

Borrowed Time — The Matchmaker Chronicles Volume 2

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Rated PG-13

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Summary: This story starts approximately two years after the events in ‘The Family Hour.’ Lois and Clark are still under the impression that they will be unable to have children. We move forward to the time when Lois and Clark have been married for approximately thirty years. They are visited by H.G. Wells, who is trying to iron out some discrepancies in the historical record of the Kent family of the L&C canon Universe. We continue to move through their lives to the point of Lois’ death from old age. We explore the possibility of Clark being reunited with his soul mate again.

Disclaimers: The characters in this story are property of DC, December 3rd productions and Warner Bros. No copyright infringement is intended. I have just borrowed the characters for a short time. New characters that have been added are mine.

Comment:

Please see author’s notes at end for explanations of Sideral time, TTEMPO (the Time Travel Enforcement and Multiverse Protection Organization), TaDT, Multiverse identification and the Kryptonian naming convention. These are all integral to this story and future stories and will probably be included, in some form, in each.

Preface:

One critical point: In this entire series I will be dealing with time travel and multi-universe travel. It is therefore critical that you have the concept of alternate universes and be aware of which one the story is currently in at all times. I try to make sure you know where you are by using the “Universal Locator Designation”. Some of the differences in ULDs will be very slight, changing only at the Tau value. Admittedly this is simply a theory of mine that I am discussing with some physicists so please bear with me on this. If you don’t keep this in mind you will easily become confused as to what is happening and think I am simply changing the story already presented in an earlier volume when it is actually another universe. As far as times, I will attempt to insure that time markers are always present.

The events in this story take place starting approximately two years after “The Family Hour”.

** denotes emphasis

<> denotes thoughts

(#) footnotes

/ denotes telepathic communication/

For reference purposes the following will hold true throughout.

Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 - Canon Lois and Clark universe also called — Prime

Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 036 — Canon Alt Clark universe also called — Alt 1

Also, please read the end notes.

As always comments are welcome. (ken.janney@kjanney.com)

The Matchmaker Chronicles Volume 2 — Borrowed Time

What is past is ...

Prologue”

%%%%%%%%%

Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120

Local designation — Prime

%%%%%%%%%

Flashback

Dr. Klein’s lab during “Brutal Youth”

Dr. Klein was looking through a microscope at a tissue sample “This is incredible. This tissue sample ... it’s ... aging, it’s breaking down.”

Lois, who was standing on the other side of the lab bench, gave a startled exclamation, “What?”

Dr. Klein looked up from the microscope and said, “Whatever it was that sped up this boy’s aging process ... it, it ... it’s still working.”

As he looked back through the eyepieces Lois asked, “Do you have any idea what that could be?”

Looking up at Lois, Dr. Klein had a look of mystification on his face as he shook his finger at her to make his point and said, “This is what is strange. There doesn’t seem to have been any foreign agent introduced.” He started shaking his head and used his hands to gesture as if grabbing something and pulling it. “It’s as if his youth has been sucked out by some powerful force.”

Lois asked, “What could do that?”

A look of dawning comprehension came over his face. He stuck a finger up again to make a point as he got up and said, “Something noxious maybe. Intense radiation, cell disruptor.” He turned away and headed for another bench which held a Liquid Chromatograph. He picked up a flask which had been sitting on the bench. He carried it over to the microscope and syringed out an aliquot of the liquid which he added to the slide as he continued to speak. “Whatever it was caused a chain reaction at the molecular level which brought about accelerated decrepitude.” Satisfied with what he had observed he looked up at Lois again and started using hand gestures to emphasize his points. “Think of your victim’s aging process as ... oh ... the opposite of Superman’s for instance.” Again he rose from his stool and moved to another bench.

Lois moved around the bench to get closer to Dr. Klein as he moved around the lab and walked over to a bench with a spectrophotometer. Stunned by what he had been saying, all she could formulate to ask was, “What?”

Dr. Klein turned to look at Lois “You know how Superman’s

molecular structure is such that his aging process actually stabilizes and slows.....”

Interrupting him and starting to get a little frantic, Lois said, “n n n Hold on, hold on.” She continued to move closer to him until she was right in his face as she finished, “What do you mean stabilizes and slows?”

He brought his hands up and made a downward motion as he said, “What I mean is it stabilizes ... and” He then made a slow sideways motion with his hands as he said, “... sloooowwsss.”

Dr. Klein moved back around Lois to return to the microscope. It took Lois a second to come out of her shock and turn to look where he now was before she said, “So, are you saying that Superman won’t age?”

As he was settling himself back on his stool he turned to answer her, “No. No, no, of course he will. He’s not immortal.”

“So, he will age, just not like you and me?”

Dr. Klein turned back to his microscope “Well, it’s all speculation, you understand. But, I think it’s safe to say that long after you and I are dead and gone, Superman will still be in his prime. Fighting for Truth, Justice and ...”

Lois with a look of stunned disbelief on her face said, “The American way.”

Flashback

Newsroom — Daily Planet during “Family Hour”

With a dejected look on his face Clark walked up to Lois and asked, “Can we ... talk ... privately?” They moved to the conference room. Lois knew that Clark didn’t usually act this way and was somewhat apprehensive. It showed on her face and in her demeanor as they moved into the conference room. As Clark closed the door behind them she turned to face him. Clark had a hard time even looking in her direction as he started, “I ... just ... uh ... came back from STAR Labs.”

“Really. Well ... You coulda just called me.” This had the possibility of being good news and Lois started to lose some of her apprehension and her voice became somewhat more animated as she said, “What did Dr. Klein say?”

Clark was silent.

His silence hit her and she knew that this wouldn’t be good. The realization that this could be really bad news settled in and she turned away and sat on the edge of the conference room table as she said, “Oh, you ... you couldn’t just call me. Because ... the news ... the news isn’t ... good.”

Clark walked slowly over until he was standing right in front of her and reached out with his right hand and rested it on her left arm to comfort her as he said, “Dr Klein ran every possible test that he could. The poor guy could barely even face me.” As he was speaking Lois’ head went forward and her right hand came up covering her eyes and face as she started breaking down.

Clark had placed his hand on her arm and started stroking it in an attempt to comfort her before continuing. “But he told me that Superman’s biology and an Earth woman’s are incompatible for reproduction.”

Lois began to weep.

Seeing her reaction he felt the need to comfort her even more strongly. He moved in closer and moved his right hand around to her back and his left hand on her right arm, he pulled her in closer and she leaned her head into his chest. He said, “I told myself I’d never make you cry. I’m sorry.”

Lois was sniffing as she pulled back, looked up at him and said, “I feel so confused.” She started shaking her head from side to side as she physically displayed what she was saying, “I feel like I ... I feel like I’ve lost something I never really had.”

Clark leaned down so that he could look her in the eye as he said, “We haven’t lost anything, honey.”

You could hear the raw emotion and the tears in her voice as

she continued, “You can’t try to make me feel better. I mean, that’s what you always do with everything and it’s sweet, but I know how much you want to have kids.”

Clark leaned in further to get her attention as he said, “Lois, I want you to hear me. Okay? Really ... hear me. Every time, **every time** we make love ... we make **love**.” Lois let out a sigh. “That’s the strongest life force there is. Whether or not that results in another little person,” Lois shook her head and whimpered. Clark continued, “For me, it **is** creation.” Clark moved in so that her forehead was in his chest again and he put his chin on the top of her head and then kissed the top of her head.

Lois cried as she said, “Oh, Clark.”

Clark’s hand was on the back of her head gently pulling her into his chest as he said, “You fill me with life.” He kissed the top of her head again and her arms came up and circled his neck as he pulled her into a firm embrace.

That night - 348 Hyperion Ave

Lois came down the stairs in a robe. Clark was in his robe sitting in a chair near the bassinet with a glass of milk. Lois leaned back against the table across from him.

“You caught me. I came down for a glass of milk and I just sort of noticed this,” he indicated the bassinet, “sitting here.”

Lois nodded, “I know. Clark ... You know how I get when I want to fix something?”

Clark looked up at her and said, “Well ... First you eat a lot of chocolate while you figure out your next move.”

Lois reached into the pocket of her robe and pulled out a candy bar wrapper. She held it up and said, “Check.”

Clark chuckled and said, “Then you get that real determined look on your face, sort of like you’ve got right now and then the seas ... part.”

Lois moved over and sat on Clark’s knee and began explaining her thoughts, “Listen, we have come through almost every conceivable disaster, usually by inconceivable means and if conceiving is what we want, I think we are going to have to be fearless once again. There’s a man ... a medical doctor... who’s practiced his craft over the years on the cutting edge of science. He’s explored some fairly esoteric areas. In **fact**, he treated you once.”

You could hear the confusion in Clark’s voice as he said, “He did?”

In a matter of fact manner, Lois replied, “Saved your life.”

Mystified he said, “Saved my ...”, Then with dawning comprehension he continued, “Wait a minute ... wait ... Your father?”

Nodding her head, Lois replied, “I know. A scam artist, a dreamer.”

Clark had a worried expression on his face as he said, “There are things that he would have to know.”

Nodding her agreement, but resigning herself to the inevitable, Lois said, “You’re right. We’d have to tell him. We’d have to tell him everything.”

“Wheush.”

The next morning 348 Hyperion Ave.

As Lois was going to answer the door she said over her shoulder to the Kents, “I think Clark’s secret is safe. My dad will be the only other person who knows.”

She opened the door and was startled to see just who was standing there. She was expecting her father. He was there, but so was, “Mother!” Sam was standing behind her mother with a somewhat chagrined expression on his face.

Ellen replied to this unexpected greeting with, “I wish you

wouldn't sound so shocked when you say that. I'm such a slug in the morning but today I woke up just glad to be alive. Maybe it's because I had such a good time last night."

Lois said, "Daddy, how nice."

Clark tried to salvage the situation by ad libbing, "Well, ah, Sam, do you want to maybe go into the kitchen so that we can ask you about , uh, that, that uh stuff for the story?"

Sam replied, "Yeah, uh."

Ellen tried to follow Lois, Clark and Sam when they were leaving the room saying, "I would love to hear about it."

Jonathan and Martha were both speaking to Ellen, saying that they wanted to spend the time with her and interposed themselves between her and the others.

Jonathan then put an arm around Ellen's waist and diverted her into the living room as he said, "It's just a lot of dry technical stuff. It really isn't very interesting at all."

In the kitchen now, Lois was obviously very nervous. She sloshed milk into Sam's coffee cup and onto the floor and then literally threw several sugar cubes in.

"Sorry about your mother, honey, but she nabbed me just as I was leaving and since I **am** trying to rebuild our relationship, ditchin' her seemed to be a bad idea..." Sam had noticed Lois' nervous behavior and asked, "Are you all right?"

Clark saw that Lois wasn't handling this very well and spoke up. "Sam, you've done medical research in a lot of different fields, right?"

"Yeah."

Lois said, "How about the field of infertility?"

"Infertility! Wuah." He smiled "You two are tryin' to ... really, why that's wonderful."

Lois said, "Well, ah, Yeah, uh, but see the thing is..."

Sam broke in, "If you guys are having trouble getting pregnant there are a lot of experts more qualified than me."

Clark replied with a nervous chuckle, "Not necessarily. You see, we've got a, an added challenge."

Lois marshaled her nerve and continued, "Daddy, telling you this next thing, is well, it's one of the toughest decisions we've ever had to make.

"This is something that has to be kept secret, Sam." Clark warned.

Lois added, "Unfortunately, even from mother. It's a dangerous secret and only those that **have** to know have to know."

Sam replied with an air of confidence, "Ah, secret from mother, that's easy."

Lois looked out the living room door to check where her mother was and then turned to Clark and said, "Uh, honey."

Clark nervously touched his tie. "Uh..."

Clark stepped out of the room through a swinging door and immediately returned in the Superman suit.

Sam exclaimed, "Oh, gees."

Superman exited and immediately returned as Clark holding his glasses in his hand.

Sam was shocked and one could hear it in his voice as he said, "What you just did there, that, that, that's humanly impossible!"

Clark replied, "Exactly."

Later that night. — Sam's lab

Over the course of the day Clark had provided Dr. Klein's Superman data to Sam for review.

Sam sat in front of a computer clicking away at the keys. His partner Misha was at a work bench behind him having hysterics because of 'Fat Head's' threat.

"God. In a few hours he's going to be here. Sam, Sam."

"Not now Misha. I'm up to my knees in shinola here."

"This morning I have to deliver a machine that will super-enhance the brain's energy."

"Uh, I didn't know such a thing existed."

Misha gave a nervous laugh and said, "It doesn't."

Sam was squinting at the screen "Aww, these figures **can't** be right!"

"You've got to help me, Sam." There was a brief pause and then Misha asked, "What the hell are you working on over there?"

Dismissively, Sam replied, "Ah, it's just a little project of mine, nothing important."

Chapter 1 — A Vacation?

Two years after The Family Hour

Tuesday, September 7, 1999 Sidereal

Lois and Clark had been involved in an investigation into corruption in the office of their member of the U. S. House of Representatives, Rep. Hotchkiss (D), District 23, New Troy. It had involved kickbacks for pork barrel projects inserted into bills as earmarks coming through his office. After the story broke, the Representative resigned from office in disgrace. The story was being considered for a Kerth award. Lois and Clark just had to wait for the committee's decision.

The morning after the story was printed when they exited the elevator they were greeted with a banner stretched across the room "Congratulations — Lois and Clark", applause from all of the staff, party poppers going off and streamers flying. Each was handed a glass of champagne as Perry took the floor.

"Once again the team of Lane and Kent has scored **the** big story of the month, if not the year. So, what do the two of you have to say for yourselves?"

"Chief, it was really nothing." said Lois "We just happened to be in the right place at the right time to get the story."

"Aw, come on. You know that's not true. That's like Elvis claimin' that 'Heartbreak Hotel' was a fluke."

"All right, so we caught some lucky breaks." Clark said

"I wish **all** of my reporters caught "lucky breaks" like that more often. Well done, you two. What do you have in the pipeline for the future?"

"Right now we have some follow-up to do on the story. Then we would like to take a break. Can we talk to you in your office, Chief?"

"Sure, come on in."

The three of them moved to Perry's office. Lois and Clark sat down on the couch.

Clark started in a matter-of-fact tone, "Chief, we've been pulling some long hours on this investigation."

Lois added in a spirit of one-upmanship, "Actually, we've been pulling some long hours for a while."

Clark offered in a weary tone, "Once we finish with the follow-up on this story, we'd like to take an honest-to-goodness vacation."

Lois finished almost beseechingly, "Could you do without us for a couple of weeks?"

"Well, now, I don't know. I might have to start runnin' dog show reviews on my front page if I don't have my top reporting team working. Na, I'm just funnin'. You kids deserve some time to yourselves. As soon as you're finished with the follow-ups you're plannin' I won't expect to see your faces around here for two weeks. Go and have some fun."

"Thanks, Chief. We'll probably be able to complete the follow-ups within the next couple of days. What do you think Lois, by Friday?"

"Friday sounds about right."

"Good, Friday it will be. If you are done a little bit earlier than that, fine. I still won't expect to see you until two weeks

from next Monday.”

They said in unison - “Thanks, Chief!”

Thursday September 9, 1999 Sidereal 9:30 AM

They actually completed the follow-up and LANed the article to Perry Thursday morning and left early. By 10:15 they were home.

Lois wearily dropped her briefcase and bag and thrust both her arms up in the air and spun around a couple of times while saying, “We now have two **glorious** weeks ahead of us. What shall we do first?”

Clark watched her cavort about and then looked at her with a wicked little gleam in his eyes and a smile on his lips. “I can think of one thing ... right ... off ... the ... bat.”

Lois looked back at him and said, “Reallllly!?!? And what would that be, pray tell?” All the time she had an equally wicked grin on her lips and an arched eyebrow.

With an attempt at a straight face, which failed, Clark said “Well, we **could** play Scrabble.”

“Reallllly? Actually, I had something else in mind.” She moved over to him and put her arms around his neck and her fingers in his hair.

“Well, now that you mention it,” ... kiss ... “so” ... kiss ... “did” ... kiss ... “I.” Then he picked her up and carried her upstairs to the bedroom at superspeed.

Before Lois knew what was happening she found herself naked and under the covers with her equally naked husband beside her. She let out a contented sigh as she turned to that side and laid her head on his chest. She started drawing random patterns on his abdomen with her finger and delivered little butterfly kisses to his chest.

“Clark, I love you sooo much, I can hardly stand it.”

Clark kissed the top of her head and said, “I love you too, honey. I never knew that I could love someone as much as I love you. You complete me the way the final piece completes a puzzle. I don’t know what I would ever do without you.” He pulled her up and claimed her lips and after a time they separated and caught their breath.

“Personally, I don’t want you to ever have to find out. Clark ... make love to me.”

“Your wish is my command.” He pulled her in for another kiss and things progressed naturally from there.

Their lovemaking was slow and sweet and completely fulfilling to both of them. Afterward they drifted off to sleep in each other’s arms.

At noon, when they awakened from their nap, arms and legs still entwined, they discussed what they wanted to do on their vacation.

Clark asked, “Well, we’ve already done the first thing on our agenda for this vacation, so what do you want to do second?”

Lois, with a wicked little grin said, “More of the first thing.”

Clark with a chuckle replied, “Later, we will have plenty of time for that first thing. In fact, it will probably be third, fifth, seventh ... unless we decide to do some other things in between.”

“I like the way you think. It’s been a few weeks since we’ve seen your folks. Maybe we should spend a few days with them.”

“Okay, that sounds good. I know how much you like Mom’s cooking and I can see if Dad needs any help with major repairs around the farm. Since we are headed west maybe we should plan on using our island get-away for our vacation.”

“Oooohhhh Yyyeeessss, lots of sun, balmy weather and little need of clothes. I love it. Yes, let’s do that.”

“Okay. That’s the final destination. How about we spend a day or so visiting Lucy in California? You haven’t seen her in a while.”

“I’d love to and I’m sure she would like to see us. Now, for

packing, I won’t need much for the island, but, are we going to go anywhere else?”

“Well, we could go out to dinner a few times, maybe to Waikiki or Honolulu. While we are with Luce we could see some of the sights in San Diego. She is living in Torrey Pines now. I understand that there is a rather nice golf club there. You could brush up on your game.”

“Oh Clark, this is going to be a vacation for the books. We are already off to a good start with the first thing on the list. When do we get to number three?”

Laughing Clark replied, “I think we need to pack and fly to Smallville. After dinner, if you’re a good girl, it may be time for number three, but number two is getting to Smallville.”

Lois bounced out of bed and started rushing around the room getting out bags and clothes, not bothering to put anything on. Clark simply lay there watching his naked wife as she moved around the room, noting the bounce of her breasts and the sway of her hips. He said, “Saucy wench, you know, if you keep that up, number three and number two may have to switch places.”

With an exaggerated sway to her hips putting the point to his comment, she sashayed over to the side of the bed and leaning in, claimed his lips in a kiss. She giggled as he pulled her down and rolled them over so that he was on top and deepened the kiss.

When they came up for air Lois asked, “What about Smallville?”

“It’ll still be there when we’re done here. We’ll just get there a little later.” With a squeal of delight she opened herself to him. When they finished they simply lay in each other’s arms for a while. Finally Clark said, “Okay, now for the new number three. While you start to pack I’ll call the folks and let them know we’re coming.”

“The packing shouldn’t take much time since I won’t need much. A couple of dresses for when we go out, maybe a swim suit - which shouldn’t get much use at all - and some casual clothes for Smallville and San Diego. Shouldn’t take more than a half an hour or so.”

Clark had taken Lois to this deserted tropical island previously on another vacation. Between then and now, Clark had built a more substantial cabin with kitchen and bath facilities with the idea of having it as a getaway location for just such a time as this. It didn’t have power so there was no air conditioning but in that climate none was really needed. There also was no TV or radio to alert Clark to any emergencies. Clark had notified the authorities that he would be leaving soon on a mission, hinting that it could be related to New Krypton and that he would be unavailable for a couple of weeks.

Chapter 2 — Murphy’s Law

Lois and Clark packed a couple of bags each and Clark ferried them to the Kent farm and then came back for Lois. When they landed Jonathan and Martha were both on the front porch waiting for them, having heard Clark when he was dropping off the luggage.

“Clark, Lois, it’s good to see you. How long can you stay?”

“Well, Martha, we were planning at least a couple of days,”

Lois said. “This is the first stop on a much needed two week vacation. It’s our first chance to get away for a while. Is there some particular reason you’re asking?”

“Well ... actually ... there is.”

“What is it, Martha? A problem with the farm? Your health?”

With a laugh Martha said, “Oh, no no no. Nothing like that. This weekend is the Corn Festival! I guess you kids just forgot. Also, there have been some strange things happening around Smallville in the last few weeks and we don’t know what to make of it.”

Like a bloodhound on the scent of its quarry, Lois was immediately on the alert. “What kinds of things?”

“Why don’t you kids get settled, then we can talk.”

Clark said, “Okay.” He picked up their bags and took them upstairs to their bedroom at superspeed, and was waiting for them to reconvene in the living room before Lois was even inside the door.

Jonathan sat in his favorite easy chair and Martha sat on the couch next to Lois who had settled in next to Clark. After they got settled Martha said, “Jonathan, why don’t you tell the kids what you found out.”

Jonathan turned to Clark and asked, “Clark, do you remember the old Wilson farm, over past Wayne Irig’s place?”

“Sure Dad, it’s been vacant for some time, ever since I was a teen.”

“Well, it was recently rented out and the new tenants moved in a couple of weeks ago. That, in itself, isn’t unusual. They have been purchasing large quantities of ammonia fertilizers. By itself that isn’t unusual either, but, what is unusual is the fact that they don’t have any acreage under tillage and they don’t even have any large farming equipment. Why would they need the fertilizer when they don’t have any crops in?”

As Jonathan had been speaking Lois had slowly been inching forward on the couch. When Jonathan finished she turned to face Clark and they both said at the same time, “Timothy McVeigh!”

Clark said, “Murrah Federal Building,”

Lois said, “Oklahoma City,”

They both finished with, “Fertilizer bomb!”

Almost frantic in her enthusiasm Lois almost shouted, “Clark, we **need** to investigate this!”

Clark looked at the smart off-white pantsuit that his wife was wearing and said, “We can start tonight. Did you pack any dark clothes? I need to go back for some for myself.”

“No, I didn’t! I wasn’t planning on doing any prowling around on our vacation.” She was almost chortling as she finished up with, “**This** is gonna be **fun!**”

“Dad, do you have any idea as to their ethnic background?”

Jonathan replied, “No, I haven’t seen any of them. I did hear that it was a group of guys, no women.”

Clark looked at Lois, “If they **are** up to something, they will probably have guards, possibly even armed. We’re gonna have to be careful.”

Lois suggested, “Maybe, if one of us caused a diversion, the other could get in and snoop around some.”

Clark offered an alternative, “How about this? We both cause a diversion that will draw them out, and then while they are out we both go in. I can get us in quickly as soon as they leave and if I sense them returning I can get us out, unseen. Besides, I would rather have you with me.”

Lois immediately started to bridle and thought <Doesn’t he think I can take care of myself?>.

Clark continued, “Two snooping goes quicker than one.” At which point he saw Lois relax again. Clark thought <Dodged that bullet ... just barely.>

After doing some planning, Clark left for Metropolis to get their investigation clothes and to do a quick Superman patrol. He was going to make sure that he would be seen while doing so before returning to Smallville. This would probably be his last patrol for the two weeks they would be away. Superman just needed to make his presence known with Lois and Clark being away, so hopefully it would be an uneventful trip.

As he was approaching Metropolis however, he could see a pall of smoke emanating from the Suicide Slum area. He diverted his course in order to investigate. What he found was an apartment building which was nearly fully engulfed in flames. He landed near the fire chief and said, “Chief, is there anything I can do?”

At the sound of his voice the Chief turned around and saw Superman standing next to him. The Chief was surprised because

the first responders had gotten notice that Superman wouldn’t be available. Nonetheless, he was very happy to see Superman there and certainly wouldn’t turn down his help. The Chief replied, “Superman, I’m glad to see you. We were told that you weren’t going to be around.”

Superman replied, “I was preparing to leave but seeing what was happening I decided a few more minutes wouldn’t make that much difference.”

The Chief replied, “In any event I’m glad you’re here. Here’s the situation, I think that all of the tenants have been evacuated and we seem to be getting it under control but please stand by in case something happens.”

As the chief was telling him this, Superman heard himself being called by a nearly hysterical woman in the crowd. He turned and looked at her.

Seeing him looking at her she shouted, “Superman, Superman, my daughter, I can’t find her! I think she’s still in the building!” Clark did a quick scan of the building and he saw not only the child but two of the firefighters who had gotten trapped by the flames. One of the firefighters was down and his partner was trying to drag him out.

Clark did a quick triage. The child had to be first. She was unprotected and didn’t have a source of breathable air. “Excuse me Chief, this is a job for Superman.”

The first thing that Superman did was grab a discarded fireman’s coat. As soon as he had that he took off and headed for the fifth floor center apartment. He went in through the window without bothering to open it first and found the child, a girl about six years of age, unconscious on the floor in a closet. He wrapped her in the fire coat to protect her from the flames which filled the room that he would have to take her through. He was going to depend on the coat, his speed and his aura to protect her from the flames rather than trying to blow out the flames since that would take more time and time was of the essence. Once she was covered he picked her up and flew her out through the window he had used to force his entry. He took her directly to an ambulance and very gently placed her on a stretcher. He covered her mouth with his and pinched her nose closed and inhaled. When he got almost to the point of collapsing her lungs he pulled back and allowed her to take a gasping breath and immediately placed an oxygen mask over her face. By doing this he had removed almost all of the particulate matter from the smoke she had inhaled and minimized the impact of the smoke inhalation.

Since he was at the ambulance he grabbed an extrication kit. Early on in his career as Superman, Clark had realized that there would be times that he would be required to remove victims from dangerous environments and that sometimes they would already be injured. He had taken a course in emergency medicine so that he would be able to act in these circumstances without aggravating the already existing injuries.

He re-entered the building through the same window. He used this entry to avoid giving the fire an additional source of air from yet another opening. It was bad enough that he couldn’t have avoided breaking that window as it was. He went through the apartment door and closed it after himself. Then he proceeded to the third floor, where he had seen the firefighters trapped. The one was still unconscious, of course. It had only been a minute or so since Superman had first spotted them. The firefighter’s partner was still trying to drag him out of the building.

They were both wearing SCBA units and full Nomex™ bunker gear. Their walkie-talkies were evidently both out of commission and as a result the chief was unaware of their distress. When the firefighter saw Superman arrive she realized that she could stop pulling and allowed her partner to settle to the floor gently. Superman then quickly x-rayed the downed man and asked, “How was your partner injured?”

“This floor was almost fully involved,” she told him. “A

section of the ceiling was weakened by the flames and it gave way, allowing a piece of furniture from the floor above to fall through. Charlie was not directly underneath, but he was clipped by it as it fell.” While she told him the story he prepared the materials in the extrication kit.

Fortunately, the injured fireman was wearing a Metro style helmet rather than the traditional leather or metal Philadelphia helmet (1). Its construction being that of high density polymers, its advanced suspension system had absorbed the impact better than an old style helmet would have. Based upon the mechanism of injury there was a strong possibility of a neck injury so the first thing Superman did was apply a rigid cervical collar. He did this, even though his x-ray vision had not detected a fracture, to be on the ‘I’d rather be safe than sorry’ side.

