“Son, you’re not a journalist, but you’re not a gofer any more, either. As soon as I clear it with H.R., you’ll be the Planet’s newest researcher and photographer.”

Jimmy stood silently for a minute as he processed what the Chief had just told him. He needed the time to change gears from coping with his humiliation (Did the chief have to keep repeating how horrible his writing was?) to understanding what he had just been told. Researcher *and* photographer? Smooth!

Words finally came to him. “Thanks, Chief! You won’t regret it.” He ran out to the bullpen and shouted, “Hey everybody! I’ve just been promoted to researcher and photographer!”

After the congratulatory chorus died down, Jimmy approached Lois and Clark.

“Hey guys, our shift’s almost up. Let’s all go out for a celebratory dinner. My treat. Oh, and I’ll ask the chief, too.”

Clark said, “Sounds great. Where will we go?”

A huge grin spread across Jimmy’s face. “Hey! I just thought of something. I’m in a new body — no more allergies! We’re going to the diner. I’ll finally get to eat some eggs!”

Half an hour later, Perry, Lois, C.K. and Jimmy were served their food.

Jimmy took a moment to enjoy the sight of the scrambled eggs before him. He placed a forkful on his tongue and let it linger, savoring the morsel’s subtle flavor and light texture. At last, he chewed and swallowed.

“Smooth! So *this* is what I’ve been missing all my life!

Tomorrow I’m going to try fried eggs. Then there are eggs over easy, eggs Benedict, poached eggs, hard boiled eggs, soft — “

Perry laughed. “We get the idea, son, but don’t go overboard. You don’t want high cholesterol.”

Lois defended Jimmy. “He’s just had a whole new culinary world opened to him. He’ll get it out of his system after a while.”

C.K. apparently couldn’t resist the opening. With a very poor imitation of innocence, he asked “You mean like you’ve gotten chocolate out of yours?” He leaned away as Lois went to swat his arm.

Jimmy turned a bit more sober. “How am I gonna convince everyone I’m me? My Mom’s gonna kill me! And what about the DMV? My bank? Man oh, man, how am I ever gonna get my life back?”

Lois reassured him, “We’ll vouch for you. You could ask Henderson to write a statement for you. And you said Superman had been there and could corroborate at least part of your story. Once we tell him that we believe you, I’m sure he’ll speak up for you, too. And you can’t get a better reference than him.”

C.K. looked thoughtful. “I’m sure Superman will help you any way he can. He came in too late to keep the switch from happening, and I’ll bet it’s really bothering him. I’m sure he’ll want to make that up to you.”

Jimmy pondered that a moment. “I don’t want him feeling bad. Proving to everyone that I am me will be a pain, but with your and his help, I’ll get through it. Yeah, this new body will take a bit of getting used to, but I do like it and I’m getting the hang of moving about in it already. I hate to admit it, but Justin was right about one thing — it is a better body than my old one. Not only can I eat eggs now, but I’ve got muscles, and auburn hair. The last time we were here, that waitress totally ignored me.

Did you see how she smiled at me when she brought us our food today?” Jimmy beamed.

All in all, Jimmy reflected, things had turned out well. He might not be a reporter, but he had a new and more interesting job and a much better body. And he could eat whatever he wanted.

Life was ‘eggs-ellent’!

THE END

Author’s notes:

Jimmy’s cavalier attitude toward his allergies was extremely unwise; but then again, canon-Jimmy was never known for his prudence.

A few facts about food allergies: Some people do react to eggs in precisely the way Jimmy in this story did; i.e., there are people who have anaphylactic reactions to raw eggs or egg dishes but can tolerate small amounts of eggs in baked products.

Unfortunately, even after years of such tolerance, a fatal reaction might ensue. People who have an allergy to foods — especially one severe enough that they might need to self-administer epinephrine for it — are better off avoiding the allergen entirely. Unless an allergist tells you otherwise, do NOT do what this story’s Jimmy did!

Incidentally, eggs being in injections is not at all far-fetched. Indeed, the contents of flu vaccines are cultured in egg, and extremely egg-allergic people may choose to forego said vaccines or else get them at their allergist’s office or in a hospital — both places that are prepared to deal with anaphylaxis. (MMR vaccines also contain a small amount of egg, as well.)

I am not an allergist, but I am the mother of a child with several potentially life threatening food allergies, one of which is to eggs. I do carry epinephrine (in the form of an EpiPen) with us wherever we go, although thank God I have never needed to use it. I have learned a lot about allergies over the years to better cope with my son’s situation. One resource which I have found excellent and which I would recommend to anyone who wishes to learn more is the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network’s web site www.foodallergy.org.