With his x-ray vision he had determined that the downed man had a broken right collarbone. He took out a cravat and tied it into a loop which he then applied to the left arm in the manner of sliding a ring on a finger, sliding it all the way to the shoulder. He took another cravat and wrapped it around the right shoulder once so that both loose ends were at the back. He then passed the ends under the SCBA and threaded one end through the loop on the left shoulder and tied it off. Pulling it tight put tension on both shoulders, pulling them back. This is commonly called a ‘Cuban Hitch’.

Now that the firefighter’s injuries were stabilized, they were ready to move. Superman turned to the uninjured firefighter, handed her the extrication kit and said, “Okay, let’s go. I’ll lead the way but stay close to me.”

She replied, “You don’t need to tell me twice, I’m going to stick to you like glue.” She grabbed hold of his cape.

“Here we go.” Superman used his x-ray vision again. This time he checked the structural integrity of the stairs to make sure they would hold up under their weight. Once assured of this, Superman picked up the downed fireman and carried him. He also assisted the injured man’s partner down the stairs, using his super cold breath to extinguish the flames in the area that they had to pass through as they moved.

Once outside the uninjured firefighter stayed with Superman as he took her partner over to another ambulance. In fire school one of the first things ingrained into firefighters during their training is that you **never** leave your partner. As soon as they were out of the building she had released her hold on Superman’s cape, removed her helmet and ripped off her mask. She followed as Superman carried her partner to the ambulance and placed him on a stretcher after removing his breathing apparatus. The firefighter’s partner knelt next to the stretcher and held the unconscious man’s hand. The Senior Medic immediately took charge and saw the cervical collar and the Cuban Hitch. Addressing Superman, the medic asked, “Okay, Superman, what do we have?”

Superman explained, “I put the collar on as a precaution. He was hit by a piece of furniture that fell from the floor above. I didn’t detect any cervical injury, but I might have missed something and by the mechanism of injury a cervical injury was likely. I x-rayed the shoulder area and found the right clavicle was fractured so I applied a Cuban Hitch to stabilize the collar bone.”

The lead medic replied, “Thanks, Superman, we’ll take it from here.” He turned to the female firefighter and asked, “What’s your partner’s name?” as he followed standard protocol, prepping the patient and starting an IV.

Still holding her partner’s hand, she replied, “His name’s Dilks, Charlie Dilks with Station 4.”

The medic had noted the hand holding and asked, “What’s your name?”

Somewhat distractedly she replied, “Sharon, Sharon Wils ... Uh, Dilks, Sharon **Dilks**. We were married a week ago. We just

got back from our honeymoon.”

The lead medic said, “You don’t have anything to worry about. Superman did everything by the book. I couldn’t have done any better myself; in fact I may not have handled it as well. Your partner’s gonna be just fine.”

She gave the medic a sad smile.

As they were preparing to load him aboard to transport him to MetGen, the medic asked, “Do you want to go with him?”

Sharon looked back at the structure and shook her head as she said, “No, I’m not the one hurt. Once we’re done here, I’ll come to the hospital to see him.”

She turned to Superman and said, “Thanks, Superman. You don’t know what this means to me. I don’t know what I would have done if I had lost him, and if you hadn’t been there, I might have.”

Superman gave her a smile and said, “I’m just glad that I was here to help. I hope he recovers quickly.”

Her mask dangled from her hand she turned back to the scene of the action. With renewed vigor, knowing that her new husband was not seriously injured and in good hands, she returned to her truck.

The lead medic watched her go. As the injured man was being loaded aboard the medic turned to Superman and asked, “You want to check on your other rescue? She’s regained consciousness.”

Superman nodded his thanks and went over to the other ambulance. The mother of the little girl had seen her rescued and was at the ambulance when he got there.

The little girl was awake and alert and as he approached her eyes, metaphorically, got as big as saucers. Superman was **impressive!**

Clark knelt next to the stretcher and took her hand in one of his and with the other he smoothed the hair from her forehead. He leaned in and gave her a kiss on the forehead before asking, “How are you feeling, little one?”

Her only response was, “Wow.” Her mother had told her that Superman had been the one that had rescued her. She felt like she was in love. Her eyes darted to her mother as she said, “Mommy, he kissed me!”

Clark chuckled and said, “I guess you’re feeling okay.”

The mother grabbed his hand and said, “I really don’t know how to thank you. You saved my little girl.”

Clark said, “You really don’t need to thank me. Just seeing her alive and well is thanks enough.” Turning back to the little girl he said, “You be good for your Mommy, okay?”

She nodded to let him know that she would.

The medics then loaded the little girl and her mother into the back of the ambulance and headed off to MetGen.

Seeing that the fire was basically under control, Clark went over once more and reported to the chief, filling him in on his firefighters and the injuries received by the one. The chief thanked him, “Superman, sometimes I don’t know how we got along without you. Because of you there are sure a lot of people walking around alive and well that wouldn’t have been. I want to thank you on the behalf of the department and the city for your efforts in general and particularly for your efforts for the little girl and my injured man.” The Chief looked aside for a moment, and then stated, “We had gotten word you would be gone for several weeks. Let me just say I’m glad you hadn’t left yet.”

Smiling, Superman shrugged, “You know the saying, ‘Stuff happens’. Murphy’s Law even affects me. My departure was slightly delayed and that enabled me to be here to assist.”

“Well, we were certainly lucky today. Thanks for your help.” The Chief, who had interacted with Superman on a number of occasions, extended his hand.

Superman shook it gladly. “I’ll always do whatever I can to help,” He turned to lift off.

As Superman had been speaking, the Chief got a call over his radio with a report of an accident on the interstate. As Superman was turning away he shouted, “Superman! A call just came in. There’s a PI 10-10, multiple vehicles, with injuries on the interstate. Can you give them a hand?”

Superman replied, “It sure looks like Murphy is working overtime today. Since everything is under control here, I’ll go there immediately.” <This is really delaying me but in the suit I don’t have my cell phone to call Lois. Oh, well. I’m sure she’ll understand.>

Chapter 3 — The Investigation
Meanwhile, back in Smallville

When the expected time of Clark’s return had passed, Lois wasn’t that concerned initially, but, when he was more than an hour overdue she began to get worried. She had started fidgeting and finally asked, “Martha, can we turn on the TV and check LNN? Clark’s late and it may be because he got involved in something. I hope he’s okay.”

Martha tried to reassure her by saying, “Honey, I’m sure he’s okay. There isn’t much that can harm him.”

Lois with more than a little fear in her voice said, “I know but what if somebody ambushed him with Kryptonite or maybe they made another weapon like the Quantum Disruptor? He could need me and here I am in Kansas. I should be there with him. He might need me to get rid of the Kryptonite. I never should have let him go alone. Oh, Martha, what if he’s dying and I’m not there with him? I could never live with myself.”

Martha picked up the remote, turned on the set and tuned in to LNN and sure enough, there was Superman dealing with a multi-car pileup on the interstate. There were a number of bodies laid out on the side of the road and some individuals walking around, apparently in shock.

Relieved that it wasn’t anything worse Lois let out a relieved sigh and thought <Clark’s going to need to decompress after this one. I hope there aren’t any children that have died. Those are the worst.>

Finally, at about 7:30 that evening, Clark made it back to Smallville. He immediately took a shower and when he came out Lois was waiting for him. When he came out of the shower he had a towel wrapped around his waist and was using another to dry his hair.

Lois had heard him when he got back and had gone up to the bedroom. As she entered she could hear the shower running. She saw the bag with their ‘snooping clothes’ and decided to change. She had gotten as far as removing her pantsuit when she heard the water go off. Wanting to be there for him when he came out she sat on the edge of the bed, wearing just her lacy bra and bikini panties.

As soon as Clark exited the bathroom he spotted Lois sitting on the edge of the bed, waiting for him. He stopped drying his hair and just stood there looking at her. The look he saw on her face was priceless. She was just staring at him. Like watching the red colored alcohol rise up the column in a thermometer when it is heated, he could see the blush rise in her skin starting at her breasts and moving up her chest to her shoulders and then to her neck, finally coloring her cheeks. He wondered just what was going through her mind.

With some fear and trepidation as to how the deaths would be affecting him, Lois waited on the edge of the bed for him to come out of the bathroom from his shower. When she saw him in that towel, even though in their three years of married life she had seen him in much less any number of times, she was transported back in her memory to that day six years prior.

When she had showed up at that fleabag hotel where her new rookie partner was staying and when he had answered the door

all he had been wearing had been a towel. She had been shaken to her core at the sight of the well muscled and well defined chest and six pack abs. She could only imagine what lay behind the towel and she had a good imagination. At the time she thought, <Oh ... My ... God! Wow! Who woulda thought?> She hadn’t wanted to admit just how he had affected her but it had come out inadvertently when she had said, “I said nine, I thought you’d be naked.” <OhMyGod! What did I just say?!?!> She cleared her throat a couple of times. “Umm, mm,” and then tried to cover her mistake by trying, unsuccessfully to substitute, “ready.”

Remembering that and remembering what she had actually been thinking caused a flush to make its way into her cheeks. It started by her nipples hardening and then her breasts engorging slightly with the flush, not from embarrassment, but from something more ... primal ... more visceral ... pure instinctual sexual desire, the mating instinct. This was her mate and what she wanted right then was nothing less than to rip that towel off of him and make love to him immediately. But then she thought, not about herself and her desires, but of his needs. She had seen what he had been through and she knew how much those types of rescues affected him. She had to be here for **him**. Her desires needed to become secondary. He **needed** her and she had to be there for him and not let him down.

He watched the many emotions that flitted across her features.

All he could do was stand there as she stared at him obviously reliving some memory with an expectant look on his face. He wasn’t sure why she was there but figured it had to do with why he had been delayed.

Clark cleared his throat and said somewhat defensively, “Honey, I can explain everything.”

Dragging her eyes up so that she was looking at his face and finally coming back to the present she broke her silence by clearing her throat and then asked calmly, “Want to talk about it?”

Relieved Clark shrugged and replied, “Oh, I guess you saw it on LNN. Yeah, it was rough, but it could have been worse. Five cars, three killed, five others injured. I had to fly three of the injured directly to MetGen. Boy, they were getting a workout today what with the fire and then the accident.”

Startled by this revelation she blurted out, “Fire, what fire?”

Clark explained, “As I was approaching Metropolis I saw that there was a fire in Suicide Slum. I rescued a little girl and a couple of firefighters. The little girl had some smoke inhalation and minor burns. One of the firefighters had a concussion and had a fractured collar bone.”

“Oh, wow.”

“The little girl was so cute. When I went to check on her afterward all she could say was,” he started chuckling, “‘Wow’. The same way you just did.”

Lois thought <He saved a child. That is a very good thing,> and then said, “I’m happy that she’s going to be okay. I bet her mom is very happy.”

Very brightly he replied, “Yes, she is. The last I saw of both of them they were in the back of the ambulance getting ready to go to MetGen and they were holding hands.”

“Now, the firefighter, that’s another interesting story. The injured fire fighter’s partner was very relieved too. She and the injured man had just gotten back from their honeymoon.”

With a relieved sigh Lois stood up and started to move in his direction as she responded, “That sounds very promising. Now, are we still going to do this tonight? Are you up for it?”

Clark knew what Lois was asking but that didn’t keep him from teasing her. He lowered his voice until it took on a sultry tone and reached down to release the towel around his waist as he replied, “I was up for it this afternoon. I think I could be up for it tonight as well.”

Lois couldn’t help glancing down as he removed the towel

and she could see just how up for it he was and she could feel the heat rise in her cheeks as they flushed once again.

He asked teasingly, “Besides, is it really time for number four already?”

That sultry tone, that view of her husband’s very physical response and the promise both held got her juices flowing, but she quickly snapped out of it and said, “You are just too much,” as she moved into his arms.

He came back with, “Oh? I thought that you always said that I was just enough.”

Her hands started a slow slide up his chest and around his strong neck and she couldn’t hide the desire in her voice as she replied, “You are that. In fact, I would say just about a perfect fit.” She sealed this particular statement with a kiss. When she pulled back a couple of minutes later she continued, “But, seriously, are we going to do this **investigation** tonight?”

Clark had slid his arms around her while they were kissing and was enjoying the feel of the skin of her back under his hands. He slowly stroked her back with one hand while the other drifted down and cupped her pert derriere, pulling her body even closer. Acting very disappointed and putting something of a pout in his voice he replied, “Oh that! Is that what you were talking about? Now I’m disappointed.”

Lois leaned in for yet another kiss and her body melded against his. With an arched eyebrow and keeping a sultry tone in her voice, Lois replied as she rubbed herself against him, “You won’t be later.” She pulled back slightly so that she could look into his eyes and get a little distance and perspective. “Now, let’s get serious. What about the investigation?”

With a soft chuckle Clark replied, “Well, I guess that in order to get to the fun we have to do the work first.” He turned and reached for his briefs. Lois was more than a little disappointed when he started getting dressed. He said, “I brought our snooping clothes. I also brought back your dress and boots for the Corn Festival. I keep jeans and flannel shirts here.” They both pulled out their dark clothes and finished dressing and then they moved downstairs and joined the elder Kents in the living room.

While Clark had been gone a front had moved in and the sky had clouded up. There was a possibility of rain or thunderstorms.

They were in the living room spending some time with Clark’s parents when a bolt of lightning split the sky followed closely by the thunder, but there was no rain yet. Jonathan, with his typical dry sense of humor, said, “Heat lightning, one of the joys of the Midwest.” Everybody got a chuckle out of his statement.

Clark said, “It sure looks like we’re going to have a little help from the weather. It’ll be extra dark and if there is a storm it could cover any noise that we might make.”

After a pleasant dinner with Martha and Jonathan, Lois and Clark waited for it to get darker. It wasn’t too long before the elder Kents went upstairs to bed. ‘Early to bed and early to rise’, the old farmer’s motto, had always held true for them. While they waited, Lois and Clark cuddled on the couch and watched some TV. They figured that they would give the storm a little longer to reach their target area.

At 10:30, as anticipated, it was as dark as the inside of a barrel because of the overcast. Clark flew them to the outskirts of the farm and they landed near a back gate.

Clark used his enhanced vision to check the place out while Lois used a pair of binoculars that she had borrowed from Martha. What they found was an armed camp. Obviously Clark was able to see more than Lois, and to him there appeared to be seven individuals in total. Two were sleeping and three were playing cards in the house while the other two were out on roving guard. All in all it had the appearance of a military operation.

“Lois, I think we’re going to have to re-evaluate how we do this. Here is the situation. There are seven total with two roving

guards. It will be nearly impossible to get them all out at the same time.”

“Yeah, I can see the guards. They look like they have had at least some military training but they are still sloppy. I bet that if we can distract the two guards you could slip in and out without alerting the others.”

They had been hearing thunder in the distance for some time and just then it started to rain and the rolling thunder was coming closer. There was a flash from a bolt of lightning followed almost immediately by the crash of the thunder. Lois commented, “Wow, that was close!”

Clark quipped, “I would say, less than a mile away.”

Lois asked, “How do you know that?”

Clark replied, “Count the seconds between the flash and the noise of the thunder. It’s called the flash-to-bang method. Divide the number of seconds by 5 and that’s how many miles away the strike was.”

Lois gave him **the** eye and said, “You and your trivia, less than a mile, huh? Well, that’s good. That will help. The two roving guards will probably look for some kind of shelter from the rain.”

“If there are any lightning strikes in the area, I should be able to start a fire with my heat vision as a distraction. That might draw them away, but we may not need to do that. I only see one building other than the house. If the guards seek shelter from the rain, as long as it isn’t in the outbuilding we should be okay. If they go back into the house why don’t we start with the outbuilding? That has to be where they are stockpiling the fertilizer. If they are planning to create a bomb there has to be evidence of it in there.”

“Sounds like a plan.”

Before it started raining too heavily Clark flew back to the Kent farm and got a couple of black lawn and leaf bags to use as ponchos while they waited for the guards to take shelter.

When they saw both of the guards go back into the house they made their move. Clark picked up Lois and flew them to the outbuilding. Clark kept an eye on the guards while they forced a window and gained entry.

What they found was enough fertilizer and other ingredients to make a truck bomb of sizeable proportions and there wasn’t any question as to the purpose since most of the other components weren’t used to fertilize the ground for crops.

They took pictures of what they found and exited the same way they had entered. Clark flew them straight back to the Kent farm.

Lois said, “Now that we have the evidence, where do we go from here?”

Clark replied, “I wish we had been able to determine their target. The nearest large city is Wichita. But, I don’t think there is a major governmental office building there like there was in Oklahoma City. I think that we need to first write up the story, and second call Sheriff Rachel Eck and ask that she contact the FBI and ATF. The authorities will act quicker if it comes from a local official.”

Immediately the duo set about writing the story outline, leaving out only the details about the group’s identity and target. When this was complete they headed off to bed. When they got into their room Lois turned and put her arms around his neck and pulled him down into a kiss. She asked, “Are you still up for it?” This led to the fulfillment of the thoughts and desires they had each been harboring since earlier in the evening.

On Friday, September 10 at 8:00 in the morning, Clark called Rachel and asked her to come out to the farm. She arrived at 8:45 after seeing that her deputies were started on their assignments. Since Lois had used a digital camera they had the images on the laptop to show to her. Clark explained, “Rachel, when we arrived,

my parents told us about what was happening over on the old Wilson farm. It seemed rather odd that they should be buying up large lots of fertilizer with no crops in, so we investigated. We went over to the farm last night and took some pictures of what we found.”

Lois brought the pictures up on the screen of the laptop. She explained, “What we found was a large amount of fertilizer and kerosene and other components easily identifiable as the components of a fertilizer bomb. There is even a large panel truck parked on the property. Fortunately that thunderstorm last night covered our activities. The camera flash went unnoticed because of all the lightning strikes.”

Clark then said, “Our concern is that they are preparing for an Oklahoma City style bombing. Do you think that we have enough evidence to justify a search warrant?”

“Well Clark, from what I see here, we just may. Can I get copies of these pictures to take to the judge?”

Lois picked up a sheaf of papers and proffered them to Rachel, “Already printed out. If you can get the warrant don’t you think that the FBI or ATF should be involved?”

Rachel accepted the pictures and said, “You’re probably right. I’ll go to the judge first and then call the FBI. Stick around. I’ll be in touch.”

Clark said, “We’ll be here waiting for your call.”

At 10:30 AM Rachel called. When Clark answered she said, “Okay Clark, the FBI is sending out a field agent from Wichita. He should be here by about noon. They seem to be interested, so if you could, I’d like you and Lois to be here when he arrives to explain what you found. I’ve gone to the judge and have the warrant so we’re over that hurdle. As soon as the FBI and ATF are on board we should be ready to move.”

Clark borrowed his parents’ truck and he and Lois drove into town joining Rachel downtown at 11:35. Half an hour later the FBI agent, Nick Charles, arrived.

Looking at their evidence, he asked rather acerbically he asked, “Okay, just how did you acquire these photos?”

Clark responded smoothly, “When we got into town yesterday my folks told us about what was happening. We went out last night and checked. We climbed in through a window and took pictures of what we found.”

Agent Charles asked, “Okay, Let’s see, so first off you trespassed and then you entered illegally and these both took place before you took the pictures, is that it?”

Clark replied somewhat sheepishly, “Yeah, I guess that about sums it up.”

Agent Charles started raising his voice because he could see that nothing that they had obtained was usable. “You realize of course that this evidence would not be admissible in a court of law as a result of the way it was obtained.”

With a slightly raised voice but in a sarcastic manner Lois stepped forward, invading his personal space. She had a hard time restraining herself and almost poked him in the chest as she replied to this salvo with, “We’re aware of that. We also know that it was enough for the judge to issue a **search warrant!**”

Agent Charles literally took a step back in response to her retort and regrouped. Trying to salvage some of his professional pride he responded somewhat sheepishly. “Okay, well, since we now **have** a warrant we can get the evidence we need legally.” He pulled out a cell phone and placed a call to his office and arranged for additional agents to join him in Smallville. He also called the ATF office and brought them up to speed on what was going down and requested support. They said that they would have a team there within three hours and would bring the FBI agents with them.

As soon as this had all been arranged Rachel called all of her deputies in on special assignment. At 3:00 a call came in on the police radio for Rachel. It was the leader of the ATF team calling

from the lead chopper. “Sheriff, we have three choppers. Where can we land so that we can pick up your people? It’ll need to be fairly level and a reasonably large space.”

Rachel keyed her mic and said, “This is Sheriff Eck, there’s a small airport, a crop duster field approximately two miles south of town. We can rendezvous at that field. It should meet your criteria.”

“Roger Sheriff. I have it spotted on the sectional. It’s listed as Shubert Field, correct?”

Keying the mic again she said, “That’s a 10-4. Shubert Field. We’ll be there waiting for you. Sheriff out.” She hung the mic back up on its clip and was all business now as she turned to the others in the room and said, “All right folks, Clark, Lois, why don’t you ride with me. Mr. Charles, you have your own car, correct?”

“Yes, I do, Sheriff. I’ll follow you.”

The Sheriff hadn’t been too impressed with agent Charles and said in an ‘almost’ sarcastic tone, “You do that.” She turned to Lois and Clark and said, “Let’s go.” Suiting her actions to her words Rachel grabbed her hat and headed out the door with Lois and Clark right behind her.

When they got to the field Rachel grabbed her twelve gauge Remington pump from its bracket and checked to make sure it was loaded by jacking a shell into the breach and then put the safety on. With the shotgun resting in the crook of her arm, she pulled her revolver and checked that all chambers were loaded. Re-holstering her side arm, she stood there casually dangling the Remington in one hand while she laughed and chatted animatedly with Lois and Clark about the Corn Festival as they all awaited the arrival of the ATF choppers.

Agent Charles was standing over near his car watching the sheriff and her friends. The sheriff’s deputies were all standing around in a group a short distance away. They had a mix of weapons. A few, like the sheriff were carrying shotguns while most simply had their revolvers. The agent was somewhat surprised that they didn’t carry semi-automatics but who was he to question department policy? He had been looking at the group of deputies when his attention was suddenly drawn back to the sheriff and Lois and Clark when he heard Lois squeal and he saw her throw her arms around the sheriff and give her a hug. As Lois released her he saw Clark lean in and give her a hug too. He wondered what that was all about but figured that it didn’t have anything to do with this raid so he let it pass.

Rachel called her deputies over and had Deputy Brennan brief them. Deputy Brennan had been Air Cavalry in the Army until recently and was very experienced in air operations. He had them break up into six small groups. He spaced them out on both sides of the runway so that they would have easy access when boarding the choppers using both side access doors on each aircraft. He also directed all of them to secure their hats to make sure that the rotor wash wouldn’t snatch them off their heads.

By 3:30 when the ATF and FBI arrived, everything was ready to go. The ATF came in three Blackhawk helicopters and in force, landing at Shubert Field in line of attack. The deputies that had accompanied the sheriff as well as Agent Charles, Lois and Clark all prepared to board the choppers.

Rachel had briefed her deputies when she had dispatched several cars to the scene. On a map of the county she had pointed out to each team where they would wait until they saw the choppers. They were to proceed code 1, no lights, no siren, to their assigned stations. When they saw the choppers landing they were to move to their blocking positions code 3, lights and siren, and block all exits from the farm.

As they were boarding the aircraft Rachel asked that their departure be delayed for ten minutes to give the deputies she had dispatched to the scene time to get into position.

Ten minutes later, she and the rest of her deputies boarded the

choppers with Lois and Clark. All of the aircraft held a mix of her deputies and the FBI and ATF agents. The aircraft with Lois and Clark would be the last aircraft in line. The reporters had thought ahead. Lois had pocketed her digital camera and Clark had pocketed his mini-recorder when they had come into town earlier so they were ready to document the raid with pictures and interviews.

The raid went down just like a textbook exercise. The choppers came in quickly and the agents and law enforcement personnel disembarked like air cavalry troops entering a hot zone. The police cars moved in with lights and sirens blaring and blocked the exits. As soon as the cars were in position the deputies all exited their vehicles and stood behind the hood with their shotguns pointed in the general direction from which fugitives could be expected. The operation was executed with startling efficiency so all of the conspirators were captured with only a few shots fired. Clark had to use his heat vision to melt the firing pin on a weapon he saw aimed at Rachel but that went undetected.

Once the conspirators had all been taken into custody, the FBI started searching the premises. The warrant had been written in such a way that anything from a piece of paper to a truck could be considered as evidence, so the house, outbuilding and truck were all examined. They found that they had come not a minute too soon. A large amount of the fertilizer and other components of the truck bomb had already been assembled in the panel truck. There were only about one-third of the materials left in the outbuilding.

The FBI interrogated the perpetrators and found that they were going to leave that night to drive to Kansas City. If the FBI had been even two hours later they might have missed them. The FBI had found maps and diagrams while examining the contents of the house. On examination of the maps and documents captured, it was determined that the target had, in fact been the government building in Kansas City, Kansas. It was bigger than the Murrah building, and like the Murrah building, it also had a daycare center on the ground floor.

After these facts had been discovered and the perpetrators restrained, Agent Charles, the agent in charge of the raid, came up to Rachel, Lois and Clark.

"Thanks to your heads up on this we have been able to avert a major tragedy. I'll see to it that you get the appropriate credit." The agent reached for Rachel's, Clark's and then Lois' hands and shook them. "Thanks, not only from me, but from a grateful nation."

Agent Charles continued, "We found out that the target was the federal building in Kansas City. This would have been a bigger tragedy than Oklahoma City. I'm familiar with that building. For your information, it's bigger than Murrah and it had a day care center just like Murrah. Depending on where they placed this truck they could have killed upwards of 400 people and that day care center hosts about 40 kids on any particular day. Thanks to your actions, they have all been spared."

Clark asked, "May I quote you on that?" Clark had been handling this like an interview and had been recording the conversation. Lois had taken a number of pictures as the raid had gone down.

Agent Charles replied, "Yes, you may quote me. Thanks again." He shook hands again with Clark, turned and left.

Later Lois and Clark found out that true to the agent's word, their names were mentioned prominently in the FBI report for providing the information necessary to the disruption of this domestic terrorist plot.

Prominently mentioned also were Sheriff Rachel Eck and her department. They were recommended for special commendation for their efficiency in the preparation for and conduct of the raid itself. A few months later the FBI sent Agent Charles back to

Smallville with a letter from the head of the FBI and a plaque representing a departmental citation for their work. Rachel had the letter framed and it and the plaque now hung proudly in the entryway to the Sheriff's office.

One of the deputies that had driven patrol cars to the site gave Rachel a ride back to the field so that she could retrieve her car and another gave Lois and Clark a ride back to town where they had left the truck. At 6:00 PM after the raid, they had returned to the farm, and had dinner with Jonathan and Martha then they filled in the blanks on their story and e-mailed it to Perry at about 7:30, which was 8:30 Metropolis time.

In Metropolis, Perry White was just about to head home. It had been a long day, but the morning edition was just about ready and the night editor would not have a lot to do to finish up. He was just about to shut down his computer when he heard a beep and a pop-up announced that he had received an e-mail from Lois. He thought, <They're supposed to be on vacation. I wonder what this is.> He maximized his e-mail program and opened the e-mail. As he read it he said, "By Elvis, they've gone and gotten themselves into something." He opened the attachment and as soon as he read it, he muttered, "Bless my blue suede shoes!" He flagged it for the front page and called Smallville.

They were all in the kitchen and Lois and Clark were filling in his parents on what had happened on the raid when the phone rang. Martha reached over and answered the phone, "Kent residence."

His excitement was evident in his voice as he said, "Martha, it's Perry White. Where's my star reporting team?"

Martha laughed and said, "Right here, hold on. Kids, it's Perry." She actually said his name in a sing-song voice as this call was not totally unexpected.

Clark picked up the phone and Martha handed Lois the extension. Clark said, "Hi, Perry. I take it you got our story."

Perry replied, "I let the two of you out of my sight for **two days** and you come in with another front page story, when you're supposed to be on **vacation** yet. How did you do it?"

"Well, Perry, when we got here my parents told us about some strange happenings going on, so we investigated. The raid went down this afternoon," Clark said.

"I'm just happy your kids are okay. Actually, this story looks like more Kerth material to me. How many lives do they think were saved by this intervention?"

Lois replied, "They said that this was going to be a very large bomb, larger in size than the one Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols put together. That one killed 168 including 19 children under 6. The FBI estimates that between 300 to 400 lives have been spared and untold injured. Among those would have been about 40 infants and children under 6 years of age in a day care center."

"Redo the story, add those details and send it to me again. I loved the pictures too. I'll sort through and pick one or two to run with the story. You guys **really** did good on this one. All those kids owe you their lives. Tell you what, in view of this new story; take some extra time on your vacation. I'll look for you back here two weeks from Wednesday. This time, take some time off, would ya?"

Lois and Clark both laughed, "Thanks Chief. We'll try! We'll e-mail the story to you in a few minutes."

The elder Kents went to get ready for bed as Lois and Clark moved into the living room. After a few minutes of work on rewriting the story they sent the final copy to Perry.

After they sent it off they shut the laptop down and went upstairs. When they were alone in their bedroom, Lois and Clark looked at each other as the fact of what they had just typed up sank in. Actually it was a combination of that and the news that Rachel had given them while they were waiting for the choppers. Rachel had recently found out that she was pregnant and Lois and

Clark had been the first of her friends that she had told. They hadn't mentioned it for some time. They hadn't even allowed themselves to think about the subject for some time, but, it suddenly hit them, ...the **children**. The children they had saved. The child their friend was about to have. The children that **they** couldn't have. Lois walked over to Clark and put her arms around his waist and buried her face in his chest while he wrapped her up in his arms and she started softly crying.

They spent the rest of the evening, in their room just holding and being held, each comforting and being comforted by the other. After a while they made love, not desperately or fiercely, but gently and passionately.

What they didn't know at that time was the fact that all of their married life to this point had been preparing them for this night, or more correctly had been preparing Lois' body for this night. All of the studies that Dr. Klein had performed were done in the early part of their relationship. Even then, on a review of the data by Sam there had been a discrepancy noted. As a medical doctor he had realized that there were some discrepancies, although very slight, in Lois' data. He had forgotten all about it when the Bummer Be Gone malfunctioned, so he had never told them. The truth of the matter was that early in their relationship there **was** a genetic incompatibility, but, more or less constant exposure to Clark's aura had made subtle changes to Lois's physiology which changed all that.

Chapter 4 — The Real Vacation

Saturday, September 11, 1999 happened to be the day of the Corn Festival. They had both completely forgotten about it when they had planned for their vacation. Fortunately Martha had reminded them when they arrived so Clark had picked up Lois' boots and an appropriate dress while in Metropolis. When he came downstairs Lois was in the kitchen 'helping' Martha bake some goodies for the festival. After having a cup of coffee Clark changed and helped Jonathan prepare his grill and load it into the bed of the truck to take downtown. Once everything was loaded they took the truck into town where Clark helped unload and set up and then Clark drove the truck back to the farm to pick up Lois and his mom.

This year Martha was entering her Pecan Pie in the pie competition. She had encouraged Lois to bake up one of the few things in her repertoire - Chocolate Chocolate Chip Cookies - and enter them in the cookie competition. They all loaded up in the truck and Clark drove them into town.

As soon as they exited the truck they could hear the music from the bandstand in the gazebo. As they were approaching the town plaza they could see most of the contests that were going on. The annual husk off was in progress. They passed by as time was called and the champion threw his arms up in the air and jumped around. They hurried over to the tables where the baked goods were on display to make their entries.

After getting their baked goods registered, Lois and Clark wandered over to listen to the rest of the song at the gazebo while Martha joined Jonathan at the grill. As the couple drifted over that way, they saw some people line-dancing, and when Lois saw just who was there, she decided to join in. All of their close friends were there, and Lois and Clark arrived just as a new song was starting.

[URL=<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMWcRNRiDtM>]

Over the years something of a friendly competition had developed between Rachel Eck and Lois on the dance floor as to just who had the best moves in the line dance. Recently Lana had started getting in on the act now that she was engaged to Pete Ross. A really close friendship had developed between Lois and Rachel ever since Lois had been a bridesmaid and Clark had been a groomsman when Rachel Harris had married Billy Eck one and

a half years earlier. Billy had been one of Clark's best friends at Smallville High. Clark had been the Crows quarterback and Billy had been his go-to guy as tight end. Pete had been a linebacker who had made it his personal responsibility to protect the quarterback, seeing to it that Clark was **never** sacked. All through school those three had been like the three musketeers. Lana and Pete's wedding was going to be held in three months. The invitations had recently gone out and Rachel and Lois were both going to be in the wedding party. Clark was going to be Pete's best man and Billy a groomsman.

Lana, Lois and Rachel were dancing next to each other in line while Pete, Clark and Billy were in line behind them enjoying the view of their respective partners as they moved in the dance. It was a friendly competition since the women had long ago become girlfriends, they were all happy with their husbands or fiancé and they all had a good time.

After the dance finished they started judging the baked goods and Lois thought that she had a sure win when Clark was chosen to be one of the cookie judges; however, he had to be impartial and she wound up with an Honorable Mention while Martha took Second Place for her pie.

They spent a lot of time with Rachel and Billy Eck, Pete Ross and Lana Lang and some other friends. Clark rang the bell on the strength test again. Of course, this time he had to be careful not to send the weight into orbit. This time Lois chose a Superman doll.

After having some burgers and franks that Jonathan had cooked up on the grill along with corn on the cob with lots of butter and salt, Lois had her favorite snack — a caramel apple.

When they got back to the farm she placed the Superman doll on the dresser in their room. As she did she said, "We can leave this here for the time being. If we ever have a child it will go in the crib with him. I wish we'd done that with CJ."

To which Clark replied, "Him? You already know the gender? I would think you would want a girl."

Lois replied, "I thought you would want a boy, one like CJ. I really miss holding him."

"I would be happy with either, as long as he or she is healthy. I guess you'll just have to be satisfied holding me."

Lois threw her arms around his neck, kissed him and said, "Yes, either one as long as it's healthy. You know, I love you Clark. I am happy holding you, but, it's just not the same."

He said, "I love you too Lois and I know how you feel, because I miss him too," as he started unbuttoning her dress. "Maybe, one of these days, something will change and we will be able to have a baby. Some very much stranger things have happened to us in the past. Don't give up hope."

On Monday they were ready to proceed with the rest of their vacation. They packed their bags and headed out for the visit with Lucy. They landed outside San Diego. Since they would be doing a lot of local travel, Clark went in and rented a car. They had reservations at the Marriott Gaslamp Quarter near Horton Plaza, so they went in, registered and moved their bags to the room. They got into the car and they drove north on the I-5 to Torrey Pines.

Lucy had seen the article about the raid on the front page of the Planet a couple of days before and insisted that they tell her the whole story over dinner. She was still going to San Diego State and she filled them in on her new part time job as a technical support/help desk call taker for a hi-tech medical equipment supply company located in Torrey Pines. The next day they went to the San Diego Zoo and the Midway museum. After taking in some more of the sights the next day and even crossing over into Mexico for part of the day and a meal, they returned to the hotel.

The next day they checked out and returned the car. Clark then flew their luggage to 'their' island and then returned to pick

Lois up and flew her out there.

The rest of their vacation was spent on their island paradise.

They had arrived at their island late in the afternoon so they had devoted their time to getting settled in and making dinner. When they had finished and cleaned up they went over to their bed and lay down to cuddle.

Thinking back to the incident in Smallville Lois started talking. “Clark what are we going to do? I know how much you want children and we can’t have any. We tried adoption once and I was turned down, but that was a couple of years ago so maybe we should try again. I’ve been a good girl and I haven’t been in any significant risk of losing my life for a while now. Maybe they’ll pass me this time. After all it wasn’t that long ago that we had CJ and he was with us for almost a year. You know, I really miss that little guy.”

Clark replied, “Yeah, I miss him too. I’m just glad that we had the opportunity to have him with us for the time we did.”

Lois mused, “I wonder how he is now?”

Chuckling, Clark replied, “Actually, he hasn’t even been born yet and won’t be for another, let’s see ... about ninety years.”

A very wistful expression was on Lois’ face as she said, “That’s amazing, but, even so, he was such a good baby! And to think, somehow, he was actually, yours! There must be some hope or else he couldn’t have been, uh, will be. I’d still like to know why we had to take care of him. What was this mission that they were on? Oh well, I guess we’ll never know. Now, back to our current dilemma, maybe if we point out how well we did with CJ they’d reconsider.”

“I guess we could try after all, what’s the worst they could say — no? They’ve said that to us once already, but, even if they say no again, I’m happy with you. You complete me the way no one else could. Every time we make love it is just that, we make love and it is totally fulfilling.”

As he was finishing speaking Lois was starting to unbutton her blouse. Seeing this Clark reached over and completed her task. She sat up so that he could push it off of her shoulders and down her arms. As his hands were pushing her blouse off he used one of them to unhook her bra.

“Did you just do that one-handed, mister?”

“Busted,” he said as he leaned in to kiss her. “You are really sensitive to touch to realize that.”

“To you, I’m very sensitive.”

Once the bra was off she lay back down with a sigh. Clark unbuttoned her slacks and she lifted her hips so that he could slide them and her panties down and then she picked up her legs so that they were vertically in the air so that he could remove her pants completely. She reached up. Cupping her breasts, she pushed them together and up to present the nipples to him. Clark, while watching this display, had first removed his shirt and then his pants. After watching him disrobe Lois licked her lips and said, “Come to Mama”

Their lovemaking was slow and sweet.

The next day on the beach Lois picked up the sun tan lotion and handed it to him. With an arched eyebrow she asked “Want to put this on for me?”

With a mock serious tone Clark said. “Your slave, madam.”

Lois laughed. “No, not my slave, my **husband**. Even after three years I love the sound of that and I love you.” She said as she put her sunglasses on and lay back on the towel.

When he was applying the lotion he did her front as well as her back and he was able to pay special attention to those areas of her body that hadn’t had any prior opportunity to be exposed to the sun.

When he finished lathering up her body she pushed him down intending to take her turn enjoying the feel of every square inch of his magnificent naked body as she applied the lotion. Just as she was about to he stopped her and said, “Remember, I really

don’t need any lotion.”

With a pout she said, “Oh darn. That’s right. So you’re taking away my fun?”

“Do you need the lotion as an excuse to put your hands on me?”

“No, I guess I don’t.” Suiting her actions to her words, she set aside the lotion and proceeded to enjoy the feel of his skin under her hands. She came to the conclusion that she enjoyed it this way almost as much. Of course this only lasted for a few minutes before she threw herself completely on top of him and lay there with as much of her skin touching his as was possible.

Their lovemaking session exhausted both of them and Clark floated them over into the shade so that she wouldn’t burn while sleeping and then he dozed off as well.

That night Lois put on one of her dresses and Clark donned a suit and they flew in to Honolulu for dinner, caught a movie and then went dancing. A couple of nights later they went to Waikiki for dinner and dancing.

The rest of their vacation was spent on their island paradise. Sunning on the beach, making love; swimming in the ocean, making love; or swimming in the pool with the waterfall and making love. Most of the time, even when not making love, they were naked or nearly so. Lois was picking up a beautiful tan, with no tan lines while Clark was feeling more and more reinvigorated even though he didn’t really tan.

On their last day Lois looked at Clark and said in a somewhat whiney voice, “Do we really have to go back? Can’t we just stay here for the rest of our lives? It’s soooo perfect here, just you and me ... together. This has been like a second honeymoon.” As she was saying this she put her arms around his neck and laid her cheek against his chest.

“Well, as much as I’d love to, as long as it was with you, I think that we would eventually miss the hustle and bustle of the news room and the thrill of the chase as we hunt down that next story.” He kissed the top of her head.

“I guess you’re right, it’s just that, well, you know, I’m going to have to share you with the world again.”

He pulled her into a tight hug and said, “Look at it this way. You may have to share me with the world, but I come home to you.”

Lois heaved a wistful sigh and said, “Yeah, I like it that way.”

Chapter 5 — Back to Work

Newsroom — Daily Planet - October 6, 1999

At the morning briefing Lois sat next to Clark. It seemed to Clark as if Lois was having a hard time staying awake. Watching her as she was taking notes, he saw that her writing was very erratic and frequently the letters at the end of a word would trail off into a squiggly line. She would visibly jerk after a few seconds as if coming out of a doze and look at what was on her pad as if trying to decipher what exactly she had been writing. A couple of times Perry had asked her questions which Clark had fielded as her partner when she seemed to be out on her feet.

During the course of the meeting Perry assigned them to a series on city government which would require a series of interviews. As the meeting broke up after Lois had left, Perry said, “Uh, Clark,”

Clark hung back and watched as Lois made her way back to her desk before turning to Perry and saying, “Yeah, Chief?”

Perry asked, “What’s goin’ on with Lois?”

“I honestly don’t know. We were in bed **early** last night.”

Chuckling Perry said, “Son, that’s not good enough. You gotta let her get some **sleep**.”

Clark, feeling very put upon, replied, “Perry, it wasn’t like that. We went to bed, to **sleep - early**. I can’t understand why she’s so tired.”

“Okay, son, just you take care of her. You know I’ve never seen her so happy as in these last three years. Ever since the two of you got married she’s like a different woman. I really never saw her so radiant and fulfilled as while you guys were taking care of CJ for your cousin. By the way, how is that little guy? I kinda miss havin’ him around.”

“Last thing we heard he was just fine. We are hoping that the fact that we were able to take good care of him that the adoption agency will change their minds about us adopting a baby.”

After he exited the conference room he went over to his desk. Clark made a couple of calls to schedule interviews. While doing so he had been watching Lois. She was trying to read her e-mail and having a hard time keeping her eyes open. Since she hadn’t been acting real perky all morning he was concerned.

After completing the calls Clark got up and walked over to Lois’ desk, perched on one corner, looked at Lois and asked, “Honey, what’s the problem? Aren’t you feeling well?”

At that Lois looked up at him with a woebegone expression. Then she jumped up and made a dash for the Ladies Room and threw up in the commode. After several minutes when she came out looking rather wan and pale, she found Clark standing just outside the door. She said to Clark, “I think I may be coming down with that virus that has been going around the newsroom. I just threw up, but I guess you could hear all of that, couldn’t you? The same thing happened to Ralph, Denise in research and Jimmy earlier this week. I think I’m going to go home at lunchtime and take a nap. Along with the nausea I’m just soooooo tired, I can hardly keep my eyes open.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. Now that I’ve thrown up the nausea isn’t too bad, I’m just really, really tired.”

“Tell you what. We have an interview scheduled for 3:30. I can handle it by myself. Why don’t I take you home at lunchtime? We can have a bite to eat together and then I can ‘tuck you into bed’ and then go do the interview. I’ll be back from the interview at about 5 and we can have a leisurely supper, watch a movie or something and go to bed early. How does that sound?”

With a relieved sigh she said, “Heavenly. Let’s do it.”

The next morning Lois was very groggy as she awoke. She looked at the clock on her bedside table and saw that she was late. She reached over to Clark’s side of the bed and found that he was gone and the sheets were actually cold so he had been up for a while. She thought, <Oohhh I hope he didn’t have to go out on a rescue. I need him here.> Her disappointment lessened somewhat as she picked up the aroma of coffee brewing. <Aahhh he’s downstairs making breakfast. I really love that man.> Lois always loved the smell of fresh brewed coffee, especially the coffee Clark made from those beans he flew in from Brazil. She took a deep sniff and suddenly realized that for some reason, this morning the smell was ... turning her stomach!

Lois grimaced as she got out of the bed. She got as far as sitting on the side of the bed when suddenly the coffee aroma really got to her. She put her hands to her mouth and made a dash for the bathroom. After throwing up she felt somewhat better and realized that Clark was there kneeling next to her holding her and trying his best to comfort her. With pain on her face and in her voice she leaned her head back against his chest and said, “Clark, what’s happening to me?”

“I don’t know, honey,” he replied. “Are you okay now?”

“I think so. The smell of the coffee really got to me. I can’t understand it! I love the smell of coffee.”

Clark helped her to her feet and helped her clean up. She brushed her teeth to get rid of the taste and proceeded to dress for work. When she got downstairs she didn’t feel much like eating so she had one piece of dry toast and some juice before they headed out for the interview they had scheduled.

As they were on their way out to the car, Clark saw that Lois was fighting fatigue even though he had let her sleep in for a while so he suggested that he do the driving. He knew just how profoundly she was ‘under the weather’ when she didn’t object and just handed him the keys. Before Clark was even in the driver’s seat, Lois was asleep, leaning against the door. When they arrived for the interview Clark woke Lois up. She looked at him groggily and said, “Are we there already?”

With an incredulous tone he replied, “Lois, it took us 35 minutes to get here.”

She looked at Clark with some fear in her eyes and said, “What’s happening to me, Clark?”

Showing more than a little concern he replied, “Maybe it isn’t the virus like you thought. Perhaps we need to get you in to see the doctor.”

With a resigned tone in her voice she replied, “Okay, much as I hate going to the doctor, maybe I do need to have a check up.”

Somewhat relieved he said, “Good, we have a couple of minutes until our interview. I’ll call right now and set up an appointment.” Before Clark had finished speaking, Lois was asleep again, leaning against the door.

Clark made the call. Fortunately the doctor’s office had just had a cancellation. A few minutes later Clark had Lois scheduled for a visit for that afternoon.

Clark woke Lois up again and they proceeded to conduct the interview. When they finished the interview an hour later Clark called Perry and told him that he was taking Lois to the doctor’s to get her checked out. The appointment was for 1:15 PM so they stopped off for a quick lunch and then Clark drove straight to the doctor’s office. After a short wait they were ushered into an examination room. A couple of minutes later the doctor came in.

The doctor had her file in his hand and he flipped it open and started perusing it as he asked, “Well now, Lois, what appears to be the problem?”

“There’s been this virus going around at work. In the last couple of days I have had a couple of episodes of vomiting and now I have an overwhelming exhaustion.”

He was still looking at her file and muttering some “Tsk, Tsk, Tsks” as he read he said, “It’s been a while since you have been in for a checkup. I seem to recall that your reason for not coming in was that you were too busy. What kind of schedule have you been keeping? Are you still working long hours and almost 7 days a week?”

Somewhat chagrined she replied, “Well, yeah, we have been working some long hours, but, we just got back from a very relaxing vacation where we didn’t have any deadlines and we really caught up on our sleep and ...” The doctor stuck a tongue depressor in her mouth and asked her to stick out her tongue. After she said ‘Ahhhh’ she finished up, “... our relationship.”

As they had been talking the doctor had been taking her vitals, listening to her heart and lungs and checking her eyes and ears. He made some notations on her chart and gave her a lab slip. “I would like you to step down the hall and have some blood drawn. I want to see if we need to add some high potency vitamins to your diet to build you up some. A blood test will tell us a number of things. Why don’t you come back in, let’s see, today is Friday, let’s say Tuesday next week and I will go over the results of the blood test with you and we can map out a supplement regimen.”

They thanked him and went down the hall to have the blood drawn and then to the receptionist to schedule the appointment for Tuesday.

When they left the office Clark called Perry and told him that he was taking Lois home and that he would be in to write up their notes from the interview.

Fortunately this was an off weekend for them so Clark was able to let Lois sleep as much as she needed, which at this point

was something on the order of fourteen hours a day. She was only up long enough to eat and spend a little 'quality time' with Clark.

Clark didn't express it to Lois but he was very worried. He had never seen anything like this before. Lois was almost comatose for about fourteen hours a day. He hoped that the blood test would provide the answers that they needed. He couldn't help thinking, <Has one of our enemies managed to infect her with some kind of virus or slipped her some drug that is doing this to her and will we be able to neutralize it in time to prevent permanent injury?>

Clark worked from home on Monday so that he could stay home with her and then on Tuesday he took her in to the doctor's office to get the results of the tests.

Almost as soon as they walked in the door they were ushered into the examination room and the doctor was waiting for them. Clark thought, <This doesn't look good>. The doctor stood up and offered his hand to Lois and Clark before sitting down again and opening Lois' chart.

The doctor spoke as he flipped open Lois' chart and started sorting through the various report slips reading the results. "I have the results of your blood work here. Everything looks pretty **nor**-mal from what **I** can see."

Clark had a worried tone in his voice as he asked, "Doctor, would the blood test have shown up any drugs or viruses that might have been given to Lois without us knowing about it?"

The doctor's reply was very casual, "Yes, they would and we don't have **anything** to worry about along **that** line. We **do** have to put Lois on a new **vitamin regimen** though. We need to put her on a good course of **pre-natal** vitamins."

Lois and Clark exclaimed in unison "WHAT!!!"

The doctor had an amused expression on his face as he finished up with, "Pre-natal vitamins. There isn't anything wrong with Lois that won't clear itself up in about eight months time. Congratulations Lois, you're **pregnant**."

Lois said, "But, but, but **how** is this **possible**?"

Still amused the doctor replied, "Do you really need me to explain the birds and the bees to you? Come on. It happens to most married couples eventually. It just takes longer for some."

Lois, still having a hard time comprehending all that the doctor was saying, said, "No, no, you don't understand. We were told that we wouldn't be **able** to have children. We have even looked into the possibility of **adoption**."

The doctor was obviously enjoying the situation. One of the more pleasant aspects of his job was informing patients that they were going to be parents. He personally enjoyed surprising them with the fact. It didn't happen too often nowadays. Since the advent of the pregnancy home test kit, all too often all he was doing was confirming what his patient already knew, but this time it was coming as a total surprise and he loved the reaction he was evoking. The reaction he had elicited from Lois and Clark was by far the most amusing he had observed in a long time and he was really enjoying himself.

With a deadpan expression he continued, "If you wish to open your home to another child by adopting one that is very commendable, but in about eight months you are going to have a child of your own." He handed Lois a pre-prepared slip listing the vitamins he recommended. He said, "Here you go. This is what I would recommend and you should start on them as soon as possible." As they were about to exit, the doctor added, "And remember, **no** caffeine! That means no coffee and **no** chocolate."

Lois looked at him with a pained expression and reaching into her bag pulled out a Double Fudge Crunch bar that she kept there for emergencies and looked at it wistfully. She looked back up at the doctor and said, "Really, **no** chocolate?"

He had a rather amused expression as he reiterated, "**No** chocolate!"

With a pained expression Lois handed the bar to Clark and

said, "Enjoy."

They thanked the doctor and left.

At home they discussed the ramifications of what they had been told. They got around to talking about Bernie Klein and what his data had indicated.

Lois said, "I think we need to tell Bernie about this. Maybe he needs to do some more metabolic studies to see what happened. To find out where the error lies."

Clark replied, "You know, that might require that we tell him just who we are and why this is so important."

Lois responded with, "Yes, but we're in uncharted territory here. This is going to be an Earth human/Kryptonian human hybrid child. We don't know what kind of problems may come up. Look at what has been happening to me already. I can barely keep my eyes open most of the time. Since Bernie is **the** expert on Superman's metabolism and physiology I think he is the proper choice for my obstetrician."

Clark replied, "You're probably right. Why don't we do this? Let's invite him over for dinner. That way we don't risk being overheard and we can discuss this fully with him without any time pressure."

Lois said, "Okay, why don't you call now and invite him over for dinner tomorrow. Tell him that Superman has requested a meeting to discuss the problem he had approached him on a couple of years ago. Tell him that we were asked to invite him over so that he could meet Superman's 'girlfriend' because he would like some more studies performed and felt that it might be more meaningful if he was able to take samples from her as well as from Superman."

Clark picked up the phone and called Dr. Klein's lab. "Bernie Klein, here."

"Uh, Dr. Klein, this is Clark Kent."

"Well, Clark, what can I do for you?"

"Dr. Klein ..."

Bernie interrupted, "Clark, I think we've known each other long enough that you can call me Bernie, please."

"Uh, Okay, uh, Bernie. Well, it's like this. A mutual **friend** has asked us to invite you for dinner tomorrow. He and his **significant other** will be there and they wish to discuss the studies you performed a couple of years ago, the results you obtained then and the possibility of doing more."

"Mutual friend? Significant other? Studies from a couple of years ago. ... OH, **OH**. **That** mutual friend. Well, Okay, yes, uh, Yes, I can come for dinner, tomorrow was it?"

"Yes, tomorrow at 7:30 if that's okay."

"7:30, okay. I'll bring the data from the previous studies with me so that we can discuss them."

"Do you need directions?" Clark asked.

Bernie replied with, "No, that won't be necessary. I have your address."

"Fine Dr, uh, Bernie. We'll see you tomorrow at 7:30 then. Thanks."

Chapter — 6 - Double Revelation

The following day

After work they arrived back at 348 Hyperion and prepared the meal. Just as they were finishing up there was a knock on the door.

Clark looked at his watch and said. "It's not quite 7:00. Bernie isn't due till 7:30. I wonder who this could be." He used his x-ray vision to see who was there. He got a curious look on his face and said to himself, "Oh no. What's he doing here?" Turning to Lois he said "Hold onto your hat. This might be trouble."

"Huh, what do you mean?"

He didn't say anything and simply proceeded to answer the

door. When he opened it an older H. G. Wells, the 1912 version to be specific, was standing on the stoop. Clark asked, “Herb, what brings you here this time, another problem? This really isn’t a good time.”

Herb replied with a slight chuckle, “Oh my no, not this time, no. no problems. This is more along the lines of a social call. Yes, quite, a friendly visit.” Clark stepped back and indicated that Herb should enter.

As Herb entered, Clark took his hat and placed it on the table in the foyer. He called to Lois, “Honey, look who’s here!”

As soon as she saw Herb she started to frown and said, “Herb, are you here to get us to help you out again or is there another problem with us that needs to be corrected?”

“My, my, no, not this time. As I was just explaining to Clark, this is more of a social call.”

Relieved, Lois let out the breath that she didn’t even realize she had been holding and said, “Well then, Herb, this is a pleasant surprise. Won’t you stay for dinner? We have a guest coming. Actually, it’s someone you may like to meet.”

“Yes, that would be delightful. Thank you very much for the invitation.”

They moved into the living room and took seats and began to chat while they awaited the arrival of Bernie Klein.

A couple of minutes after 7:30 there was a knock on the door. Clark got up to answer it. Dr. Klein entered.

As Clark escorted Dr. Klein into the living room he began to introduce him to H. G. Wells. “Dr. Klein I’d like you to meet...”

“Herb!! I haven’t seen you in years! How have you been?”

Clark turned to Lois and said, “They know each other?!”

“Bernie, I wasn’t expecting to see you here this evening. Lois and Clark told me that they were expecting someone for dinner and invited me to join them and their guest. They never told me who the guest was to be. How delightful that you’re here.”

“You don’t look like you have aged a day in the ten years since I saw you last. Clark, is this the ‘mutual acquaintance’ you were talking about? I don’t recall running any tests **on** Herb. I am running an experiment **with** him, but **not** on him. By the way, Herb, how is our experiment coming. You haven’t stopped by to check the readings in at least ten years. How much longer is this experiment going to run?”

“Ah, Bernie, this is a long term project. You might even say VERY long term project. You recall when I approached you with the concept of creating a monitoring device to track disturbances in the space/time continuum I said that it could be that. That device is the penultimate result of that discussion.”

Lois and Clark had been exchanging mystified glances all during this exchange. Finally Clark spoke up, “Bernie, how long have you and Herb known each other?”

“Herb and I go way back to shortly after I started working at S.T.A.R. Labs. I was just out of my internship and had my first lab assignment. Herb approached me with questions about how to monitor the space/time continuum. He had this idea that a disturbance of sufficient magnitude could cause a fracture or rip which could cause an alternate reality or alternate universe to be created. It was all theoretical, of course. We did determine that in order to create a monitor of sufficient sensitivity it would have to be based upon the same theory that some people have been kicking around since the days of Star Trek about a ‘warp drive’. If you could create a detector that could detect that kind of field then you could extrapolate it out to detect a weaker field. We also decided that for reliability, since any disturbance strong enough to disrupt the time/space continuum could also disrupt power systems it would have to be self contained and powered. Herb borrowed a small ship from somewhere. It was truly unique and had to be of extra-terrestrial origin. Where did you get it Herb?”

“Actually, I borrowed it from Superman.”

“But ... Superman, uh ... Superman wasn’t around then, was

he? Didn’t he first show up when the Prometheus shuttle had that trouble?”

“Right ... ah ... Well ... you see .. uh ... he has actually been around ...uh ... longer than ... anyone thinks.”

“Well, then I need to thank him.” Looking at Clark, “You did say he was going to be here tonight, didn’t you?”

“Uh, yeah,” Clark said. Looking over at Herb, he explained, “Dr. Kle ... , uh, Bernie ran some fertility tests on Superman some time ago and asked Bernie to meet him here this evening to review the data.”

“Ah, I see.”

Bernie looked around, “Is he here yet?”

Lois stood up and said, “With all of this technical talk, I am really getting hungry. Clark, why don’t we serve the dinner?”

“Right, the dinner. Why didn’t I think of that?”

“Why don’t the two of you make yourselves comfortable at the table while Clark and I serve the dinner?”

Lois and Clark moved into the kitchen. “This just complicates matters. Of course Herb knows our secret and we were going to be telling Bernie tonight, but, with the two of them together?”

“It’ll be okay honey. Since Herb already knows, it won’t matter. We can just ‘play it by ear’. We really hadn’t planned out **how** to tell Bernie, anyhow.” Clark reached into the warmer and picked up a platter of meat to take to the table.

Lois reached in and picked up a vegetable bowl, “Okay, I’ll follow your lead.”

Rejoining their guests in the dining room they began to serve and they all enjoyed a pleasant meal. They saved the ‘shop talk’ until the meal was finished.

After dinner the conversation turned to the purpose of Bernie’s visit. Bernie said, “Is Superman still going to come, since the dinner party has changed?”

Clark replied, “Oh, you mean will he still be here because of Herb? Herb knows Superman very well. As he mentioned a while ago, Superman loaned him a small ship.”

Bernie replied, “But, what about that other matter, er ... person that was discussed?”

Lois said, “Oh, that ... Well, you see, ah, Herb knows her also.”

Bernie was somewhat mystified and looking over at Herb replied “He does?”

Lois answered, “Well, yeah, he does.”

Bernie asked, “Well, in that case, can we discuss the reason for this visit?”

Clark replied, “Oh, yeah, about that, ah, other matter, well, yeah we can discuss that.”

Bernie asked, “Okay, so when can we expect them to arrive? I thought they would be here for dinner.”

Clark replied, “Well, that’s a long story. Why don’t we discuss your data and why it is so important?”

Bernie commented, “Well, okay, but I was hoping to discuss this with Superman. I realize that you and Lois are very close to him, but, this is kind of personal, if you know what I mean.”

Clark replied, “Yeah, we know what you mean, but he doesn’t have any problem with us discussing it.”

Bernie, giving in, said, “Well okay. You know, I really felt bad when we obtained these results. I knew how much it meant to him. He said that he was in a committed relationship. He was planning to bring his ‘significant other’ tonight. I was looking forward to meeting her. Maybe by analyzing some of her tissue we will get a different result. I am confident of my data though, so unless there is a significant difference between her tissue and the sample we worked with before... If I’m not mistaken, that came from you didn’t it Lois?”

Lois replied, “Yes, I volunteered to provide the samples.”

Bernie stated, “It was a real shame, the results we got on

those analyses. It showed that there was a distinct incompatibility between the Earth human genome and the Kryptonian human genome. When he came to me for the results, I knew that he would be just ... devastated, by what we had found. I really hated to give him that bad news. If only there had been any other way, another test to run that might have given a different result... I wish there was some way I could be proven to be wrong! It would make me ecstatic to be wrong. It would have made me extremely happy to have been able to tell him that he could father a child with an Earth woman."

Lois said, "Well, in that case then, Bernie, I guess you should be **very** happy."

Bernie, puzzled replied, "What? Why??"

Lois stated, "I'm pregnant."

Bernie replied, "Well, Lois, congratulations, but we were speaking about Superman and his girlfriend."

Lois replied, "That's right, and I said 'I'm pregnant'."

Bernie, with a concerned look on his face replied, "Lois, I read all those stories that were in the "Whisperer" and all about the possibility of you having an affair with Superman, but, I think I know you and Clark well enough to know that they were all false gossip with no foundation. I have seen how you and Clark are together. I know that those stories were false."

Lois looked somewhat pleased at Bernie's obvious discomfort and replied, "Nevertheless, I **am** pregnant."

Bernie, now very concerned at what he was hearing, said, "Are you actually trying to tell me that you are having **Superman's** baby? With Clark sitting here?!?! ..." He looked over at Clark and could see that he had a smile on his face. He looked back at Lois and said, "And he is going along with it? How can this be?" Bernie looked back at Clark, who was still smiling. Bernie started to get a look of understanding on his face and continued, "... Unless ... Clark?"

Clark nodded.

Bernie, stunned, said, "OhmyGod. You mean that. ... all this time ... you ... you are and Lois is ..."

Clark replied, "Married to Superman. Right."

"OhmyGod."

Lois said, "Would you like a drink or something?"

Bernie replied, "No thanks, Lois. I just need a minute to take this all in. Now that I think about it, it makes a lot of sense. You two have always been **the** definitive source for everything Superman. Herb, you knew?"

Herb, with a grin on his face, nodded.

Bernie then asked, "Wow. Okay, so what do I call you? Superman or Clark?"

"Bernie, I **am** Clark. Superman is just what I do. It's my way of being able to help people while preserving my private life so that I can live a normal life with Lois. Bernie, we revealed this information to you because we trust you and feel that we are friends. We are confident that you will not betray our trust."

Bernie, now back on an even keel, said, "Well, of course! I wouldn't think of revealing this to anyone else. You can trust me. Now, when can you come into the lab so that I can do some new metabolic studies? Obviously something has happened. Either something has changed with Superm, uh, Clark or something has changed with Lois. Could you both come by the lab tomorrow?"

Clark said, "I think that, since we are probably going to be seeing you frequently, the way we need to handle this is if we call and make appointments to do interviews for an ongoing series of articles. I realize that it will be extra work for you, but, could you provide us with something each time that we can take back to write up and print?"

Bernie replied, "Sure, no problem. I can do that. I'll look for your call tomorrow. Herb, when can I expect to see you in the lab again? Don't you need to take some interim readings?"

Herb replied, "Well, no, Bernie, I don't need to take readings

that often, it is monitoring all the time. It has enough data storage capacity for many years of data and its power supply will outlast the data storage capacity."

Herb finally came to the point of his visit. "Oh, by the way, the reason I am here is simply to say, congratulations. I was reviewing the book and saw this entry and simply had to stop by."

"Saw an entry in a book? What book? You have a book about Lois and Clark? How could you have a book about Lois and Clark? It would have had to be written in the future. In order for you to have read it, it would of necessity have been in your past. In order for it to be in your past you would have had to have the means of moving into the future. That would indicate a means of moving forward and backward in time in some sort of time machine. Wait a minute. Time Machine, book, there was a book by that name written late in the last century by ... H. G. Wells ... Herbert Wells ... Herbert George Wells ... Herb?? No, you can't be, he died in 1946, didn't he? Are you Herb Wells, the Herb Wells, I mean H. G. Wells?"

Herb nodded.

"Now wait a minute. Herb, you and I worked on that detector some years ago. It was very advanced stuff dealing with the space/time continuum. An offshoot of that research could provide a means of travelling through time. I never put that together before. You wrote "The Time Machine". Do you mean to tell me that you actually invented one?"

Herb got a slight smile on his face and said "Could be."

"But, if you **are** H. G. Wells and if the research for the development of a time machine was done in my lab in 1989 and you died ... will die ... died, this is rather confusing, in 1946, then how did you get here in 1989 to help me ... with ... the ... development?"

"Let's just say that there are some mysteries about time travel that are very difficult to understand, let alone solve.

With awe in his voice Bernie said, "Then, that's why you don't appear to age. How long has it been actually, or should I say subjectively been, since I saw you 10 years ago?"

Herb gave it a few seconds of thought and then said, "Oh, about six or eight months."

Incredulously Bernie said, "Oh ... My ... God." Then he snapped out of it and saw some of the possibilities that were now open to him. Enthusiastically he said, "Can you show it to me some time?" He got a whimsical tone as he said, "Can you 'take me for a spin'? A little hop around the centuries?"

"Perhaps at another time, Bernie. Right now we both have other matters that are pressing."

"Oh, yeah, right. I need to prepare for tomorrow's visit. I guess I need to say good night." It never occurred to Bernie that Herb could bring him back before they even left if he wanted to.

Clark escorted Bernie to the door and thanked him for coming over.

Clark returned to the dining room. Herb had gotten up from the table. "This has been a delightful evening. I must say it was a pleasure seeing Bernie again. I really must be going now though. Places to go and things to do, you know."

Lois and Clark both escorted Herb to the door and saw him out. Clark turned to Lois and as he was shaking his head said "Are you as confused about this evening as I am?"

Lois laughed, "Probably more."

After cleaning up they went upstairs had a time of intimacy and fell asleep in each other's arms. It had been a **very** interesting day.

Chapter 7 — Bernie Goes to Work

S.T.A.R. Labs - Next day

When Lois and Clark arrived at the lab Bernie was in the lobby waiting for them. They immediately went back to his

office. First he gave them a short write-up he had prepared on “Lasers Used in Biomedical Applications” for publication in the Daily Planet and then they got down to brass tacks.

“I would like to take some new tissue samples. I need to compare them to the samples we took two years ago. It’s a shame that we don’t have any samples from before you were married since it could be something related to your being with Clark that has affected you. I also need new samples from Clark to see if there are any changes there.”

“What about my sister, Lucy? Genetically we should be very similar and she hasn’t been very close to Clark at all.”

“That would be perfect! That would give the full spectrum — unexposed, exposed for a short time and exposed for a long time. If we see a difference between these samples, either yours or Clark’s then we need to find out what caused the change.”

They went down the hall and Bernie took some blood samples.

In the case of Clark, previously, when Bernie had needed samples it had been in a less than controlled manner which had caused Superman unnecessary discomfort by the way it was done, a brief but less controlled exposure to Kryptonite. Since there was a possibility of additional samples being needed, Bernie wanted a better solution than that previously used. So after having pondered that problem after leaving their place the night before, this morning he had taken a very small, about the size of a grain of sand, piece of Kryptonite out of storage. This he inserted into the bottom end of a lead tube with a closed end about the diameter of a drinking straw. He then put a couple of drops of epoxy into the tube to seal it in. The epoxy would not block the radiation but would hold the Kryptonite in place at the far end of the tube. The tube then acted like a wave guide to direct the K radiation only where Bernie wanted it directed. There was a lead cap for the open end to seal it when not needed. For taking the sample Bernie had Lois hold the tube and remove the cap after the tube was directed exactly where Bernie needed to pierce the skin. In this way only a patch of skin about a half inch in diameter was exposed at the inner aspect of the elbow. This cancelled Clark’s invulnerability in that area and Bernie was able to penetrate his skin and take the sample.

Lois called Lucy and made arrangements for Superman to pick her up and bring her to the lab that evening so that Bernie could get a blood sample from her as well.

The tissue samples were a lot easier to acquire. A simple swab of the inside of the cheek resulted in a crop of squamous epithelium (2) cells.

The following week when Clark called to set up the ‘interview’ Bernie informed him that they would need more time for the meeting and also more privacy. Clark invited Bernie over for dinner that evening at 7:30.

When Bernie arrived the first thing that they did was to have a pleasant dinner together. Bernie asked, “Does Herb show up frequently? I take it that he was unexpected the last time.”

“Yeah, Herb’s like that,” Lois answered. “We never know when he’s going to show up. There was one time, our wedding day as a matter of fact, that he showed up at our door, just as we were about to leave on our honeymoon. Normally it wouldn’t have bothered us too much, but we had waited so long and had been through so much that we were really looking forward to the honeymoon, if you know what I mean. Well, in that case he had a very good reason for interrupting us. It turned out that there was a curse on us and if we had, you know, consummated our relationship I would have been dead the next day. So in that case Herbus Interruptus was a good thing. Actually most of the time we see Herb it’s because there is a problem somewhere. That dinner party we had was the exception rather than the rule.”

“Oh my, so usually when Herb shows up it means bad news.”

Lois replied, “Doubled down in spades! I know, I’m mixing my metaphors but you get the idea.”

After dinner they got right down to business.

Bringing out some paperwork consisting of charts of numbers and bar graphs in multiple colors, Bernie began to explain. “I have run the same set of tests that I ran the first time.” Picking up one particular chart which showed different colored bars all reaching the same heights in groups of five he said, “Clark, you can see by this graph which plots the results of all of the tests we have run on you dating back even to before this particular question that there has been no change in your samples. It showed the identical results to all of the previous samples.”

Clark stated, “I was wondering where those extra data points had come from.”

Turning to Lois he said, “Looking at all of this new data this time I can see that when the first set was run even though there was an incompatibility noted it actually was not as definite as that which I found when I compared **Lucy’s** to Clark’s. That tells me that the change was definitely in you. When I compare your current sample to Lucy’s there is a marked difference, a dramatic difference. Something has modified your physiology at a fundamental level, at the level of the genome. Your current sample shows that your now modified Earth human genome is compatible with the Kryptonian human genome for reproduction. Here, let me show you.”

Pulling out another sheet having a similar graph he addressed Lois. “Lois, this is the graph of your results, now I added Lucy’s in as the control or zero day sample. By doing that we can see that even at the one year mark which is approximately when the first set of samples was taken we can see a movement away from the Earth human norm and toward the Kryptonian human norm based on Clark’s readings. The difference between the one year and three year is dramatic but when you compare it to the zero day it is spectacular.”

Bernie now pulled out another sheet. “This graph plots Lois’ tests against Clark’s results. You see here and here?” He said as he was pointing to a couple of the bars. “See how the values are starting to merge? That shows that physiologically, Lois, you are moving in the direction of becoming Kryptonian. Based on these results, when we compare the zero day, Lois’ three year and Clark’s results I would guesstimate that physiologically Lois is now approximately one half Kryptonian.”

Setting the graphs down and running his hand over his nearly bald pate Bernie said, “The question now is: what did it?”

Clark replied, “Bernie, the only thing I can think of is my aura.”

“You’ve mentioned that before. It helps protect you from friction and such. How does that enter into this discussion?”

Clark couldn’t resist feeling somewhat satisfied at dumbfounding this brilliant scientist. “Actually everyone has an aura. Mine is just ... somewhat ... **different**. Normally it projects out only a few millimeters from my skin. Somehow it helps protect me from harm. That’s one of the reasons the Superman suit is so tight. It cuts down on wind resistance and also keeps it within my aura. When I am carrying Lois, or anyone else for that matter it also protects them from harm while in flight or whatever else we are doing. It’s like the L-Field described by Harold Saxton Burr (3).”

“Ummmmm, I would like to examine the aura more fully, but I don’t have the vaguest notion as to how to do it. Let me do some research. What was that name again?”

“Harold Saxton Burr, he was a professor of anatomy at Yale back in the 1930’s. He called what he found the L-Field. I would guess that the L would stand for Life.”

Bernie wrote the information down.

Lois spoke up, “How about Kirlian photography?(4) I’ve seen articles on the internet that show where they can take

pictures of the auras of people and objects.”

Bernie added that to his notes. “All right, I’ll do some research on this and if I can come up with something I’ll give you a call. By the way, are you two sure that you want to stay in the newspaper business? I could sure use a couple of research assistants as good as you around the lab.”

They both laughed. Then Lois said, “Thanks for the compliment, Bernie, but I think we will stick to reporting.”

“That’s such a shame. Oh well, I’ll be calling when I have something.”

Three days later they got a call from Bernie.

“Can the three of you come in this afternoon?”

“Bernie, I know I’m pregnant but we aren’t talking about it like the baby is here already.”

“Oh, no, no, no. I meant can you and Clark come in and bring Lucy with you? I think I have something here, but I will need a ‘control sample’ for you. That’s where Lucy comes in. By the way, does she know about Clark? I don’t want to make her suspicious if she doesn’t. I realize that she would be willing to help her sister and that Lois’ friendship with Superman can account for him picking her up before, but this will be a different situation. It could compromise the secret.”

“Yes, she knows. She’s the only member of my family that we have told, at least that remembers having been told, but that is another story. I’ll give her a call and make the arrangements. We should make this appointment for last thing of the day to accommodate her schedule.”

“I think last thing of the day will be fine. We won’t have any time pressures.”

Lois made the arrangements with Lucy. Superman picked her up and brought her to Metropolis again and they joined Bernie at 5:30. Bernie immediately took them into his lab.

Bernie started speaking, something like a professor in front of a class. “This problem has been very stimulating. I have had to delve into new lines of research that I had never dreamt of before. It’s all extremely interesting. I started looking at Kirlian photography but that really wouldn’t work because it is based on using an induced current. The work done by Burr was closer to what we are after. He was on the fringes of the new field of Bioelectromagnetism (5). When I got there I hit pay dirt. That was the key to putting it all together. We have devices for detecting magnetism. A compass is a simplistic example of that. We have sensors that will detect electric fields. You know of course that you don’t have to physically touch an electrical connection to determine if it is ‘hot’ or not. There is a detectable field or aura around the connector or a wire for that matter. We then apply this information to the human body and Voila!

“I have been able to combine the magnetism sensing capability of a compass with the field sensing capability of an inductance voltmeter and tied it into a computer so that we will have a visible display.”

Gesturing at Lucy, he said, “Now, I would like Lucy to step into the center of the sensor array. A computer will process the readings and produce a visible display of the results. It will be real time and not a snapshot that way. Lucy, if you please?”

Lucy stepped into the sensor array field. Immediately there appeared on the computer screen a rudimentary image which slowly built into a full colored view.

“It takes the computer a while to process the fundamental data and build the display. Once the basic display is built it will become real time if she moves around. The software is similar to what they use for Computer Generated Images or CGI.”

After a couple of minutes the display had ‘firmed up’ and Bernie asked her to turn around. They could see her move on the screen. It wasn’t like a picture in that you could not see her facial features but you could tell that it was a female form. Of particular

note was the field which surrounded the outline of her body. It extended a short distance from her body and was rendered in a blue color. The field was moderately intense.

Lois asked, “Bernie, can you explain what we are looking at? Is there some significance to the color?”

“Well, Lois, while I was developing this system I asked some of my lab assistants to step into the array field. When they did generally I found that the aura was blue in color. It appears as though a human aura is blue in color. That color is derived from the frequency of the energy itself. The distance that the aura extends out from the body is due to its intensity and strength.”

“As I said, I had some of my lab techs act as guinea pigs. I have their results recorded. Let’s pull those results up and do a comparison with Lucy’s results.” Lucy exited the sensory array field and joined them as Bernie called up the previously recorded data.

When the data had come up and Bernie had set it up for multiple windows tiled side-by-side they could all see the similarities. Bernie pointed out, “You will note that in most respects the recordings are almost identical, however, note the intensity of Lucy’s field in relation to the others. Hers is quite a bit stronger, note the intensity of the color of the field.”

“Okay, let’s proceed. Clark will you enter the sensor field, please?” The results were dramatically different. “Oh my, will you look at that! Clark’s aura is considerably stronger. It does extend out somewhat farther than Lucy’s and it is a brilliant red in color. Look at that intensity! It’s almost off the scale! I must say, that is dramatically different from Lucy’s. Color and intensity are both much different. The frequency difference between blue and red are almost at opposite ends of the scale. Okay, Clark, you may step out now.”

“Okay Lois, your turn. Let’s see what you’ve got.” Lois stepped into the array field. After the picture had had time to form Bernie exclaimed, “Wow would you look at that! Lois, the aura which you present is showing up as a deep rich purple, much stronger than Lucy’s. It’s almost as strong as Clark’s and looks almost like a blending of Lucy’s blue and Clark’s red, however that deals with the visual spectrum. I would have expected something more in the range of yellow if it were purely spectral related. This however is a rich wine color, not what I would have expected from the data we acquired from the genetic studies. It is more like the frequencies are additive, combining to form the new aura.”

Bernie literally clapped his hands in excitement very well pleased with the outcome of his experiment. He was addressing all three of them as he said, “There it is, that proves it, you see! Her field **has** been altered! Somehow Clark’s field has overlaid hers to form a hybrid. That goes along with the metabolic studies we did. Lois, your physiology has been modified by Clark’s aura at a fundamental or genomic level. You are not fully Kryptonian but Kryptonian enough that you can conceive.”

Bernie continued, “One thing we don’t have data on is when will the changes stop. I don’t know if this change will continue or if it has reached an end point. It apparently had already started when we did the first study but hadn’t progressed to the point where it raised any red flags but by comparing it to the ones we just did on Lucy, the change is apparent. I would say that at this point the change is permanent and you should not have any further problems having children with Clark.”

“This data is stored. I would like to run more comparisons, say at six month intervals, to see if the change has continued to progress or has reached an end point.”

“There is one final test to perform. Lois, if you would return to the array field, please. Now I want to see how the fields interact. Clark, would you step into the field **with** Lois?” As he did the character of Clark’s aura changed slightly as he neared Lois. When he got to within three feet of Lois his aura extended

out and overlapped hers when he got close to her.

“Now, Clark, put your arms around her.” At this point the intensity of the aura increased. It appeared to intensify until it extended out to twice the distance of the individual auras.

“That is remarkable. The closer you got the stronger the interaction between the auras.” Bernie pressed a couple of keys on the computer keyboard committing the data to memory before he gave the next direction.

“Now, Lois, please exit and Lucy, please enter.” Lois exited and Lucy took her place. As Lucy entered the array field Clark’s aura extended in her direction but not as strongly or with as much intensity as with Lois.

“Now, Clark, hold Lucy the same way you were holding Lois.” The auras manifested similar characteristics to when Lois was in the field with him but to a lesser degree.

“Now we can see that there is something special about Lois being in there. That tells me that this is normal behavior for your aura but it does vary somewhat by individual. That is the aura protecting those you are in contact with. Some are protected more, some less.”

Bernie finished with a flourish, “Now, to recap, what we have is Lois with a modified genome which is now at least partially Kryptonian due to exposure to Clark’s aura and there is a possibility that anyone exposed for a sufficiently long time to Clark’s aura will undergo the same changes.”

They thanked Bernie for his time and effort and took their leave. Clark flew Lucy home and returned for Lois.

348 Hyperion Ave.

Lois said, “Now we have to decide when we tell Perry and the rest. Of course they will automatically know in a couple of months when I begin to show, but I think we need to tell them sooner than that.”

Clark replied, “You’re right, of course. We don’t have any reason to wait at this point. It’s pretty sure now.”

“How do you want to do it?” Lois inquired.

They brainstormed for a while and finally came up with an idea.

Daily Planet newsroom — Next day

At around 10:00 AM Lois got a telegram. Since telegrams are so unusual, it piqued the interest of all present including Perry.

Lois said, “I wonder who sent this to me.”

Perry said, “Why don’t you open it and find out?”

She looked around to make sure that she had everyone’s attention and then replied, “Okay” and slowly opened it. She then read it out loud to all those assembled around her.

“Lois Lane,

Advance notice. I have you scheduled for a delivery in seven months.

Signed,

The Stork”

Perry, who had been reading over her shoulder looked at her and said, “Is this some kind of joke?”

Lois and Clark both laughed and said, “No.”

“Well, congratulations, you two! It’s been a long time in coming, but, I’m happy for you.”

Jimmy said as he was clapping Clark on the back, “CK! You da MAN!!! Way ... to ... go.”

Clark said, “Thanks, Chief, Jimmy, everyone. We are extremely happy about this, but, I guess you could tell.”

“Seven months, huh? Lois, I don’t suppose I’ll be able to convince you to cut back any?”

“Chief, I’m pregnant, not dying. I’ll be fine. Right now I’m just really tired.”

“Well, darlin’, if you need to rest, you can use the couch in my office any time.”

“Thanks, Chief.” She laughed, “I’ll probably take you up on that.”

“All right folks, the entertainment is over. We still have a paper to put out. Let’s get back to work.”

A short time later the child within her began to manifest its own aura. That was the point at which Lois’ tiredness disappeared and she developed a tremendous feeling of well being.

WHAM WARNING — For those of you that insist on a WAFFy ending at this point you should go back and re-read “Volume 1 Lois Lane: Mother of Utopia”. This chapter starts with the creation of a new universe which had a different outcome.

Chapter 8 — The Later Years

Imperceptible to human or even superhuman senses there was a disruption of the space/time continuum when the child’s aura manifested itself. What could most easily be described as a ‘snap shot’ of the current universe - Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 was created, although it was slightly out of phase with the original. This was caused by a difference in the vibratory characteristics of the copy. A later analysis of the data would show that a new universe had been created with vibratory characteristics Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124.

S.T.A.R. Labs — Dr. Bernard Klein’s lab

In a doubly locked closet sat a device. There was nothing which would distinguish it as anything unusual. It was simply a featureless cube approximately 1 meter per side which made a very soft humming sound. The only markings on it were “Property of TTEMPO”.

The key question was, however, what caused the creation of the ‘new’ universe? The data was recorded and a detailed comparison of the events of the time line to the recorded time of the disruption and universe creation would be done later. Much later as it turned out. This was a LONG TERM experiment. But then, when you are talking about people that can travel through time, anything is possible.

%%%%%%%%%%

Universal Locator designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124

%%%%%%%%%%

In the normal course of time Jonathan Joel Kent was born to loving parents. Two years after Jon came Lara Martha. Then they had the twins, Celeste and Sean. Then came Jessica, James Perry (Jimmy), Lucy Ellen and Sam.

July 30, 2031 AD 7:30 PM local time (Sidereal)

Outside Metropolis, New Troy

Kent residence, Wisteria Lane

A, for want of a better term, portal opened in the air just over the walkway which led up to the house on Wisteria Lane. Herb, the 1917 persona, stepped through and then did a final check of the information on the display of the Time and Dimension Transporter or TaDT. To outward appearances the TaDT could be a smartphone and it could even surf the web if need be, but, in actuality it was a marvel of technology. It was a blend of Kryptonian and future Earth technology capable of creating openings in the space/time continuum allowing for passage from one of the universes within the greater multiverse to another. Herb looked at the display and read:

%%%%%%%%%%

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124

July 30, 2031 AD 7:30 PM local time (Sidereal)

Metropolis, New Troy

%%%%%%%%%

Satisfied that he was at the correct location and time, Wells placed the TaDT in his pocket. It automatically locked itself and would not turn back on until Herb handled it again. It was coded to his bioelectromagnetic signature which is unique to each individual and disappeared at death.

At TTEMPO Herb had received a letter from Lois and Clark in Prime which had been more or less placed in a time capsule dated for delivery to him in 2454. The letter revealed to him the true answer to the mystery of the multiple Lois Lane/Clark Kent reporting teams and how they had duped him as well as the entire population of the Earth for over three hundred years. He was here to see just how different this universe was from Prime. Herb walked up to the door, reached up and knocked on it and waited patiently for it to be answered. When it was, he was greeted by a stunningly beautiful blond woman with long straight hair of about 25 years of age. She was wearing a maternity dress in dark burgundy.

“May I help you?” she said after looking him over.

Herb was speechless for a few seconds. This **definitely** was not the individual he was expecting to meet at the door. After clearing his throat Herb removed his derby hat and held it in both hands in front of him as he replied, somewhat hesitantly, “Uh, Yes, Un, I would like to speak with Lois Lane-Kent if you please. My name is Herbert Wells. I’m an old acquaintance of hers.” His surprise was evident in the unconscious habit he had developed of shuffling his hat in his hands, spinning it by shuffling his hands around the brim. The more nervous he was the faster he spun the hat and he was spinning it rather fast at this point.

“Won’t you come on in then and make yourself comfortable in the living room while I get her?” Seeing what he was doing she reached out and took Herb’s hat and placed it on a table in the foyer. She then escorted Herb into the living room and saw to it that he was comfortable before she exited and proceeded to another part of the house.

After a wait of something over 15 minutes an older but still very attractive Lois Lane came in. She was dressed in a gray pinstripe business suit, which matched the color of her hair, a jacket that came to below the waist and a skirt that fell well below the knee. A white blouse with a high neck and frilly collar and gray ribbon tie and low heeled shoes completed the ensemble. As she came in from the hallway Lois approached Herb and held out her hand in greeting. Herb stood up and took her hand in his. “Herb, sorry I had to make you wait, I wasn’t exactly presentable. It’s been a long time since you’ve visited us. To what do we owe this honor? More trouble in the alternate universe that you need us to help with?”

“No, not this time.” <Talk about déjà vu.>

Getting a worried look on her face she asked, “Is Tempus on the loose again?”

“My gracious no, not this time. This is more on the lines of a **social** call, if you will.” Herb said, playing out the scene he had acted out previously.

Looking quite relieved at this news, Lois said, “Clark’s out on patrol right now, but should be returning shortly.”

After they had both taken seats Herb began, “I have been in the process of updating the Kent Family History and I would like to have your help with it. The, uh, young lady that answered the door, who was she?”

“That was our daughter-in-law, Jennifer or Jen for short. She and our son Jon moved in with us when we bought the new homestead. Jen is expecting our first grandchild in about two months. We were thrilled when they decided to join us here. It will give me an opportunity to help her with our grandchild full time now that we’ve retired from the Planet. I’m going to be a grandmother Herb! I can’t wait. You know, it was just like what

happened to Clark and me. For Jon it was love at first sight. It took a little time for Jen to make up her mind. At least she didn’t fight it the way I did. They started dating right away.”

Flashback

7 years earlier (July 2024)

One thing that all of the Kent women had in common was their feminine form. They were all at the top when it came to ranking feminine beauty and if they had all entered the contest for the Corn Queen, it would have been a four-way tie. One of the problems that Clark had was the fact that all of his daughters knew just how beautiful they were and enjoyed showing off their beauty so when they were on the beach, only the skimpiest swim suits would do. The guys were almost as bad. They weren’t vain but they knew that thanks to their Kryptonian physiology they had bodies like extreme athletes. They also wore as little as possible at the beach.

On Friday, July fifth, they were at the lake. The girls were playing two-on-two beach volleyball to a crowd of male admirers. Among the crowd was the life guard.

Jon happened to glance out to the float and was attracted to a girl that had just swum out. As she climbed up the ladder Jon used his telescopic vision to get a good look at her. His breath was taken away at the sight of her. She was wearing a black bikini top which barely covered the essentials and an extremely brief red bikini bottom with a yellow band, almost like a belt as the top strap. Jon marveled at the fact that her bikini was a match for his uniform and was mesmerized by her and just stood there frozen as he watched her. She was a vision of beauty! She was the only girl there that could rival his sisters in the beauty department. Her beauty was in stark contrast to his sisters though; all of his sisters had dark hair inherited from their parents. This girl was a platinum blond and she had a knockout figure which was amply displayed by the extremely brief bikini.

She crossed the float and climbed up on the diving board and walking out to the end gave a couple of experimental bounces before returning to the float end of the board. She did her approach and bounced on the end of the board, went into a short arc and hit the water cleanly.

Jon watched for her to surface and when approximately fifteen seconds had elapsed he started to worry. He took off at a run and had a hard time restraining himself and maintaining a normal human speed as he crossed the beach to the water. He hit the water in a shallow dive and stayed underwater and started to fly, cleaving the water like a torpedo. He arrived in the vicinity of the float within seconds and started using his enhanced vision to locate her. He spotted her tangled in some submerged debris which had been washed into the lake from a storm the previous month. She was unconscious as he freed her from the debris and brought her to the surface.

As soon as he had her head above water he started administering mouth to mouth resuscitation. As he did so, when his lips came into contact with hers he felt something akin to an electric shock pass between them. It startled him but didn’t keep him from doing what needed to be done. He gave her a couple of breaths and then started to move her back to shore. When he got into shallow water he picked her up and carried her to the beach where he continued his life saving measures, talking to her as he did, “Come on, breathe. Come on, I know you can do it, breathe. Come on and breathe.”

Suddenly she started coughing and spitting up water. Jon lifted her up and pulled her into his chest in an embrace. As she started to come to, her left arm came up and around his neck and her right arm came up under his left and across his back.

After a couple of minutes she realized the position she was in and pulled back to look Jon in the face. Jon asked, “Are you okay

now?”

She asked, “What happened? All I remember is I dove off the board and suddenly I was caught.”

Jon replied, “I was watching and when you didn’t come back up I swam out to find you. Once I had you free I brought you back to shore. I’m Jon, by the way, Jon Kent.”

“Hi Jon Kent, Jen, Jennifer Jenkins, pleased to meet you. You’ll never know just how pleased.” She looked at the way he was holding her and relaxed in his arms. She used her arm around his neck to pull him down and she kissed him. When she released the kiss she said, “Thanks, Jon Kent. You saved my life.” When her lips touched his she felt the same electric like jolt that Jon had when he was doing the mouth to mouth and it surprised her. It was unlike anything she had experienced before.

Jon picked her up and carried her over to his towel and laid her on it before sitting down next to her. Before he was able to get settled she noticed a very prominent bulge in the front of his Speedos.

She propped herself up on her elbows and they talked. They talked and they talked and they talked some more. Neither of them was inclined to do anything that would break the rapport that they had established. Jon found out that Jen was a second cousin to Lana Lang and that she was eighteen. The single item that he discovered that made him happiest was the fact that she didn’t have a boyfriend.

Before the end of the day Jon had her contact information and asked, “Would you like to go to the movies? They are doing a ‘Back to the Future’ marathon at the Talon. All three movies, back to back.”

Jen said, “Only if you promise to buy me popcorn.”

Jon began to smile as he said, “The biggest tub they have, if we can share.”

She laughed and said, “You’re on. We’ll share.”

Before the end of the vacation Jon and Jen had spent the majority of their time together.

Lois and Clark had seen what was going on and had allowed things to happen naturally. Clark knew just what Jon was going through and he and Lois had asked if they could have a talk with him.

Jon knew what they wanted to talk about and was surprisingly relaxed as they sat down in the living room of the old farm house with his parents.

Clark started it, “Well, Jon, how are things going?”

“You mean with Jen?”

Lois said, “Yep, how are things going. You’ve been spending a lot of time with her.”

“Yeah, I guess I have.” He got a little bit of an embarrassed look as he asked, “Dad, how did you know that mom was the one?”

Clark responded, “I just knew. From the first moment I laid eyes on your mom I knew that she was the one.”

Lois gave Clark a very loving look and added, “It wasn’t so easy for me. It took quite a while for your dad to convince me that he was Mister Right. Once he did though, once I realized that he was the one for me, we still didn’t have an easy time of it. It was like the fates were conspiring against us, trying to keep us apart. I just hope you have an easier time of it. Do you think she’s the one?”

Jon replied, “Yeah, I think she’s the one. When I’m with her I don’t see anyone else and when I’m not with her all I can think about is her. It’s like I have this hollow spot in my chest that only she can fill.”

Clark replied, “Okay, well, you know, you’re going to have to tell her, but you really need to be sure, after all, it’s not just you, it’s the entire family. How do you plan to handle it?”

“Jen’s only eighteen. I think I want to date her for a while to make sure. She’s been accepted at MetU starting in the fall in the

primary education teacher program. I think that by the time she is a sophomore we should be sure. If we are I’d like to propose and then tell her next year.

Lois spoke up, “Clark, she’s part of Lana’s family. Will that complicate matters?”

After giving it a moment’s thought he replied, “No. I don’t think that will be a problem. We know the Lang family pretty well. I think that if there was a problem Pete or Lana would let us know. Why don’t we have a talk with them?” Turning to Jon he said, “That is, of course, with your permission.”

Jon replied, “Actually, I’d like to do that myself. Do you mind?”

Lois replied, “That would be preferred. We only offered in case you would be too embarrassed.”

“I can handle it. I’ll just talk to Uncle Pete and Aunt Lana and ask if they have any problem with me getting serious with their niece.”

Clark replied, “That sounds like the best way to handle it. I’m proud of you, son.”

Lois chimed in with, “Actually, that’s, we’re both proud of you. We always have been.”

Humbly he replied, “Thanks Mom. I know you are and I always want you to be. You two are my heroes. I would never want to do anything to disappoint you guys.”

Lois responded, “We could **never** be disappointed with anything you do. You’re a chip off the old block. You make us very proud.”

End Flashback

“Jon and Jen were engaged the following year and he brought her in on our secret. The summer she graduated they were married and they are every bit as happy as we could hope they would be. Jen’s not only a beautiful girl in appearance she also has a beautiful personality and we love her to pieces. She’s more daughter than daughter-in-law.”

Just as Lois was finishing up they heard a whooshing sound and Clark entered from the hallway. He was dressed casually in jeans and a t-shirt and looked all of 25 to 30 years of age. He walked over to Lois and kissed her on the cheek. Then he reached for Herb’s hand in greeting. “Herb, it’s so good to see you. So, what brings you around? I hope it isn’t another problem in the alternate universe.”

“No, as I have been explaining to Lois, this is more in the nature of a social visit. I have been in the process of updating the Kent Family History and had some questions. Lois has been kind enough to have provided the answers that I was looking for.” He marveled at the fact that they didn’t know that at this point, they **were** in an alternate universe, both from the one they were thinking of and also the **original**, or Prime. Ever since he had received that letter from Lois and Clark in Prime at TTEMPO he knew what was happening with them. He was here to see just what differences there were between the two universes. The difference had become apparent shortly after Lois had walked into the living room. This Lois was **actually** aging.

Right about then a younger version of Lois entered the room, walked over to Clark and gave him a hug and then did the same to Lois. Keeping an arm around her waist Lois turned her around and introduced her to Herb. “Herb, this is our daughter Lucy. Luce this is an old friend of ours, Herb Wells.”

Lucy stepped over toward Herb and stuck out her hand and said, “Pleased to meet you,” in a very forthright manner. Apparently any friend of her parents was okay in her book.

“Luce, would you please go to the kitchen and rustle up some refreshments for us? Herb, would you like some tea?” ...

Metropolis - October 2059 Sidereal

Noel Neill Extended Care Facility room 125

It was a bright sunny room with a southern exposure. There was a profusion of flowers in vases on just about every flat surface that could be found. The signatures on the cards read like a Who's Who of the Journalistic universe, however there was a large area devoted to family. Most of the cards bore wishes for a speedy recovery. Lois was in a wheelchair next to the bed. Lois was still an attractive woman even in her 90s although she was quite frail in appearance with gray hair and glasses.

Clark, with graying hair and made up to look older than he was, was sitting in a chair next to her. In truth, the gray hair was a wig. Bernie Klein's prediction that Clark would age at a much slower rate than Lois had come true.

They were talking, reminiscing about their various adventures while they were investigative reporters. For the last 10 years of their employment at the Planet they had been co-Editors-In-Chief and just as effective in that role as they had been as reporters. As they moved from topic to topic, often finishing each other's sentences, the easy familiarity acquired from over 60 years of marriage was very apparent. Eventually they discussed the arrangements for preparing the house to accommodate her needs and her move home from the Neill Center.

One year later - At home

"Clark, I don't want to go to the hospital this time. There really is no need. Since Celeste, Sean and Jessie are living here and all of them are doctors, why should I need to go to a hospital? I just want to stay here in my home with my family. I know that you don't want me to be saying these things, but we have to be realistic. I am old and my body is starting to shut down. I hate it that I am going to have to leave you like this, but we have known ever since Bernie told us that your rate of aging would "stabilize and sloooooowww", (I still hate the way he said that), that it would be happening some day. I want you to hear me say, one last time, that I wouldn't have traded one day with you for a lifetime with anyone else."

Cue <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UbrJEE9hkg>

There was a radio playing softly in the background. A song came on and they listened to it and the lyric caught their attention.

*Come and sit here by my side
For our time will soon be gone
And these tears I cannot hide
For it's your turn to move on.*

Lois looked into Clark's eyes and she saw unshed tears. She listened more closely to the lyrics.

*I know you were never really mine
You were given to me
on Borrowed Time*

*Now I shall stay here on my own
For I know you'll be called home*

Hearing this line brought home to Lois just what Clark was thinking.

*Now I know I must be strong
For what else can I do?*

Won't be easy to go on

But I must learn to live without you

Lois gestured for Clark to join her on the bed. Clark climbed up on her bed and lay next to Lois taking her in his arms as the song continued.

*You're the light cannot be born
And there's nothing I should fear
For you'll go no further than God
And God is very near*

Clark was openly weeping now.

Turn out the light

Let me love you

One more whole night hold me tight

tell me everything's

gonna be all right

Lois turned her head and buried it in his chest as her tears started to flow.

Now it's time to let go

Just part of the plan

So many answers

you don't know

Some day we'll understand

Some day

Turn out the light

Let me love you

One more whole night hold me tight

tell me everything's

gonna be all right (6)

For a long time they remained in each other's arms, comforting and being comforted

Finally, Lois pulled back and looked Clark in the eyes.

"Clark, we have known, ever since Bernie told us about your rate of aging, that we were on borrowed time, but ... I don't want you to live out your life being lonely." She got a very determined look on her face as she said the rest. "I want you to find me again. You know how Herb took us into the past to help remove the curse. That means that I will be back again and I need you to promise me that you will look for me because then, I can die happy; knowing that we will be together again. We've had a long and happy life together and there is no reason we can't do it again. In the time I have left, I am going to concentrate with all my might and will power on us and what we have had and meant to one another, what you have meant to me. I can only hope that some of that will carry over with me."

Lois, with Mad Dog Lane determination set her mind to do just that. For the rest of the time they had left along with the easy banter there was a determined look on Lois' face, committing even more deeply than ever every memory of their time together.

Obituary:

Lois Ellen Lane - Kent

Sept. 23, 1967 — Sept 23, 2063

Award winning journalist, former Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Planet passed away last night in her sleep in the arms of her husband of over 60 years. She is survived by her husband Clark J. Kent, 8 children, 23 grandchildren, 10 great grandchildren, her sister and her sister's family. She will be missed.

Interment will be in the Kent family plot in Smallville, KS

In lieu of flowers the family requests that donations be made in her name to the Superman Foundation.

The next day in a San Francisco paper a birth notice was printed:

September 23, 2063

Lorelei L. Lane

Girl, 8 pounds 13 ounces

17 ½ inches long

Born to Phillip and Doris Lane

This city

Chapter 9 — Herb Makes an Offer

%%%%%%%%%%

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124

September 2065 Sidereal

%%%%%%%%%%

A portal opened over the sidewalk leading up to the door of the mansion on Wisteria Lane and H. G. Wells, the 1917 version, stepped through. Herb double-checked his TaDT to ensure that he

was at the correct location and time. Once he confirmed time and location he knocked at the door.

When Clark heard the knock at his door he did a quick scan with his x-ray vision to see just who it was. When he answered the door he greeted Herb, “Herb, how are you? To what do I owe the honor of this visit? Is there a problem in the alternate universe again?” Clark asked the question as he conducted Herb into the living room and saw to it that he was seated comfortably.

Herb had assumed that Clark would have checked before opening the door and seeing just who it was hadn’t bothered to put on his makeup before answering. He looked little older than the last time Herb had seen him.

After being ushered in and seated, Herb began. “My boy, I am terribly sorry for your loss. I was aware of when Lois was to pass and I have allowed you some time for the grieving process.”

“Thank you, Herb. It has been a terrible time. If it wasn’t for the kids I don’t know what I would have done. I’ve needed to be strong for them as well as myself. It’s been two years, but I still miss her, I miss her so much.” Clark had to pause as his voice began to crack. Leaning forward with his forearms on his thighs, he took a breath and said, “You will never know, Herb, just how much it hurts to lose someone that is as close to you as Lois was to me. We were together for over sixty years.”

“On the contrary, my dear boy, I do have great understanding and sympathy for you in your loss. In fact I have had to deal with your counterpart in one of the other universes after he lost his Lois. Do you recall the last time you saw Clark from what you called the alternate universe? As we were leaving he was lamenting the absence of his Lois Lane from his universe. That was a rather tragic story. If you recall he told us that she had been lost in the Congo while investigating illegal gun running. The poor lad, after meeting your Lois he finally knew what he was missing. I must say that I had never before met such a miserable soul as he was at that time. So, yes, I know how it can be.”

Continuing on in a different vein Herb said, “As they say ‘Time heals all wounds’ and this is one time when we can put that particular aphorism to the test. You have been terribly wounded by the loss of your soul mate, Lois. Now why don’t we use time to our advantage to finally completely heal that wound? To that end I have a proposition to make to you and it is this; I propose that I assist you in finding Lois again. We know that the two of you are fated to be together throughout time, we have demonstrated that with the soul tracker. Last time we used it to move into your past lives but now I propose to move you through the use of the TaDT into the future where she is waiting for you.”

Clark was incredulous that Herb would suggest such a thing. “Herb, that is exactly what Lois wanted, but, I have been at a total loss as to how to go about it.” He grabbed Herb’s hand and proceeded to shake it while expressing his appreciation for his offer of help. “Herb, I don’t know how to thank you. Before she passed Lois expressed the desire that I try to find her in her next incarnation. She didn’t want me to be alone and lonely and she didn’t want to be without me in that next life. She determined that for the last couple of years she would do everything that she could to see to it that her memories carried over, her memories of us and our time together. I feel certain that if anyone could accomplish that feat she could.”

Wells informed Clark, “Well, my boy, to use a military term I have already scouted out the ground so to speak. I have used the soul tracker and moved ahead in time, tracking Lois’ soul and I have found her in California. I found her as an infant and have followed her through her development. I feel certain that this is in very fact Lois’ soul. I have also taken the liberty of paving the way as it were. I have met with her parents and taken some steps to ensure that she will be prepared.”

Wells continued, “I don’t think that anything would be served by you going to find her at this point in time. She is, after all,

only a two year old child. I have followed her as she has matured and the parallels between her life and that of the Lois Lane that you knew were startlingly similar. I did follow her to the age of eighteen and she was starting college. Can you guess what her major might be?”

“Knowing Lois the way that I do, it would have to be journalism.”

“Right you are. She will be accepted at San Diego State as a journalism major in 2081, sixteen years from now. Now, if I were to take you to 2085 you would be able to meet her and establish a relationship when she is about to graduate. We know all about the special affinity you have for each other so if you were to meet her casually and start dating a deeper relationship could progress from that.”

“Herb, this isn’t a decision that I can make on my own. I will have to consult with my family in this matter. After all, it would require that I disappear from their lives for a twenty year period. They are all adults now, which will help, but still, they lost their mother only two years ago and to now lose their father, even temporarily, I don’t know how that would affect them. I really need to discuss this with them. Do you mind?”

“No, no, of course not. Quite. This is a big decision and I can quite understand that you would need to discuss it with family.”

“Why don’t we do this, I’ll call the meeting and then you and I can have something to eat while we wait for them to gather.”

“That would be splendid, yes, quite, we can spend the time discussing the plan for contact.”

“Okay, let’s do that.” Clark called a meeting of the family for that evening. Clark made a stir fry dish and he and Herb sat down to discuss the plans for the trip.

As they sat down to the meal Herb said, “As I said I have paved the way. I have taken it upon myself to visit with her parents. Interestingly enough she is actually a cousin of your Lois born the same day as your Lois, September 23. I find it an odd coincidence that your Lois died on her birthday and her next incarnation was born on the same day. I took it upon myself to give her a present from the Superman Foundation and told her parents that the Foundation had an interest in her and that hers was a special destiny.”

“Just how much did you tell them? Did you tell them about the soul mates thing?”

“Oh no, no, no, by no means. I simply told them that she had a special destiny and did not go into any detail. I told them that when the time came for her to fulfill her destiny that they would recognize it. As I have been checking on her yearly, I did manage to get pictures of her each year as she was, will be, oh my the confusion of time travel, growing up. Here they are.”

Herb pulled out his TaDT and called up a picture file. He scrolled through the file with Clark looking over his shoulder. As Clark watched he saw a progression of pictures of a young girl as she aged slowly the pictures obviously being taken at one-year intervals. She was the absolute image of Lois and there she was growing up in front of him. Some of the later pictures were obviously taken at sporting events. Some were even vid files. When Herb got to them he activated the video function and Clark watched in fascination as this Lois scored the winning point in a singles tennis match. He thought, <She sure looks good in that tennis outfit> as he watched her aggressive style on the courts. Another was a vid file of her grading in Karate. Clark was very impressed with the smooth flow as she performed her kata, and when she had to fight how she took the match in surprising form and how she showed compassion for her defeated opponent.

The more he saw the more he thought, <That sure is Lois. It’s undeniable.> and asked Herb, “Would it would be possible to make copies of the files available to show the ‘kids’? I know, they’re all adults now, but I still think of them as the kids.”

Herb asked, “Do you have a computer handy? I can

download the files directly to it and you can use it to show the pictures.”

“Sure Herb. Let me grab my pad. You should be able to beam directly to its memory as long as we have a compatible interface.” He returned a few seconds later with his pad and held it out to Herb for inspection.

In a rather musing tone Herb muttered, more to himself than to him, “The TaDT is very versatile and can adapt to any interface. It’ll just take a ... few ... seconds ...” He fiddled with a few buttons. “Ah, there we are. I created a new folder called ‘Lorelei’ and downloaded the contents to it.”

Once the family had all arrived, not just the children but their spouses and children as well, most of them by air, they assembled in the large parlor. The non-super members were flown in by those with powers.

Clark smiled gently as he saw them all there. They sure were an attractive group, not just on the outside, but on the inside as well. He proudly addressed the assembly. “I would like to introduce Herbert George Wells. Most people know him simply as H. G. Wells. A couple of you met him on a previous visit.”

Jen spoke up “H. G. Wells, you mean the author? He died in 1946, didn’t he? Besides he doesn’t look any older than he did when I met him over 20 years ago.”

Lucy said “Yeah, you’re right! I met him in this very room.” Turning to her father she added, “I even got the refreshments for you, Mom and him when he was here.”

Clark responded, “You’re right and there’s a very good reason for that. This is in fact the same H. G. Wells and you have all read his book “The Time Machine”. None of you knew why we made you read it but it wasn’t **just** because it is ‘classic’ literature. We had you read it because Herb not only wrote that book, but, he actually created the machine that he wrote about. Your mother and I met Herb a number of years ago when there was a problem with our time line that needed to be corrected. Since then we have had a number of adventures together. In one of our adventures he helped eliminate a curse on your mom which would have prevented any of you from being born. This curse had been placed on her in medieval times at the request of Baron Tempus. You all know about the problems we have had with Tempus, well, this was another incarnation of that psychopath. Anyhow, Herb took us back so that we could prevent that curse from being applied so that we could live together as husband and wife. As a result of that each of you owes him your very existence. If not for his intervention your mother would have died immediately after our wedding night.”

There was a collective gasp from all the assembled Kent clan members and then there was a concerted rush by all of the children in an attempt to be the first to shake Herb’s hand and thank him, sincerely, for what he had done. Herb, very modestly accepted thanks from each one saying that he had been “happy to have been of assistance.”

After everyone had returned to their places Clark continued, “In that adventure, Herb revealed to your mom and me a device he called a Soul Tracker.” Herb held the device up for them to see. “Using this device Herb was able to move your mom and me through some of our past lives. You see, your mom and I are fated to be together throughout time because we are soul mates.”

Clark gave this a minute to sink in. Turning to Herb he asked in an aside, “Could you use the soul tracker to help each of the kids to find their soul mates?”

Herb replied, “Those that have not as yet found them I will help.”

“Herb has graciously offered to help me find your mom again. In fact, using the soul tracker he found her in California. Herb has offered to help me to be re-united with your mom. Actually, this is going to be somewhat hard to explain and possibly even harder for you to understand. In that previous

adventure we had gone back in time to experience previous lives. This time Herb has moved ahead, into the future and found, for want of a better term, the latest incarnation of Lois Lane although she hasn’t always had that name. I guess that one way to look at it would be this. Our bodies are simply vessels to hold our soul. The soul is eternal but the body isn’t, so when one body is used up the soul finds another vessel, body, to inhabit. The soul tracker ignores the vessel and looks for the soul essence wherever or whenever it can be found. In this case your mom’s soul, when her body was used up, moved to a new vessel. That vessel happens to be a distant cousin of your mother. Since Herb found her he has tracked her as she grew up and even has managed to get some pictures and videos of her over the years.”

Clark reached for a remote and turned on a holoprojector and linked his pad. He accessed the directory and started running through the pictures and videos. As the pictures were scrolling slowly through as a slide show Herb gave commentary as to ages.

When the videos played there were collective gasps from the assembled family because they could remember vividly their mom’s moves on the tennis court and they recognized the style. She had taught each and every one of them how to play and each of them had played against her more times than anyone could count. If they didn’t know her style, no one would and they all recognized her.

When the karate sequence played they sat there staring at the screen in awe. They clearly recognized the movements and the fluidity of motion from the many times they had watched as their mom practiced her kata to stay sharp and stay in shape. The technique was unmistakable and when she won the sparring competition a cheer went up from all of the children.

“We can go about this a couple of ways. Firstly Herb has made the offer to use his time travel device to take me ahead in time to a point sometime after she had turned eighteen. She will be starting her studies as journalism major at San Diego State. Or secondly I can stay here and simply wait for your mom to mature, perhaps move to California and meet her as a child. Personally I think that the best plan is for Herb will take me 16 years into the future so that I can meet and court your mom again, when she is of age.”

This generated some discussion. Lara spoke up, “How can you just disappear?”

Clark replied, “I’ve thought about that. To all intents and purposes as far as the public is concerned Clark Kent is in his nineties and has been in seclusion for the last two years since he lost his wife. It would not be unexpected for him to pass on. I propose that we fake my death. Since we have a number of doctors in the family now, a death certificate shouldn’t be any problem. We can also avoid an autopsy that way. Clark Kent will be buried next to his wife, Lois, in Smallville. Jimmy, with your help we will create a new identity for me, digitally, one that I can step into in the future. As far as Superman is concerned I think that he could announce that he has to visit New Krypton for a time.”

Jon asked, “How will things be handled in your absence?”

He replied, “You are all adults now and some of you are still living here in the Kent homestead. Jon, as the eldest son, I expect you could handle any family matters that may come up.”

Speaking as the child psychologist of the group, Lucy asked, “What about the difference in age. She will be, what, twenty-two? Psychologically there is a world of difference between a twenty-two year old and a ninety year old. Level of maturity is only one aspect. How will that work out?”

As the family practice physician and the one most familiar with human and Kryptonian physiology Jessie said, “Yeah, and **physically** you look like you’re in your twenties or thirties but really you are over ninety and she will be twenty-two.”

Jon spoke up to answer Jessica’s question. “Sis, we’ve been

running tests on Mom and Dad all of their lives. Sean and Celeste have been helping ever since they got their MD's because of their knowledge on Kryptonian physiology. The data collection started with Bernie and has continued even until now." Jon walked over to the desk and activated the server. Donning the interface gloves he made a pushing motion over the top of the desk and the image moved into the holoprojection. Activating the virtual keyboard he started typing in mid air. The S.T.A.R. Labs logo appeared floating above the desk with a login screen. Jon typed in his username and password. He then used a biometric scanner for authentication and was finally able to access his files on the system in a secure area of the memory.

As he pulled up his files he explained, "I'm calling up the data from Mom first." A spreadsheet with lots and lots of numbers on it appeared. "As you can see from the number of columns we have many years of data." He made a sweeping motion and the display changed. He pointed at another file and it opened to display a graph. He explained, "Here is the graphical representation of the data. Bernie didn't have any zero day data for Mom so they used Aunt Lucy for that baseline. As you can see these bars indicate the character of the genome. You can see how it diverges more and more from the norm which is represented by Aunt Lucy's result." Jon made a move with his fingers and another set of bars were added to the graph. "These are Dad's results for the same tests. As you can see," he made another movement with his fingers and when he did some of the bars lit up. "Mom's results diverged more and more with time. At the three year mark her genome was essentially one-half Kryptonian and at the last sample which was taken six months before she passed she was approximately sixty six percent Kryptonian. Over the first three years there was a rapid conversion and then it slowed but continued till death. Presumably she lived as long as she did because of the conversion of her genome."

Jon made another sweeping motion and the chart disappeared and then he pointed at another file and it opened. "This file records the metabolic studies we have performed on Dad over the years. Bernie had determined early on that his rate of aging would stabilize and slow even though he didn't know exactly the rate. We have determined by measuring the telomeres over time that Dad's rate of aging is something on the order of 14% that of a normal Earth human. In other words in the last seventy years or so he has aged just over ten Earth human years. In essence even though we know that he is over ninety years old, effectively he is a thirty two year old man by Earth human standards."

Jon continued, "It isn't unheard of for a thirty year old man to marry a twenty year old woman. Okay, so she will be twenty two but that's close enough. Also we know that she will continue to age and eventually she will in essence catch up with him age-wise."

Clark added, "Herb has offered to use the soul tracker to show her who she is and who she has been I can only hope that in doing so she will learn enough that we will be compatible."

Clark continued, "Based on what Jon just presented I really don't think that the difference in age enters in to it. I think that the fact that physically I am in my thirties because of my Kryptonian physiology is the key, I look and feel like someone in his thirties. This is one time when that will work to my advantage. With your mom, she aged while I did not, and Lorelei will do the same."

Being the baby of the family and the one that Lois doted over just a little more than the rest, but not much, Sam said, "What about mom's memory? Are you going to forget her? I don't think I could stand to see you with someone else."

"Sam, son, it won't really be someone else. All of you really need to get the concept here. It **will** be your mom, her soul, in this new body. Before your mom and I were able to consummate our

wedding, Herb interrupted us. He told us that if we consummated your mom would die almost immediately because of a curse which had been placed on us by a sorcerer in the employ of 'Baron Tempos'. Tempos wanted 'Lady Loisetette', your mom in a previous incarnation, but he knew that she loved 'Sir Charles', me. He challenged me to trial by combat. If he, Tempos, lost, the sorcerer was to curse Lady Loisetette in all her incarnations that if she and Sir Charles consummated, she would die. I had to lose the combat and go into exile. That way the curse was not applied. However, it changed history. We had to go back to a later incarnation in the Wild West and defeat him there as Tempos Tex to set things straight. When Herb took your mom and me into the past we were ourselves in each case. I expect that will be the case when I go to the future. I think you all saw from the pictures and vids that this **is** your mom, she's just in a younger body. Now, there is a possibility that she might not recognize me or what we mean to each other. That is why I have to first establish a relationship with her and then later Herb has offered to use the soul tracker to show her who she was."

Clark asked, "Are we all in agreement that I should do this? If there are any dissensions I will stay here and just find her at the appropriate time."

Jon looked around the group and collected a series of nods from those assembled. He then turned to Clark and said, "Dad, we are in agreement. Go ahead and find mom. We will muddle along until you're back. There's no reason for you to be here by yourself all that time. We support you in this." There was a chorus of assent as he finished his statement.

The next day they started working on the plan. Sean worked on the death certificate and the funeral was planned and carried out. Superman announced that he had to travel to New Krypton for an undefined period of time. While all of this was going on Jimmy was working his digital magic creating a new persona complete with a history, bank accounts, passport and driver's license. In this way Superman's absence would be accounted for and then Clark could accompany Wells to the future.

Once all of these preparations were complete he was ready to go with Herb.

Herb pulled out his TaDT and entered the appropriate parameters. When he hit the enter button a portal opened in front of them and they stepped through, moving to San Diego, twenty years in the future.

%%%%%%%%%%

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124

New time basis

September 2085 Sidereal is now present day

%%%%%%%%%%

As soon as he stepped through he could sense the telepathic communications being carried on by the 'kids'. He sent out a mental greeting, /Hi kids! I'm back./

A chorus of mental greetings came back, /Dad! /Welcome back! /Where are you? /How soon can we get together?/

/I just arrived! Herb brought me to San Diego. He's going to point me in the right direction and then he'll be leaving. Why don't we get together tonight at the homestead, 7:30 Metropolis time./

Another chorus of replies came back, but Jon jumped in and resuming old habits acted as spokesman for the kids he sent, /We'll all be there. We look forward to seeing you again. It's been a long twenty years without you. We've all missed you. We're glad you're back./

Chapter — 10 - Loreleii

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Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124

September 2085 Sidereal

%%%%%%%%%

Lorelei L. Lane, granddaughter of Paul Lane, Sam Lane’s cousin, was getting ready to graduate from college. When she had graduated from High School she had been first a reporter and then editor of the school paper. She had followed that same path through her college career. Lorelei was a very attractive brunette with a fiery disposition and a drive to be the best at whatever she did. She was a very serious student and athlete in a number of sports and, for a teenager, was in top physical trim as a result.

Her family consisted of her parents, Phillip and Doris Lane; her younger sister Elizabeth (Liz) and older brother, Larry. They were a very close knit family. Her parents were very close and also very supportive of the children, encouraging them to do their best without being ‘on their cases’. For example, when Lorelei found out that she was going to graduate as Salutatorian of her class (her GPA was .02 behind the Valedictorian), she was disappointed with herself and wanted to do extra credit work or whatever it would take to move up to Valedictorian before it was too late, but her parents convinced her that she didn’t need to do that. She was tops in their book. At the last minute it was determined that there had been an error in the GPA calculations and that Lorelei was in fact the Valedictorian, with a GPA .04 ahead of her competition. She had maintained a constant 4.0 throughout her whole four years in college and was preparing to graduate with honors. She just had a few requirements to finish up.

16 years earlier (2069)

Six year old Lorelei woke up from her dream with a smile on her face. It was still the middle of the night. She was cuddling a black and white teddy bear that she had had for as long as she could remember in fact she couldn’t remember not having that bear. She really loved that bear and wouldn’t go to bed without it.

She hadn’t been scared by the dream; not really. There had been a point in the dream when she had been a **little** bit uncomfortable. She had felt like she had been falling, but then that had passed and she felt like she was being carried. She knew that she had never been in an airplane in her life but she had seen them on HV and knew all about them, well, sort of and in her dream she had been in an airplane. There had been other people there with her. One of them seemed to be special to her. Suddenly she was falling. One minute she had been in the plane and the next she was outside of it and she was falling. That only lasted a couple of minutes though because suddenly she felt a pair of arms cradle her and hold her up. It was a very comforting feeling, kinda like the way Daddy carried her, but, different somehow. She was still up in the air but she wasn’t falling anymore. It was like she was actually still flying, but she wasn’t in an airplane. Once she felt the arms cradling her she stopped being afraid, in fact she had felt very safe and secure even more than the way it felt in Daddy’s arms.

The dreams had started a long time ago, so long ago that she couldn’t remember not having them. They were always so nice. This one was a little scary to begin with but it turned out okay.

Then on the other hand sometimes Liz, her little sister, would wake up in the middle of the night from a dream screaming about the monsters. Liz’s screams would often wake up Lorelei who would climb out of her ‘big girl’ bed and climb into Liz’s crib, teddy in hand, and hug her until she settled down. Lori really loved her little sister and sometimes felt like it was her responsibility to take care of her. That was another dream she sometimes had. Mommy and Daddy had both gone away and she had to raise her sister. Then she’d wake up and realize that it was just a bad dream and that her Mommy and Daddy were in the other room and they weren’t going anywhere.

Sometimes she fell back to sleep holding Liz and her bear

and her parents would find her there in the morning.

Lorelei was glad that the bad dreams she had weren’t like the ones Liz had.

18 months previous - March 2084

Lorelei’s parents were more than a little bit concerned that she appeared to be so driven in everything she did whether it was her school work or sporting activities. She had been this way through high school and it had followed through in college.

“Phil, what do you think, should we interfere in what Lori’s doing. She doesn’t have a social life. Between her school work, Tae Kwon Do, tennis and cheerleading she doesn’t allow herself any time for dating. Should we encourage her to date?”

Phil replied, “I think that if she felt that she was missing out on anything that she would correct the situation herself. She seems happy the way things are. She has any number of friends, mostly girl friends, but that’s her choice. She’s the only one that can tread the path that she is on. We don’t even know where that path is leading. We have some suspicions, but only time will tell. All we can do is sit back and wait and allow her to chart her own course and find her own destiny.”

“I guess you’re right, it’s just so hard to watch her. Most of her friends have had at least one serious relationship, well at least as serious as a teenage relationship can be, by this time. She hasn’t had a single crush on any boy and she’s rebuffed any number of guys that have approached her.”

“So, she’s being really picky on who she allows to get close. There’s nothing wrong with that. I just think that when she does find the right guy, that’s going to be it. There hasn’t been a single guy she’s been willing to give more than the time of day to. I think that when she falls, she’s going to fall hard and completely. Just you wait and see.”

“That’s not too comforting Phil. To listen to you we should expect her to elope as soon as she meets Mister Right.”

“Doris, it’s up to us to make sure that she knows that we love her and are here for her. That we support her in whatever she does and maybe she will be open with us when the time comes.”

In the spring, Lorelei was team captain of her women’s tennis team and a fierce competitor on the courts both in singles and doubles play. In high school, invariably one or the other if not both of her parents had been at every tennis match cheering their daughter on. When she won the trophy for Most Outstanding Player for both singles and doubles play at the end of season banquet they led the applause. Since they were in San Francisco and Lori was in college in San Diego they couldn’t be there to support her but now, after each match she called to give them a report.

In the fall she was Captain of the cheerleaders for both football and basketball.

She also had worked very hard at Tae Kwon Do and had achieved her 3rd Dan Black Belt in that martial art. When she went for her grading her parents drove down and were both there observing her kata. They had watched her practice and practice at home during high school and knowing how assiduously she practiced they weren’t at all surprised when she flew through the kata demonstration.

When she went for the fight demonstration she was paired with a fourth dan black belt from a different dojo. When she stepped onto the mat she and her opponent both gave the covered weapon bow and assumed a ready stance. With the command to begin each of the combatants started circling to their strong side sizing up their opponent. When they started to close Lori gave a feint with her left hand, a weak side strike which drew her opponent to that side slightly and she quickly scored. The referee shouted “Wazaari!” (tr: one half point) as she made a quick right snap kick to the side making light controlled contact with her

opponent's left rib cage. With the scoring of the half point the fight was stopped and they returned to the starting positions.

Her opponent was somewhat chagrined at losing a point so early and resolved to equal the score quickly. When the command was given to begin, her opponent came in with a flurry of kicks and strikes which Lori successfully blocked until her opponent performed a combination kick. It started as a low snap kick targeting the knee but it stopped after traveling only about a foot, just far enough for Lori to commit to the block before changing target and becoming a high snap kick targeting the ribs and making somewhat stronger contact than was necessary or even called for. It knocked the wind out of Lori. The referee shouted "Wazaari!" Her opponent was awarded the half point but was also given a warning about excessive contact.

The score was now tied at a half point apiece. The next point would win the match. The opponents returned to their starting positions.

The command was given to begin. Lori's ribs still hurt. She decided she'd have to protect that side in this encounter so she kept her left arm tucked in using a weak side lead. Because of this she also wanted to get this over quickly. After moving around for a bit, each sizing up the other, Lori decided what she was going to do. Suddenly she charged her opponent. Just as she was about to be in striking range of her opponent she spun around and partially presented her back and good side while she twisted to look over her right shoulder and she brought her right leg back in a rear kick which took her opponent off guard, making contact in the solar plexus and knocking the wind out of her even though it wasn't a really strong contact. It was a precisely placed contact to do the most damage with the least effort and also not permanently injuring. Her opponent dropped to the mat.

The referee shouted "Ippon!" and awarded the full point to Lori, giving her the match. She immediately went to her opponent and assisted her to stand. She helped her to return to her start location, returned to her spot and bowed first to her opponent and then turned to bow to the referee. The formalities completed, she returned to her opponent and shook her hand.

When all of the candidates had been graded the award ceremony was conducted and Lori was awarded her third dan black belt. Her sparring opponent came over to her and congratulated her before her parents had a chance to take her away to celebrate.

She was also an expert marksman with any firearm or bow and arrow.

Even though they had discussed it any number of times, her parents were still concerned that she occupied all of her 'spare' time with study and sporting activities and had virtually no social life. They knew that hers was a special destiny but they couldn't understand why that would keep her from having a social life. She had a lot of friends but she didn't really date. There **had** been the captain of the football team. He was a tall, good looking guy with dark hair, but he just couldn't convince her to move beyond the occasional Coke after school. Even those stopped when some of the team members were declared ineligible after the HS paper published her expose on some of the members of the football team that were cheating on their Physics exams in order to remain eligible to play.

She was nearing graduation and Phil and Doris knew that the time was nearing when all of their lives would be changing.

14 years earlier, (2071)

Eight year old Lorelei woke up from her dream with a smile on her face. She was cuddling her teddy bear, just like always. Recently the dreams had started changing. Now she wasn't always falling. Sometimes she was just flying. She remembered one time that she flew right at this big building and at the last

second she changed course and flew in through these big open windows. There were lots of people inside and they were all watching her as she landed or as it placed on the floor. Yeah, she had been placed on the floor. She couldn't fly by herself but somehow she had been flown through the air. Someone had been carrying her! All she could remember was a bright colored suit disappearing back out the window.

There were other times that she felt like she was flying! She could look around and see some big city way down there, underneath her. She loved the sensations that brought out. The freedom to be up there, in the sky, not stuck to the ground. It just felt sooo real. She could even feel the wind in her face and blowing her hair.

But, there was still that feeling that she was safe and secure in someone's arms. There was that brightly colored suit and a nice face.

She didn't know who it was or how he could fly and she never stopped to think how that could be, it just was.

5 years ago, September 2080

As far back as Lorelei and her parents could remember, there were several supermen and superwomen helping the authorities with apprehending criminals and mitigating natural disasters.

Most of her girlfriends got all dreamy eyed over the younger members of that group, especially Dan-El and Zar-El, but not Lorelei.

Most of the guys she knew **literally** drooled over Hazel and Noel and especially Angel, three of the superwomen. There was no wonder about that, the skimpy outfits that they wore didn't leave much to the imagination and the skin tight suits the guys wore showed off their physique to advantage.

Nobody really knew their origin. There were several schools of thought on that topic. They did seem to have a resemblance to each other, adding weight to the theory that they were all members of the same family; however, it was very hard to be dogmatic on that point since they all wore a mask of some sort.

Another school of thought was that at least some of them were visitors from New Krypton. Since the disastrous introduction of the New Kryptonians, the reparations and intervention by the original Superman had healed the breach and a limited trade had been established. Another was that neither of these was the case and they were somehow advanced Homo sapiens originating right here on Earth. The idea that they could all be part of the same family was discounted because they all looked to be about the same age, mid twenties at most. In order for them to all be from the same family they would have had to be octuplets and that was very unlikely since multiple births of that nature always received a lot of notoriety.

Lori started thinking about her dreams and looking at the pictures of Superman and the colors of the uniform struck her as being very familiar, but there were so many supermen these days and the uniform colors that were being used ... actually no two were the same, at least within gender. Some of the girls wore the same colors as the guys, but like in a rainbow wedding party, no two of the girls wore the same colors or even the same style uniform. Ultra Woman II wore a uniform which was a full length body suit in maroon with a red cape but was sleeveless while Angel wore not much more than a two piece bathing suit with a micro-mini skirt over the bottoms, a short cape behind and knee high boots all of it in pure white. But only the 'original' Superman wore the colors that appeared in her dreams.

The original Superman had disappeared about 19 or 20 years ago, supposedly going to New Krypton, and hadn't been seen or heard of again.

12 years earlier, (2073)

Ten year old Lorelei woke up from her dream with a smile on her face. She had 'outgrown' her teddy bear so she didn't sleep with him, but he had a prominent and permanent place in the book shelf portion of the headboard of her bed. She had the habit of petting and talking to him every night before lying down to go to sleep.

Over the last couple of years her dreams had been changing. Now she wasn't always falling and being caught or being carried or even flying. In her dream she was spending a lot of time with a man. He was very nice to her and took care of her. He was tall with dark hair. He was really nice to be with. She liked spending time with him in her dreams.

Slowly she came to the realization that in her dreams she was all grown up. They would spend a lot of time on a sofa just holding each other and maybe watching a movie. Sometimes they went out to dinner and did other things. Sometimes it was like she was a secret agent. It would be dark and she would be sneaking around to discover what the bad guys were doing. Sometimes she would get caught by the bad guys but she would fight them and get away. When she woke up from one of these dreams she resolved that when she got older she would learn how to fight like that so that she could beat the bad guys just the way she did in her dreams.

Sometimes the bad men were too much for her but then the bright colored suit would save her.

Not all of the dreams were like that though. She remembered the other night she had dreamt of a big party, or was it a carnival, maybe a little bit of both. She had been with that same man and she was having a good time. Somehow her teddy bear found his way into her dream because at this carnival the guy she was with had used this big hammer to ring a bell and won her a prize. She saw her teddy and grabbed it.

She also was dancing, not the kind of dancing she was doing in the ballet classes her mommy had signed her up for but with a lot of people around and they were all doing the same thing at the same time. It was fun.

She decided that when she got married, she wanted someone like her dream man. Someone who would be extra special nice to her, be fun to be with and take care of her.

4 years and 9 months ago, December 2080

Lorelei had done a lot of research on the original Superman. For some inexplicable reason she was absolutely fascinated with him. It might have something to do with the colors of the suit he wore. They matched the colors of the suit in her dreams. She had every different picture of him she could find and had used them like wallpaper in her room. To say the walls were covered would have to be taken literally to be accurate. Every square inch of wall space was covered by a Superman picture. None of them were of the 'new' Supermen either. Every single one was of the original Superman.

Looking at the pictures gave her a sense of calm. It brought to the foreground of her memory a lot of the dreams she had had about the brightly colored suit and she started to realize that the dreams were very obviously about him although she could not understand how. He had left shortly after she had been born and no one had seen him since, so how could she be dreaming about him especially so vividly and **personally**. The dreams were so real like that it was almost like an actual memory, but, that was impossible, wasn't it? Yet, somehow ...

She had gone on the internet and found copies of every article that ever mentioned him. She had been somewhat surprised to find that the vast majority of the articles about him were written by a pair of reporters from the Daily Planet, Lois Lane and Clark Kent.

She had been struck by the name similarity between herself and Lois Lane. This generated a different line of research and she had done some genealogical searches. To her surprise, she had found that the Lois Lane part of the duo was in fact a distant cousin. Her grandfather's cousin had been Lois Lane's father, Sam Lane. After she found this out she went to her parents and asked, "How much can you tell me about my cousin Lois Lane?"

Her father had answered, "Let's see, Lois Lane was very famous. She was a reporter for a great metropolitan newspaper, the Daily Planet, in Metropolis. Your grandfather and her father were cousins. What else would you like to know?"

"How well did she know Superman, the original Superman?"
"I'm not exactly sure, honey. I'm sure she reported on his activities and I believe that he did save her life a number of times. I don't know much more than that. Maybe you could find more on the net."

She started an in depth search and came up with a lot of articles, not all of which were written by Lois Lane. Some of them were written **about** Lois Lane and her relationship with Superman. This made her investigation all that much more interesting. Her **cousin** was a **friend** of the **original** Superman, could you beat that? In fact, there were rumors of them having had an ... **affair!!!**

Lorelei found some pictures of Lois Lane online and realized when she saw them that she bore a striking resemblance to her cousin. Holding a picture of herself next to that of Lois Lane was like looking at two pictures of herself, side by side, one version slightly older than the other.

10 years earlier, (2075)

Twelve year old Lorelei woke up from her dream with a smile on her face. Her dreams were becoming even more frequent. She was looking forward to going to bed so that she could be with her dream man. She was starting to be more interested in boys, but, none of the boys in her school could measure up to her dream man. He was special.

In her dreams they were constantly together. They had dinner together and it seemed like they both worked at the same place, doing the same things, together. She thought about that. Did she want a boyfriend that was with her **all** the time? She thought that in a few years she just might as long as it was the right guy. It did seem like she enjoyed the time they spent together and it seemed like neither one of them objected to being together; in fact they went out of their way a **lot** of times to touch each other. She could almost feel his hand on her cheek. She quickly realized that that particular touch had a very special meaning.

4 years and 3 months ago June 2081

Lorelei had been accepted at San Diego State in the journalism program. She couldn't wait! She had been interested in being a journalist ever since she could remember. She had been on the school paper ever since she was able to join. Since she found out about her cousin all she could think about was getting her degree in journalism and working as an investigative reporter for the Daily Planet in Metropolis. She would carry on the work started by her cousin, bringing criminals to justice and corrupt officials to account!

That summer was going to be her last free summer so she decided to make the best of it. She spent a lot of time at the beach swimming and sunbathing. She always went with one of her girlfriends and they took turns putting the suntan lotion on each other. One by one her girlfriends dropped away as one by one they started spending more and more time with the guys that they were interested in.

She spent a lot of time with her girlfriends in girl talk. Thus

she heard all about their sexual exploits. These all received mixed reviews. A lot of the time her friends said that it wasn't all that it was cracked up to be. The guy had enjoyed himself but her girlfriend had been left unfulfilled. Lori took it all in and decided that she really didn't want to experiment that way. She was happy just the way she was and besides, she hadn't found any guy that could measure up to her dream man. She had decided that she would wait until Mister Right came along. She knew that she would recognize him when he did. She just knew that it would be love at first sight.

8 years earlier, (2077)

Fourteen year old Lorelei woke up from her dream with a smile on her face. Her dreams were becoming more and more detailed. Like they had been slightly 'out of focus' all these years and were now becoming clearer. She could almost see her dream man. She knew now that he was tall with dark hair and **sometimes** he wore glasses, but, **sometimes** he didn't. Most of the kids that she knew that **had** to wear glasses wore them all the time even if they did think that they made them look dorky or else like a nerd. She couldn't figure that out.

She seemed to remember that most of the time he dressed up in a business suit but there was something about that ... it jarred her to think about it. There would be this dark or solid color like a gray but then there would be this splash of bright colors that simply didn't match.

Then there was the memory of the bright colored suit. How did that fit in???

Lori was going to be fifteen this September and this summer was going to be **special**. She was going to a riding camp! She had never been riding before but she had been dreaming about riding for years. She had always liked horses and was really looking forward to the experience. To get ready for it she had asked her mom if she could get a special riding outfit. Doris was thinking along the lines of a jodhpur but when Lori described what she actually wanted it was a far cry from that. Lori described a long skirt, more like culottes, so it was actually pants that looked like a skirt when standing. Lori also wanted western style boots, a hat and of all things, a gun belt. They had already gotten permission for her to carry a side arm when in the brush country. They had provided the certificates of Lori's IPSC and USPSA Junior Champion status and she had been cleared. She was going to take her favorite gun, a Ruger single action six which had a western style frame. It was chambered at .38 Special and she had a box of wad cutters that she would take with her.

The first day of camp they were introduced to their mounts. Lori had drawn an Appaloosa mare called 'Withers' who had chestnut forequarters and a white rump with chestnut spots. The first thing that they learned to do was care for their mount, which included how to feed, curry, stable and least desirable of all, how to muck the stalls. Next they learned how to saddle. Withers was an experienced animal and when she was being saddled she would take a deep breath and expand her abdomen so that an unwary rider would wind up with a loose cinch and the saddle would slip. Lori spotted this and patted Withers on the belly to get her to exhale before tightening the cinch. One of the counselors, Jackie Stewart, saw this and came over. "How did you know to do that? We hadn't gone over that trick with you."

Lori replied, "It just seemed like the right thing to do."

Jackie asked, "Are you sure you haven't ridden before?"

Lori replied, "Positive. This is my first time ever"

Jackie replied, "That's a trick that even some experienced riders miss," and thought, <I'm going to keep an eye on her. She knows more than she let's on.>

A few days later they were going out on a trail ride out in the

valley. This would be Lori's first chance to carry her revolver and she hoped that she would get the chance to do some target shooting. She made sure that she only loaded 5 rounds and that the hammer rested on an empty chamber before holstering her gun.

They had been riding for a couple of hours and rather than following in line and breathing each other's dust they were spread out slightly. Lori, on Withers, was near the middle of the group and riding off to the right side.

Suddenly she heard a noise like a baby rattle. She knew exactly what it had to be and only had a second to react before Withers responded to the threat. In anticipation of what Withers would do she gripped the reins more firmly and leaned forward just as Withers reared up on her hind legs. Lori kept her seat and her presence of mind. She was looking for the threat and just as Withers reached her full height she spotted the snake. It was to the right about five feet, and ten feet in front. As soon as she spotted the rattler she pulled her gun, cocked and fired. It was an instinct shot - she didn't have time to line up the sights.

At the sound of the gun going off Withers panicked. Her ears came back almost flat against her head and bringing her fore legs back to the ground, she bolted.

Having her revolver in one hand and the reins in her other Lori gripped with her legs to keep her seat. As soon as she had holstered her gun she leaning as far forward as she could, and with the saddle horn gouging her in the stomach she started stroking the mare's neck and talking to her in a soothing tone.

Jackie had been near the back of the group when she saw Withers rear up. Almost immediately she heard the explosion of Lori's sidearm and saw Withers bolt. Jackie kicked her mount into a gallop even though with the lead that Lori had, Jackie didn't know if she would be able to save her camper or just be there to pick up the pieces. As her mount reached a full gallop she kept watching Lori and what she saw amazed her. This self-proclaimed inexperienced rider had maintained her seat when her mount had reared, had pulled a sidearm and let loose a shot and then managed to keep her seat when the mount bolted. Now Jackie could see that Lori was leaning far forward in her saddle although Jackie didn't know just what Lori was doing. Jackie maintained her pursuit and it suddenly dawned on her that she was catching up.

Lori's actions were finally getting through to Withers. Her calm voice and gentle hand on her neck were having the desired effect. Slowly Withers ears came to the front and she started to slow her pace. Lori continued stroking Withers' neck and calmly saying "Whoa," over and over. The command finally was effective and Withers came to a halt. She started blowing from the exertion of the run as Lori dismounted.

Lori, hanging on to the reins, walked to the front and started stroking Withers' nose and continued talking to her. She reached into her pocket and pulled out a sugar cube which she was in the habit of keeping there as a treat for the horse and fed it to her. As Withers finished the sugar cube, she nuzzled Lori's face. With a final pat Lori turned and vaulted into the saddle. Lori pulled to the left on the reins, rattled them and gave the command, "Giddap." Withers turned around and started to return to the group at a slow trot.

Jackie, when she had seen that Withers was slowing down, had done the same and just followed and watched. What she saw amazed her. This inexperienced rider was handling this situation in a way that spoke of many years of riding experience. Jackie didn't think even she could have done better, if so well. She pulled her mount to a halt when she saw Lori dismount and just sat and watched. When she saw her vault into the saddle she was dumbfounded. She waited until Lori was close and then turned her mount so that they could ride back to the group together.

When they got back to the group, they were all clustered

around the spot where Withers had reared up. When they got close enough to see what was so interesting what they saw was a rattler about seven feet in length. Lori's shot had found its mark and the head of the rattler was splattered all around for a couple of feet. Jake, another one of the counselors, climbed down off his mount and pulling out a knife cut off the rattle. Walking over to Lori, he presented it to her. "That was some fancy shooting! That wad cutter you had chambered just exploded the snake's head. Here's a souvenir of your encounter, you earned it."

That night the counselors had a meeting and Jackie gave a detailed description of her observations. "If I didn't know better, I'd have to say that that girl has been riding all of her life. I'm not so sure that I could have done what she did and I've been riding for over ten years. I think we need to come up with some way to recognize her achievement."

There was a general agreement and at the end of the camp Lori received an award as most advanced rider of the season and the counselors had had the snake's rattle mounted on a plaque with a plate commemorating the event.

Chapter 11 — Lois?

4 years ago, (2081)

Lorelei was going through the registration process at San Diego State. Her parents had dropped her off the day before and gotten her settled in her apartment. Using a social media outlet she had found a couple of other girls that were starting at SD State. They had hooked up to share the expenses of an off campus apartment. It was pretty close to campus, walking distance actually, so she didn't even need a car. While registering for classes she had also signed up for some other things. She had signed up for tryouts for the tennis team, had joined the karate club and had joined the school paper. There was one other activity that she signed up for, the Drama Club. In her research into Investigative Journalists she had discovered that many times they had to go undercover pretending to be someone else. Lori thought that learning to act a little could help her with this. She had been in a couple of productions in high school and hoped that she would learn more at the college level.

When she arrived for the first meeting of the karate club she found that there was a mix of styles represented. There were several practitioners of Tae Kwon Do as well as Ischon Ru, Kempo and Jeet Kune Do. This was a real mix of hard and soft styles and she saw it as a chance to broaden her style base so she started working mostly with the people practicing the softer, Chinese Kung Fu, styles, Tae Kwon Do being Korean and considered a hard style.

Tryouts for the tennis team were going to be held the next week so she made sure to put time into her schedule to go to the courts and bang the ball around a bit. She spent a lot of time working on her serve. She won a lot of her matches by being able to serve up an ace so consistently, catching that outside corner and thus forcing her opponent into a backhand return if they could even manage to return it at all. Because their backhands were usually weak, she could usually close it by charging the net and using a cross-court return while they were still fading away.

She brought in her portfolio of articles from her high school paper and was given a 'cub' reporter position. With any luck she would be able to bring in a big story and move up the reporter ranks quickly.

6 years earlier, (2079)

Sixteen year old Lorelei woke up from her dream with a smile on her face. Her dreams were becoming even more detailed and graphic. Sometimes she wondered how she could remember so much of her dreams. Most people said that they would not

remember their dreams unless they are awakened in the middle of them, but she very clearly remembered every detail and nuance of hers. At 16 her dreams were starting to become distinctly sexual. Fortunately, so far, they had only involved a lot of kissing and cuddling, always with the same guy, her dream man. If this kept up he would go from that status to that of dream lover. With a wicked little grin she thought, <I can't wait>.

There was one particular dream that she had had recently; actually she had had it several times. She and her dream man were walking in a park and he had had her sit on the edge of a fountain. He had gotten down on one knee, pulled out a little box and just before he opened it, it started to rain. He had complained to the heavens asking to be given a break but refused to flee the rain. He opened the little box with a ring in it and asked her to marry him. Now she just had to wait for that dream to come again. Maybe she would find out what her answer had been. With as much time as she apparently spent with this same guy and as much as she liked spending time with him, she didn't think she would have turned him down.

Friday, October 3, 2085

Herb had dropped Clark off in this time period a few months previously. Clark had taken the time to get himself established in his new identity. Before leaving, Herb had told him who he was looking for and generally where to find her. Lorelei was well into her senior year and would be graduating in the spring. Clark had researched her movements from a distance and had chosen to observe her for a while before contacting her. He had seen fliers around campus for a musical being done by the Drama Club. They were doing "Camelot" and starring as Guinevere was Lorelei Lane. Clark decided that he just had to go see this play.

A month and a half earlier

Lori was amazed that she had gotten the lead. She was a contralto and the lead was supposed to be a soprano but the difference in voice had been overlooked because of other factors. They had had 'in costume' auditions and as the various aspirants had appeared on stage the only one who appeared completely comfortable in the costume and had the grace and poise needed to carry the role was Lori. When she had first put the costume on she had insisted on some changes to the way it draped and was fastened before going on stage. Her stage presence in costume almost literally blew the director away. As soon as she finished he cancelled the rest of the auditions and named her as Guinevere. He directed that they transpose the music to her range and they went into rehearsal.

The big night had arrived. Clark was fifth row center when the curtain went up. When it came time for Guinevere's entrance Clark was awed. A memory tickled at the back of his mind. The more he saw her and the way she moved and looked, the memory became stronger and stronger. Finally it hit him, just what that memory was: **Lady Loisette**. He was watching Lorelei play Guinevere but he was seeing **Lady Loisette**. He started to think, <Could she in any possible way have a memory of being Lady Loisette? Watching her in that costume and the way she is handling herself and comparing her to the other women in costume, the difference is blindingly obvious. She acts like that is her normal attire while the others are just a little bit uncomfortable. If she does have some memory of Lady Loisette could it also be possible that she remembers Lois?>

Friday, November 30, 2085

It was the day after the Thanksgiving holiday and Clark had

chosen this time and place for ‘first contact’. He went into the coffee shop where he knew she would be studying. He stepped up to the counter and ordered a cappuccino.

Twenty-two year old Lorelei woke up from her dream with a smile on her face. The difference was that it was midday and she wasn’t home in bed. She was in her favorite coffee shop trying to study but had gotten bored and had started to daydream.

What had brought her out of the dream?

There was this feeling in the pit of her stomach. It was like nothing she had ever felt before. All of the sudden there were a flock of butterflies in her stomach. It was like the electricity you feel in the air just before a thunderstorm strikes.

It had been such a lovely daydream. She had been wearing a wedding gown and her dream man was at the front of the church waiting for her. Some time ago she’d dreamt about him proposing. Now she was sure that she had married him. It had been such a nice daydream that she had hated being brought out of it, but this uneasy feeling just couldn’t be denied. She was metaphorically dragged kicking and screaming from her wonderful dream and back to the reality of the day and the coffee shop.

Looking around she tried to find the possible cause of this agitation. She thought, <What’s changed?> She tried to see what had happened that could explain the sudden onset of this agitation. Nothing seemed to be happening. There was only the usual number of students and teachers in the shop studying or talking in small groups around the tables.

There was a new guy at the counter buying a coffee. He had his broad back to her so she couldn’t make out his features. He was dressed nicely enough, but he didn’t look like a student or even a teacher, being too well dressed to be either one. That nice conservative business suit was unlike anything worn by either students or faculty. There weren’t too many businesses located this close to campus, so she thought that maybe he was someone with business on campus stopping to get a coffee after his sales call or whatever had called him on campus.

Usually she chose to sit alone because she liked to spread her stuff out when she worked and she needed the whole table for that. She looked back down at the table. Her electronic pad was propped up in its stand and the keyboard projector was still active. She preferred to use the keyboard projector because even though she could speak faster than she could type there were too many errors caused in the speech recognition by the ambient background noise of the coffee shop. It took almost as much effort to edit out the errors as it would to simply type to start with, thus the keyboard projector. Retyping her password brought it out of screensaver mode and she tried to get back to her studies. She had multiple research windows open in her browser as well as her word processor and she was flipping back and forth between her research sources and the paper she was working on with the ease of much practice.

This English Lit paper was really giving her a lot of trouble. The professor had assigned them to prepare a paper on the author, H. G. Wells. In high school she had read at least one of his books so she was somewhat familiar with his work and she knew that he was a popular science fiction author from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The story that she had read was about time travel and she had found it to be utterly unbelievable, at least the part about the future society that his traveler encountered. He had taken a very pessimistic view of the path society was on. However, things were different in real life.

The presence of the supermen had had a positive impact on society in general. After doing more study she had come to the realization of the reason she was having a problem with this assignment. It wasn’t because of what she had read, it was more what she hadn’t read. There was this gut feeling that there was a lot more to the story, a lot that wasn’t reported. Somehow she just

knew that this was an incomplete history. There had been some old pictures of H. G. Wells on the net but even though they were all black-n-white she kept getting full color flashes of an individual in a bowler hat with wire rim glasses, a moustache and a merry twinkle in his eyes. She kept having this vision of him pulling a pocket watch on a gold chain out of his vest pocket, opening the cover looking at it and then looking up with a smile on his face. She couldn’t account for it but she was determined that she needed to limit her report to what she could find on the net.

Making an effort to return to her work, she started another search, but that feeling of unease wouldn’t let up. She realized that the way things were going she would never get anywhere on the paper because she was just too distracted. This particular paper wasn’t due until Monday so she had the weekend to work on it but, diligent student that she was, she was just not one to put things off until the last minute.

Still trying to get back to work, she sat there staring at the screen and as she did she kind of ‘zoned out’ for a bit. When that happened she started to daydream again. Only this time it was as if all of the dreams she had had over the course of her life coalesced in her mind, sorted themselves out, solidified and became crystal clear in her memory. It was like a thunderstorm all contained inside her cranium with the lightning flashes being flashes of memories, memories that until now had manifested themselves as dreams, some of them barely remembered, while others had been clearly remembered. After what seemed like an eternity, but was actually only a matter of minutes she became aware of her surroundings again. She raised her head which had slumped forward and looked around.

When the cappuccino was delivered Clark picked it up and turned around. As he did he saw Lorelei at a table over toward the middle of the seating arrangement and there was a distressed look on her face. It was almost like she was having a seizure with her head slumped forward on her chest. It seemed as though he was the only one that had noticed her distressed state and he rushed over to her table.

Lorelei woke up from this dream with a thoughtful look on her face. She felt like a different person. All of those remembered dreams now were as crystal clear as any memory she had formed in her short life. She looked up to see the guy that had been at the counter standing across the table from her looking at her with a concerned look.

The man asked, “Are you okay? The expression on your face ... it almost looked like you were in pain.”

One look at that face, the glasses, that little forehead that flopped down on his forehead ... there was instant recognition. Slowly she stood up and moved around the table. Reaching up with her hand she caressed the side of his face in that special way they shared. Touching him caused a feeling like electricity to pass between them and she whispered, “Clark.” Just that one word, but it carried a world of meaning ... her world.

Stunned at this, Clark reached up and covered her hand with his own and looked at her with all the depths of love he possessed evident in his eyes. He said “Let’s sit down and talk.” Moving back toward her seat she started to sit down while he started to sit down opposite her at the table.

Stopping in mid-move, rather than sitting down, Lori started to gather up her equipment. “Let’s get out of here. We need to go somewhere more private.” She stuffed all her equipment into her bag picked it up and slung it over her shoulder. Taking his hand in her free one, she almost literally dragged him out of the coffee shop.

She didn’t stop until she had him at her off-campus apartment. She left him standing in the middle of the living room while she dumped her bags in her bedroom. Before she returned to the living room she picked up her teddy from HIS place of

honor on her pillow. Carrying him with her, Lori checked to see that her roommates were not in the residence. Once assured that they were absent she locked the door and turned around and faced him.

“How do you know me?” Clark asked.

“It’s so confusing. I have all these memories. I just know what I know and what I know is that I have been dreaming about you like forever. It’s been like I have been waiting for this moment for all of my life. All of the dreams I have had all of my life have been preparing me for this meeting. I just **know** you like I have never known anyone in my entire life. I know **ALL** about you. She held her bear out in front herself so that he was facing Clark. “Do you recognize him?” she asked. “I have had this bear for as long as I can remember. I never named him in all this time but, now, I know what his name is ... it’s Clarkie Bear **and** I know that you won one just like him for me at the Corn Festival. He has been my companion and confidant ever since I can remember. I know **ALL** about you ... I know who you are ... I know **what** you are. I know what you can do. I don’t know how this is possible, but I know that we are meant to be together. I have been dreaming about you and me all my life. All my dreams just came true, in one second.”

Clark stood there just staring. <This is Lois in full babble mode, incredible! I can’t let on just how much I know. This could be a fluke or it could be that Mad Dog Lane’s determination actually worked.> “What do you mean you know all about me and we are meant to be together? We just met. Actually, that isn’t even correct. We haven’t even met yet. You do seem to know my name, but, I don’t even know yours.”

Lorelei stared at him for a few seconds. Could she be mistaken? To that she answered herself with a resounding <NO!>. She decided to let it all out. “I know that you are Clark Kent. I also know that you are Superman. Not one of the supermen, **The** Superman. My name is Lorelei Lane, Lois Lane was my cousin, and I have been dreaming about you **all** of my life. All I really know is that when you entered the coffee shop I got this uneasy feeling in the pit of my stomach. When I started to feel it, it dragged me kicking and screaming out of a daydream about you. I didn’t know what or who had done it. I looked around and all I could see was your back so I went back to my studies and another daydream about you. This time it was like every dream solidified and became actual memories. It was like a blinding light went off inside my skull and suddenly, I remembered ... I **remembered**. Clark, it’s me. It’s **Lois**.”

Clark reached out and put his arms around her waist as she put her arms around his neck in an, oh so familiar way, tangling her fingers in his hair as he leaned in to kiss her.

There was instant recognition on both of their parts. There was that electrical shock exchange as their lips came into contact. Years ago Lois had told Clark that she would recognize his kiss, no matter what he looked like. When Woody Samms had taken over his body, Lois had recognized him in Samms’ body with a kiss. Lorelei (Lois) instantly confirmed for herself that this was **her** Clark and Clark, by the same token, instantly recognized Lois’ kiss and lost himself in the moment.

When they broke apart Clark put his forehead to hers and held both of her hands in his. “How is this possible? Lois has been dead, dead and buried for twenty-two years and yet here you are. I should have known, really, I do know. When Lois Lane sets her mind to do something, it gets done. She was determined that when she passed on we would be reunited. We knew that it had happened in the past and she wanted it to happen again in the future — now. I can’t believe she actually succeeded, but I am incredibly happy that she did. It makes this a whole lot easier.”

“I know how happy we were together. I want that now ... for us.”

“We were married for over sixty years.”

“They **were** happy years or this couldn’t have happened. She wouldn’t have been able to pass on these ‘memories’ the way she did if she hadn’t wanted it so much. I wouldn’t trade a single day with you for a lifetime with anyone else.”

That statement really hit him. It was a statement that Lois had made a number of times during their long married life. “They **were** extremely happy years. We were **very much** in love.”

“It’s so confusing. I have all these memories, yet, they are her, no, now they are my memories. **I** know. **I** remember. I have been waiting all my life, that is, Lorelei’s life, for you to find me. Where have you been all this time? Everyone thought that you had gone to New Krypton.”

“That is a long story. To make it short, there is this guy I know who has a device that can cross the time barrier.”

“Herb.”

Clark stared for a second then stammered, “Ye, uh, yes. He offered to bring me into the future so that we could meet and be together again. I took him up on his offer. For me, Lois died two years ago even though you are now about 22 years of age.”

“Right, I **am** twenty-two years old, which means that I don’t need my parents’ consent to get married. I don’t want to wait. It isn’t like we don’t know each other. We both have all the memories of 60 years of being together. Let’s go get married, today ... now! It will be a shock to my family, with a capital ‘S’.” <Good one.> she thought, “because I haven’t so much as dated all through school or college.”

<Typical Lois impetuosity> “Don’t you think I should at least meet your parents before we do? And what about your schooling? Your parents might object to you getting married if they think it will interfere with that. You don’t graduate till next year.”

“It won’t and you know it and I can convince them. Actually, I think my GPA will improve. I’ll be more relaxed and I’ll have one heck of a tutor.” She threw her arms around his neck and said, “I have missed you.”

“I think you should at least call your parents and tell them something.”

“Okay, yeah, you’re right. I’ll call them now.” She pulled out a cell phone and dialed. “Hello, Daddy? Lorelei ... No, nothing is wrong, in fact everything couldn’t be more right! ... Uh huh, yes, so far so good. ... Yes, we have our next match on Wednesday.. ... Well, you see, I’ve met someone. ... Uh huh, yes, I’m **sure** he’s the one. ... I just know. ... Yes, it is sudden. I know I really didn’t date. ... That doesn’t mean that I don’t know when I have found the right man. ... I was just waiting for the right man to come along. ... Yes, of course, you’re going to meet him. ... How about dinner, tonight? ... We will arrange transportation. ... We can be there before 6:30, would that be okay? ... All right, see you then. ... What? What was that? ... Bring the bear? ... Is that what you said? ... Why should I bring the bear? ... Okay, I’ll bring the bear. ... All right, we’ll see you then. ... Love ya, bye.” Closing the phone she turned to Clark. “Okay we have a few hours. Let’s go.”

“Go where?”

“To get **married**, of course. Get your butt in gear, Kent.” She grabbed her bag and headed for the door.

“Wait a minute! We do need to do this the right way.”

“I don’t want to wait any longer!”

“This will only take a minute.” As he finished that last word he disappeared at superspeed out her door. He returned about ten seconds later. Kneeling down on one knee, he pulled a velvet box out of his pocket and opened it. Inside the box was Lois’ original engagement ring which Clark had kept rather than allowing it to be buried with Lois. It had been at his apartment nearby and he had gone to fetch it. “Lorelei Lane, would you do me the honor of being my wife?”

When Lori saw the ring she instantly recognized it and a tear came to her eye. Lorelei placed her hand on Clark’s cheek and

said in a hushed tone, “You kept my ring. It’s nice to have it back. I always loved this ring. It was always special because it represented your love for me.” Raw emotion had been almost choking her so she had to clear her throat before she could answer. “Yes, I would love to.” He placed the ring on her finger. She admired it for a minute then said “Okay, Let’s go.”

Chapter 12 — Herb Paved the Way

“Hold on. I don’t want to wait any more than you do, but, I think that in order to do this the right way, we need to get your parents’ consent ... **beforehand**. Let’s go see them first so that we can explain what has happened.”

“Why must you always be so proper?”

“I guess it must be my Smallville upbringing.”

“Well, okay, let’s go talk to my parents first.”

They left the apartment hand in hand while Lori carried her bear. Finding a deserted alley Clark spun into the suit. Lori looked on in appreciation as he did this and then said, “It’s just like old times. I haven’t seen that in a while.”

Lori moved over to him and placed her arms around his neck and pulled him down into a kiss. As the kiss continued Clark picked up Lorelei and flew straight up until they were out of sight from the ground. Clark broke the kiss so that he could look around and get his bearings before heading for San Francisco.

They landed in a secluded area near the Lane family home and Clark spun out of the suit before they walked up to the door. It was only 3:30 when they arrived but Lorelei’s mom and little sister were there. Her father was due home at about 5:00 PM.

Lorelei introduced Clark to her mom as her new ‘boyfriend’ and Doris was swept off her feet by Clark’s mid-western, down home charm. Lori noticed that even before her dad arrived, Doris had been won over by Clark and that Doris was happy that Lorelei had found such a warm, caring and charming, not to mention handsome, man.

Liz, who was going to Berkley, had no classes scheduled so she had the day off and was home when they arrived. She took one look at Clark and pulled Lorelei aside and asked, “Where did you find him, Sis? He’s a dreamboat! Does he have any brothers?”

Lori laughed and said, “No, actually, he’s one of a kind.”

Liz replied, “Darn, wouldn’t you know it!”

Clark had overheard this exchange and was really happy that all of this was without revealing just who Clark actually was.

Lorelei’s brother Larry came in about 4:30 from his job. Larry had taken a year off from school to earn enough money to buy a car before starting graduate school. Lorelei introduced them. Larry, being the protective brother, immediately started to quiz Clark.

“So, what do you do for a living? How serious are you about my sister? How are you going to provide for her?” Larry asked.

Clark was a little staggered by these rapid-fire questions. He pulled himself together and answered, “Currently I’m living on an inheritance but by trade I’m an investigative reporter. I plan to work for a major newspaper.”

Larry challenged, “Are you any good?”

Clark answered defensively, “I like to think so. I’ve worked for a major paper before. I’ve just taken a break.”

Still with a challenging tone, Larry asked, “When did you meet Lori?”

Clark replied, “We just met, but it’s like we have known each other for a long time. You might say it was love at first sight.”

Somewhat worried, Larry asked, “Okay, so you say that you love my sister, but how long will that last? Will it last until you see someone else that you may be interested in?”

Clark tried to appear confident as he replied, “Well, Larry, once you get to know me, that is, if you get the chance to know

me and I’m not kicked out on my ear, I think you’ll find that I’m what you would call a one-woman man. I’ve waited a long time to find your sister and I’m convinced that she’s the right woman for me, so, Larry, there’ll be no other, now or ever.”

With some skepticism Larry said, “I wish I could be sure of that.”

“I hope that you will see that I am telling you the truth. If you aren’t sure I think that you can ask your sister.”

Lori had been watching as Larry had been confronting Clark and walked over just as Clark finished his last statement.

She spoke up, “Larry, you know me and you know how picky you have always thought I was when it came to guys. I always told you that I was waiting for Mister Right and that he hadn’t come along as yet. Trust me, Clark is Mister Right.” She put her arm around Clark’s waist. “I always knew that I would be able to tell when the right guy came along and this is him.”

“Okay sis, if you say so. I just want to reserve my final judgment until I see some more.”

Doris was busy with the meal preparations and called Larry and Liz into the kitchen to give her a hand.

Lori turned to Clark and said, “Sorry about the third degree.”

“That’s all right. Really, I expected it. Not so much from your brother as from your parents though.”

Lori laughed, “You still have to face my father. Keep in mind, this was **your** idea. I wanted to **elope**.”

“It’s still better this way.”

Lori led him over to the couch and they sat down together just holding hands and enjoying being together until her father arrived.

When Phillip arrived at 5:15 he found them in the living room waiting for him.

Lori called her mom and siblings to let them know that he had arrived.

When Doris came in she said, “Honey, dinner will be ready in 45 minutes. Lori brought her new boyfriend over to meet us. It looks to me like the day has arrived.”

Philip shot her a look and then slowly a look of dawning comprehension overcame his features. Before he had a chance to sit down Doris said, “Why don’t you go get the box out of the safe?”

Phillip nodded and left the room. When he returned he had a jewelry box in his hand which he handed to Doris.

When he had reentered the room, after Phil had handed the box to Doris, Clark got up and stuck out his hand. Phillip gave him a frank appraisal, looking him up and down before he finally took his hand and shook it in greeting as he was introduced. Doris said, “Clark Kent, Phillip Lane, my husband.”

Unperturbed by this visual appraisal Clark said, “I’m pleased to meet you, sir.”

“So, you’re the guy that’s swept my little girl off her feet.”

“I assure you that my intentions are purely honorable.”

Glancing over at Lori and getting her nod of encouragement, Clark continued, “Sir, I would like to ask for your daughter’s hand in marriage.” Lorelei had removed the ring until things were settled.

In a slightly irritated tone Phillip said, “This is rather sudden, isn’t it? When exactly did the two of you meet? When Lori called me earlier today was the first I had ever heard of you.”

Clark responded, “You’re right, sir. It is rather sudden, but, I think we can explain it in such a way that you will understand. I would ask that for a short time Lori’s sister and brother leave us alone. Some of this should be for your ears alone.”

Doris spoke up, “Certainly, Liz, Larry why don’t you two go into the kitchen and check on dinner. Why not set the table while you’re at it.”

Lori had heard her mom’s earlier comment and was curious. After her siblings had left the room she asked, “What day has

arrived? The day I finally meet someone?"

Doris replied, "No dear. It's much more important than that. Let me tell you a story."

Doris began, "When you were six months old I was at home with you one day and there was someone at the door. When I checked it was a dapper little man wearing a suit. It was a little dated but he was neatly dressed so it didn't look like it would be a problem. When I opened the door he introduced himself."

Flashback

21 years earlier (March 2064)

Doris answered the door and the dapper little man introduced himself. "My name is Wells. Do I have the pleasure to be addressing Mrs. Phillip Lane?"

"Yes, I'm Doris Lane. Do I know you?"

"No, by no means. I am here representing the Superman Foundation. May I have a moment of your time?"

"The Superman Foundation, what would they want with me?"

"Please, if I might come in, I can explain."

"Well, all right, please come in."

"Thank you." Herb entered and was conducted into a modest living room. Doris had taken his hat and placed it on a table in the foyer as she passed it.

After they were seated Herb asked "How soon do you expect your husband to arrive?"

"He should be here shortly. Did you want to see him?"

"Actually, my business is with both of you. While we wait, would you mind if I had a look at Lorelei?"

"How do you know about our daughter?"

"Really, she is the purpose of my visit."

"Why so?"

"I would like to hold my explanation until I can speak to both you and your husband at the same time."

"Okay. I'll go get her."

A few minutes later Doris returned carrying a sleeping child of about six months of age.

Herb looked upon her with adoring eyes. He said to Doris, "She's lovely and she will be a beautiful woman when she grows up."

"Thank you. We think she's kinda special."

Just then Phillip Lane walked in. "Hello," Turning to his wife he said, "Who is this?"

"Honey, this is Mr. Wells. He is a representative of the Superman Foundation."

He exclaimed, "The **Superman Foundation!** What can we do for you?"

"Ah, it's not what can you do for me, it's what can I do for you. I am actually here about your daughter, Lorelei. Mr. and Mrs. Lane you have a **very** special daughter, very special indeed. Your daughter is the chosen one. By that I mean that she has a special destiny to fulfill. She will do great things and she will make you both very proud."

"How do you know so much about us and about her? What kinds of things?"

"What I am about to tell you must be kept in strictest confidence. There are things about the Superman Foundation which the general public does not and cannot know. The things I am about to tell you, I do so only because of your relationship to her. The Superman Foundation has the means of travelling through time as well as space. Utilizing this ability we have determined that a very special destiny awaits your daughter. I cannot go into any details. Too much information too soon is not good for anyone. I have here a gift from the Foundation which will symbolize her destiny." Out of a carryall he had placed on the floor at his feet he pulled out a jewelry box which he opened

to display the contents. What they saw took their breath away. It was a sterling silver pendant on a chain.

(When she reached this point of the story Doris opened the jewelry box to display the contents to Lori.)

Herb explained, "The stones are blue Star Sapphires, her birthstone. On the back her name is inscribed. When she attains the age of maturity, this pendant should be removed from this box and she should begin to wear it. This pendant symbolizes her destiny."

"Wait a minute. That's the symbol of the supermen."

"It is also the symbol used by the Superman Foundation."

"Are you telling us that her destiny is tied up with the supermen?"

"I cannot make any further comment except to say that when the time comes for the truth to be revealed, you will recognize it.

Next Herb pulled a black and white teddy bear out of the carryall. "This is also a present from the Superman Foundation. Believe it or not, this bear will enable her to fulfill her destiny. Please keep this bear close to her."

Doris had laid Lorelei down on the couch. Herb walked over and placed the bear next to her and stepped back. He looked around and noted that they were all more than five feet away from the bear, except for Lorelei. He reached into his pocket.

{Unknown to Doris and Phillip, Herb pressed a button activating a device hidden within the bear.}

End Flashback

Doris held out the jewelry box to Lori and said, "Honey, this is for you to wear."

Lori was stunned. She had never heard this story before. She was still trying to take it all in and not having much luck in doing so. In a very distracted manner she had been staring at the pendant as the story was being told.

Doris removed the pendant from the box which Lori held and stepping up behind Lori started to place the pendant around her neck.

She continued, "Lori, we were told that when **the** day came that we should place this pendant around your neck. We didn't know exactly what it all meant but we suspected that it had something to do with the **supermen.**" She finished fastening the pendant around Lori's neck.

Lori was still bewildered and in something of a state of shock. She just sat there going over the story in her mind.

Phil asked, "I think a key question is, if you just met him, how you can be so sure that he's the one?"

She had been processing this story for a time and still had some questions but decided that at this time it would be more prudent to address her parent's concerns. To do this Lorelei asked, "Daddy, you're a clinical psychologist. Can you tell me what defines the person?"

Phillip was taken somewhat aback by this question. What did this have to do with this new boyfriend? He decided to allow Lori to direct the conversation. So, after thinking about it for a minute he said, "I would say that the person is defined by their memories. The memories acquired over the course of their lifetime mold the personality which defines the person they are or will be."

Lori said "Clark grew up in a small community in the mid-west as the son of a farmer. The memories created during that time have defined who he is then, correct?"

Her dad answered "Yes, that would be the logical assumption."

Lori stated "I grew up here in San Francisco as the daughter of a professional, a physician so my personality has been defined by those memories, correct?"

Phil answered "Yes, again, that would be the logical

assumption.”

Lori now proposed “What would happen if, say, through hypnosis or some other means a different set of memories were substituted for the existing memories or if a different set of memories were **added** to those which were already there?”

Phil thought for a few seconds and then answered “Then the person, the personality would be changed.”

Lori continued to question, “What kind of results would that have?”

Phil replied “It would result in a different personality either as a new identity or ‘split personality’ like in that movie ‘The Three Faces of Eve’ or it could result in a new, blended personality. This is based on the multiple scenarios you presented.”

Now Lori got to the crux of the matter. “Daddy, what would you say if I told you that all my life I have had memories which were manifesting themselves as dreams? Every night, for all of my life I have been dreaming about one individual, one special man. I have never believed in reincarnation, until now. That man was a man that I had been married to in a previous life. When that man found me today, all of the dreams I had had over the course of my life crystallized into memories. The memories are of a life together with that man. **Happy** memories of a long married life. Memories of this man here at my side. I’m still a little bewildered though because there is more. I have memories from other times. I don’t know just what they are.” Lori had a bewildered expression on her face as she tried to sort it all out.

Clark spoke up, “I may be able to help. You didn’t know it but I was around for a while before I met you in the coffee shop. I was at one of your performances of ‘Camelot’. I must say that you made a lovely Guinevere, but as I was sitting there, watching you in costume, your poise and grace in that costume brought something to mind. Lois and I had an adventure when we visited previous incarnations in order to break a spell that had been cast on her. We were in the medieval times. I was Sir Charles and Lois was...”

Lori interrupted him and with a look of wonder on her face said, “Lady Loiset! No wonder I felt so comfortable in that costume. Wait a minute.” Lori ran out of the room and upstairs to her bedroom. She grabbed her mounted rattlesnake rattle and brought it downstairs. “Apparently she’s not the only one I remember. Mother, Daddy, remember this?”

They both nodded.

Turning it to display it to Clark she told the story about what had happened at the riding camp. As she finished up on the story she said, “Apparently I remember my time as Lulu too and it’s a good thing I do. If not I might have been killed on that trip.”

Everyone was stunned by this revelation and all were silent for a time.

Finally, returning to the previous topic Lori said, “If the memories **are** the person, then the person that you knew as Lorelei is no more. But, then again perhaps she is actually **more** than she used to be. I know this man. I know what we had together, actually, many times over, and I want that again. I want it soooooo much I can almost taste it. I have to admit, there are times that I feel subsumed by this other person like I’m in the back seat looking on while she drives. Other times, like now, I feel totally in control, in the driver’s seat to use the same analogy. I believe that eventually it will all be integrated into a single new whole personality containing aspects of both. Hopefully, it will be more than a sharing, a blending that will be better than either of the individuals.”

Phillip looked thoughtful, “Lori, I don’t know anything about reincarnation; I don’t really believe that it exists.”

“Daddy, I didn’t either, but now, I know who I was previously. The strongest memories that I have are those of the life I led as my cousin, Lois Lane.”

“What? Who?”

“My cousin, Lois Ellen Lane. She died on our shared birthday.”

Clark jumped in with, “May I call you Phil?” At his nod, he continues. “Phil and Doris, it actually even goes a little beyond that. What I am going to tell you now is something that is secret and must remain so. I am confident that once I am finished you will see that what Lorelei has said is true and I am sincere in my intentions. As Lorelei said, I grew up in the mid-west, Smallville, Kansas as the son of a farmer, however, that is **not** where I was born. My parents found me, abandoned in a field, as they were returning from a community event. They took me home and raised me as their son. They had been unable to have children of their own and saw me as a literal ‘gift from heaven’. You see when they found me I was in a small space ship. I was born on the planet Krypton. I am Superman and I was married to Lois Lane. Lois was my wife for over sixty years.”

Phillip and Doris let out a gasp. “We knew that her destiny was in some way tied up with the Superman Foundation. We have suspected all along that it had something to do with the supermen. It would appear that our suspicions are confirmed. What do we call you, Clark Kent or Superman?”

“Clark Kent is my name. Clark Kent is who I am. Superman is what I do as a part time job.”

Phil said, “There are other supermen and superwomen.”

“Those are my children. Mine and Lois’.”

Doris said, “Then you must be over ninety years old! You look like you are in your twenties. How can that be?”

“That would be a long story. Suffice it to say that my alien physiology is responsible.”

Phil was still having a hard time with all of this and said, “Okay, but why Lori? Why now?”

“I have explained this to my children and I think you deserve the same explanation. Will you concede that there is something which we call the soul?” At their nods Clark continued. “Please accept everything that I tell you from this point on as fact and not fiction. The soul is eternal and there are, at least some, that are fated to go through eternity together. It was speculated by the ancients that the soul is split into two parts and that neither can rest content until it is reunited with its other half. That was the case with Lois and me. We were, are, soul mates. The woman here at my side, your daughter, is the current incarnation of that soul, my soul mate. I could no more avoid loving her than I could avoid breathing. She completes me and I her.”

Lorelei picked up the discussion at this point. “Mom, Daddy, all my life I have been having dreams. I know, ‘everybody dreams’. Well, this was different. Every night I would dream about this man and the life we had had together. As a child I didn’t understand what they were about. I just knew that the dreams made me feel good. As I got older the dreams became clearer and clearer until recently, when Clark entered the Coffee Shoppe the connection that exists between us suddenly crystallized those dreams into actual memories.”

She continued, “I don’t know how it happened, but, suddenly I **knew** that I was Lois Lane and exactly who and what Clark was and what he **meant** to me and I to him. I have the memories of sixty years of marriage to this man and I look forward to adding another sixty or more years of memories to them.”

“Daddy, that’s how I can confidently say to you that no fairy tale princess could have a better Prince Charming. I know how I will be **loved** and **cherished** and **protected**, actually now not only by this man beside me but by the entire family, my children.”

Lori, with a wistful look continued, “I know that is hard to accept, but, they **are** my children none the less. I can **remember** every minute of labor with each of them. I can **remember** breast feeding each and every one. I can **remember** each scrape and

bruise, before they became invulnerable of course. I can **remember** comforting them when they began hearing hurtful or embarrassing comments because their superhearing suddenly started working. I can **remember** the fires each of them started when their heat vision came on. So many things. So many **happy** memories. I will be having more children with this man. Together we will create the next generation of supermen.”

“Wow. I am overwhelmed,” Phil said looking over at Doris. “What do you think?”

“Phil, honey, I had an opportunity to spend some time with Clark before you got home. I like him and from everything I have heard I believe he loves Lori and she loves him. He sure looks like he’s in his twenties. If he is going to make her happy, I’m happy for them.”

Phil asked, “How much should we tell Liz and Larry?”

Clark replied, “As far as Liz and Larry are concerned, let’s just tell them that I’m associated with the Superman Foundation and I know the supermen and superwomen. When they meet my family we don’t need to mention that they are my children.”

After thinking about this for a few seconds Phil replied, “Okay that should work. Where do we go from here?”

Lori spoke up, “We really don’t want to wait. Would you mind if we were married tonight?”

Chapter 13 — A Very Short Engagement

“Well, I guess with all of these memories to go on, a long engagement isn’t really needed. Doris, what do you think?”

Lorelei pulled out the ring and placed it on her finger.

As someone in a state of shock because of how fast things were happening, Doris replied, “Tonight will be fine, but, how can that be done?”

Clark replied, “I just have to place a couple of calls. We will need a wedding party.” Clark took out his cell phone and made several calls. When he finished he turned to Lorelei and said, “Okay, we have an appointment at 8:30 in Las Vegas.”

Lori replied, “Where?”

Clark responded with, “Las Vegas, at the Viva Las Vegas Wedding Chapel. I ordered the Elvis Wedding Package. I thought we could do this as a tribute to our old boss, Perry White.” I would like to keep this small, just our two families.” He turned to Lori and asked, “I would imagine that you have a number of friends that you would like to invite to your wedding, don’t you?”

She responded, “Well, yeah, but that’s not important.”

Clark took her hand in his and pulled her closer as he responded, “Really, I think it is. I want you to have a *real* wedding.” Clark turned to Phil and Doris and asked, “You want her to have a big church wedding don’t you?”

Phil looked at Doris and after getting her nod, turned back and said, “Yes, we do.”

Turning back to Lori Clark said, “There, you see. Your parents want you to have a big wedding.” He turned back to Doris and said, “Why don’t you start thinking about the details. Let’s plan the big wedding for right after graduation.”

Doris actually seemed to be relieved as she said, “That would be wonderful. I’ve always wanted her to have a nice wedding.” She turned to Lori and said, “Start making a list of who you want to invite and e-mail it to me. You can come home some weekends and we can do the planning.”

That being taken care of, Doris said, “What time do we have to leave?”

Clark replied, “I guess we have about an hour. Why?”

“That’s just enough time for dinner before we leave.” Doris shouted into the kitchen, “Liz, how is dinner coming? Is it ready?”

“Yeah Mom. Ready to start serving.”

“Larry, is the table set?”

“Yeah, Mom. All set. Ready to sit down.”

Clark had sent out a telepathic call to the kids and explained the situation. /Lori and I are getting married tonight. Her parents know who I am but her siblings don’t. I’d like the six oldest to show up and fly us to Vegas. Give us about 45 minutes for dinner./

A chorus of replies came back, /Sure thing Dad, You got it. Way to go! Be there with bells on, I’ve got dibs on little sis!/
/I should have figured that one. Okay Lucy, you can carry

Liz. Jessie, do you mind if Luce takes your place?/
/Nah, that’s okay. Luce go ahead and pick up little sis./

/Thanks Jess./

/Lara, why don’t you carry Lori’s mom, Doris. It’ll give you a chance to meet her. Jon, why don’t you take her dad, Phil for the same reason. Sean, you and Celeste will be taking Lori and me. Jim that leaves Larry in your care. Jessie and Sam, I guess we’ll meet you guys in Vegas. Liz and Larry don’t know who I am. They just think I’m with the Foundation and have some pull with the supermen and superwomen./

He heard from Jim, /Okay Dad, we’ll keep it cool./

The Lanes knew nothing of the telepathic communication which had been going on and had been moving ahead with the plans. Doris spoke up, “Okay, let’s go eat. Lori, you can give me a hand in the kitchen. Phil, if you would seat our guest? Okay, hop to it.” They had a pleasant, though hasty meal and were ready to go when there was a knock on the kitchen door. This was quite a surprise to Doris as she wasn’t expecting anyone, especially at the back door. Clark saw her confusion and said, “If you will answer the door, I think our transportation has arrived.”

Ultra Woman, Noel and Angel entered with Kam-El, Dan-El and Zar-El.

All the members of the Lane family but Lori gasped. After brief introductions and an explanation they were ready to go.

Ultra Woman exited with Doris while Angel took Liz. Kam-El stood next to Phillip and put an arm around him, like a buddy hug to carry him that way and Zar-El did the same with Larry. Noel picked up Lorelei and Dan-El walked out with Clark. As they exited the house, two at a time, they all took off straight up from the back door till they were out of sight and headed for Las Vegas.

As soon as everyone was on the ground the superheroes took off again. As the Lane family exited the alley they were met by the Kent clan. Clark made the introductions. “I’d like you all to meet my family. The supermen and superwomen dropped them off before coming to get us. We do have a lot to accomplish in a short time so it would probably be a good idea to split up. Doris why don’t you go with Lara so that you can pick out a Mother of the Bride dress for the wedding? Lucy why don’t you take Liz with you for that special outing? Sean and Jimmy, why don’t you take Philip and Larry to a shop so that you can all rent tuxedos? We’ll all meet at the chapel by 8 PM.”

Clark took Lorelei to a bridal shop so that she could find a wedding gown. A couple of minutes after they got there Celeste and Jessie walked in. When Jessie saw Lorelei she couldn’t believe her eyes. She was the image of her mom. When Lorelei saw them she said “Hi kids. Want to help?” Clark looked back and forth between the kids and Lori. It really seemed somewhat incongruous for her to be calling them kids. At age twenty-two she looked to be the same age as the girls whose rate of aging had slowed just as their father’s had as soon as they had reached maturity. They looked like they were all sisters.

Even Celeste, who had been one of the ones providing transportation, was surprised. When they recovered the ability to speak they both said at once “Mom?!?!? You remember us?”

“Yes, it’s me. Of course I remember you. How could I forget? Will you help me find a dress?”

“Okay, while the three of you look for a gown, I have a few

errands to run.” Clark said.

Lori said, “Okay Clark. Go ahead. We’ll be all right.”

Jessie said, “Yeah, Dad. We’ll be just fine.”

Celeste, being the eldest, took charge. She quickly scanned the racks and selected the dress she thought her mom would have liked. When she showed it to Lorelei, the latter loved it. The girls went with her into the fitting room so that she could try it on. After determining that it was a perfect fit, Lorelei changed back into her street clothes and they exited the fitting room.

Lorelei went over to the veil section and saw a veil with a bow on the top and grabbed it. Celeste and Jessie at this point were finally, fully convinced and grabbed her and hugged her while weeping. They had seen the wedding pictures from their mom’s wedding and knew that the bow was something that not many people would have on their veil, but their mom had had one on hers. This, above everything else convinced them that she **was** their mom.

About this time Clark returned. Celeste and Jessie went to join their sisters. Carrying the gown, Clark headed to the chapel with Lori. When he had picked up the engagement ring he had retrieved their wedding bands at the same time.

When they arrived Lorelei’s mom was waiting for her in the dressing room to help her into the gown.

“Wow, Mom, I love the dress.”

“It was a gift from your husband-to-be. You know, it **has** been something of a shock, the suddenness of it all, but I really do like Clark. He is so personable he just makes you feel comfortable in his presence. I just know that you are going to be happy with him. All right now, let’s get you dressed.” She removed the gown from its covering and said, “Oh, this is a lovely gown.”

After Lori had changed into the gown and put on the veil, they went into the foyer and her mom left her and went in to sit down with Larry. Her dad, wearing a tux, entered from the other side and walked over to her.

“Daddy, are you really okay with this?”

“Princess, we’ve known for a long time, actually since you were six months of age, that this day would come. We thought that you would be marrying into the Superman family. We didn’t know that you would be marrying **the** Superman. It has to be okay.”

“Well, not exactly Daddy. I’m marrying Superman, yes, but if you’re not okay with it we can talk some more.”

“No, Princess. Your mother and I are okay with it as long as he will treat our little girl well.”

“Daddy, you have **no** idea how well he will treat me. There aren’t words to describe it. I know that I will be loved and protected and cherished and ... like I said before ‘There isn’t a fairy tale princess that could have a better Prince Charming’.”

“Anyway, your mom and I, well, we’re happy for you. Now, I think it is about time. I think I hear some music.” He got a puzzled expression on his face. “Isn’t that Elvis singing ‘Viva Las Vegas’?”

Cue music Viva Las Vegas : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Md-Px9Cs-Ns>

“Daddy, it is the Viva Las Vegas Wedding Chapel after all. Perry White was a huge Elvis fan so we’re having one of the Elvis Wedding packages, in his memory.”

“Who’s Perry White?”

“Long story. Tell you later.”

Suddenly all five of the girls appeared dressed in identical bridesmaid gowns except for Liz. The girls all had cream colored gowns but Liz, the maid of honor, was wearing a pastel green. Lara handed Lorelei a bouquet of white roses as she gave her a hug. Each of the girls had bouquets of white carnations, and each in turn then gave Lori a hug. Finally it was Liz’s turn. She did a

little spin and said, “What do you think? Do you like the dress?”

“It looks good on you, sis.”

Liz gave her a hug.

Phillip said, “Okay, well, here we go.”

The doors opened and they started down the aisle. Lara first followed by Celeste then Jessie then Lucy and finally Liz as the Maid of Honor.

Clark was standing at the front with Jon, Sean, Jimmy and Sam.

Her father gave her away, sat next to Doris and the wedding proceeded.

After the wedding they all adjourned to a restaurant where they had secured a room. It had been obvious from the start that Lorelei’s family would need to be brought in on the family secret because of the way things had happened.

After the meal it was past time for Liz and Larry to be getting back. Liz was scheduled to go on a field trip the following day for a Field Biology and Ecology class and Larry had to work the next day and they needed to get to bed so Angel and Zar-El showed up to give them a ride home.

In the privacy of the room, after Lori’s siblings had left Clark formally introduced the children, Jon the eldest who worked his part time job as Kam-El, then Lara whose Kryptonian name was Myel and who was Ultra Woman II. Next he introduced the twins: Sean who fought crime as Dan-El and Celeste who was superwoman Noel. Then he introduced Jessica who was superwoman Hazel, Jimmy who was Zar-El, Lucy who was Angel and Sam who was Ben-El. Due to the serendipity of their Kryptonian names Hazel wore a uniform of that color and Lucy had modified the ‘S’ shield on her outfit to display a pair of angel wings attached at the sides of the shield. Children were especially drawn to her, since she was a child psychologist by profession and she had become very much involved in children’s issues as a result.

Phil asked, “Why do you give the children Kryptonian names?”

“I am a descendant of a ruling family on Krypton. One of the reasons that the New Kryptonians arrived here was to ask me to join them and rule over them. I won’t go through that whole history. Bottom line, my family name still has a lot of pull on New Krypton. That being the case, we gave each of the children Kryptonian names in case they would need to interact with them. Lara, whose Kryptonian name is Myel, works for a law firm in LA. Her specialty is negotiating trade agreements with the New Kryptonians. As the daughter of Kal-El she gets special consideration. The senior partners don’t know about her special ‘edge’ on her competition and marvel about how she can get contracts that no one else had been able to.”

One at a time the kids, those that were married, had left, only to return shortly with their spouses, thus enlarging the party. In this way the Lanes were able to meet the new relatives in ‘bite size’ chunks and not ‘choke’ on a lot of new names all at once.

As Clark was finishing up an unexpected guest walked in the door. When Clark saw him enter he stood and walked over to him with hand outstretched. With hands clasped Clark turned around to make the introductions. Just as he was about to speak Doris spoke up. “Mr. Wells!” She turned to her husband and said, “Honey, you remember Mr. Wells, don’t you?”

Phil said, “Of course I remember him. How are you, Mr. Wells?”

Herb was chuckling at Clark’s dumbfounded expression at this turn of events. He replied to Phil. “Jolly good. It’s so nice to see you again. Well, I see that the day I told you about has come to pass. I hope you’re not too upset with me for not telling you more than I did. It’s just that I have started living by a sort of motto if you will. It goes like this, ‘Too much information, too

soon, is not good'. I had to be careful not to tell you too much and chance disturbing the outcome. I needed to preserve history, well, future history, history that hadn't been written as yet, at least not at this time. Oh my, I'm sure that was confusing to you because it was confusing to me as well. Let's try that again. In your future it will be recorded that these events occurred and just how they happened. If I had told you too much then you might not have behaved in the same way."

Phil replied, "Well, things did happen as you had told us that they would. Lori was not interested in dating or having any kind of romantic association until Clark came along. Now, things just can't happen fast enough for her."

"Which is as it was supposed to be. I do not mean to be rude, but, I have some things to discuss with this family," indicating the Kent clan, "and I believe that you have a couple more children at home waiting for you."

"You're right, of course. Clark, could we impose on your family once again for transportation?"

"I'm sure that can be arranged."

Before departure Phillip Lane walked over to Clark and said, "Clark, now that I have had a chance to get to know you some and met your family, I am confident that you will in fact treat my daughter well. Seeing how you interact with your family and the obvious respect and love they have for you speaks volumes. I can rest content in my daughter's choice of a mate. After the earlier discussion I must say that I was worried that Lori, or perhaps Lori's personhood or personality would be lost by the overlay of Lois' memories. Seeing her this evening though, it is like seeing a flower bud open to a blossom." Looking over at Lori, "She has become quite a woman. I'm happy for her and for you."

Clark held out his hand and as Phillip placed his in it he said, "Thank you Phil. I'm happy that you approve and I promise you that I will do everything in my power to see to it that I don't disappoint you. I love her more than words can describe."

At that statement Phil dropped his hand and gave Clark a 'man hug' and said "Welcome to the family, son."

This exchange was observed by all present. When Phil stepped back it was Doris' turn. She walked up to Clark and gave him a kiss on the cheek. She said, "I know you will take good care of her." Then she turned to include Lori in her closing statement. "I will expect you both to visit, regularly."

Clark laughed and said, "Count on it."

While Kam-El and Ultra Woman II flew Phil and Doris Lane home, Clark had a chance to introduce Herb to the members of the family that had not been present twenty years earlier. He had met the newer members of the family at the get together they had when he had first arrived in 2085. Actually, Herb already knew most of them since after taking Clark twenty years into the future, he had spent a little time using the soul tracker to help his unmarried children find their soul mates. After Kam-El and Ultra Woman II returned Herb took the floor.

He called Lori and Clark over to join him as he began to speak. "I have some things to pass along that are going to be somewhat startling for you to hear and if you have any questions I will try to answer them at the end. In the mean time I beg your indulgence while I tell you a story. Something over twenty-two years ago, knowing that Lois Lane was going to pass, I began a search for her successor. By traveling into the future and using the soul tracker I found her, the woman standing here, Lorelei. What she did not know but can now be told is that the recovery of her memories as Lois Lane was no accident." Turning to Lori, who had a very shocked expression on her face, he continued. "Lori, your teddy bear which was your companion growing up was given to you by me when you were six months old. Didn't you find it to be somewhat unusual that it never showed any wear?"

"I never really thought about it, but, yeah, now that you

mention it, it still looks like it did the first day I remember having it."

"That is because it was made from the indestructible hair of your descendants. Embedded in the body of that bear is a small device. It is an offshoot of the soul tracker and that is the source of the dreams that you have had growing up. It brought out Lois' memories as dreams preparing you for this day. That day, when you were six months old, I placed the bear next to you and stepped away. At that time I triggered the device and it locked on to your bioelectromagnetic signature and started to function. When it detected that you were asleep it switched on, bringing your memories as Lois into your dreams."

Herb gave this a few seconds to sink in before continuing. "The next item that I need to tell you about is the pendant that you are now wearing. That pendant was created in an alternate universe and designated for you. It is a very special piece of jewelry. It was determined some time ago that through the action of a Kryptonian aura the Earth human spouse's physiology is modified until it becomes a half Kryptonian and half Earth human hybrid. After that occurs then conception can occur and at that same time another marvelous thing will happen — you will acquire Clark's powers and longevity."

Clark and all the rest chorused, "What???"

Herb replied, "Yes, you heard me correctly. Lori will have Clark's powers and longevity. Lori, you will live as long as Clark. Clark, you will not have to go through the painful bereavement process that you did with Lois, you will have no further need of my use of the soul tracker to find the next Lois Lane. Your soul mate will now be with you for the rest of your life. This pendant guarantees that."

Clark spoke up, "Wait a minute, Herb. If this pendant can do all of that, why didn't you just give it to Lois in the first place?"

"Ah my boy, that is a very important question and one not easily answered. You see it's this way: in that universe Lois Lane was to die of old age and you were to find Lorelei and live out your life with her. That is history. I was prevented from interfering in that because if I had it would simply have resulted in the creation of yet another universe wherein I had done just that, but that would have left this universe unchanged."

"We have been learning more and more about the creation of the alternate universes and as we learn more we learn just what we can and cannot do. Often it is hard to sit back and do nothing when it is obvious that I could interfere and change an outcome; however, that interference can come at a price and the price may be too high to bear. I have learned the hard way that doing things my way is not always the right way to go."

"If I had brought the medallion to Lois when she was expecting her first child a split would have occurred wherein there would be a universe where she received the medallion and one in which she did not. This would still be the universe where she did not so your pain and loss were unavoidable either way."

A look of dawning comprehension was making its way onto Clark's features as Herb explained. Clark asked, "Would it have been so bad to have had a universe wherein Lois continued to live?"

Herb, very gently, replied, "My boy, that universe already exists. You exist in a universe created by the fact that the body of your Lois, as a result of having been Ultra Woman, was sensitized to the Kryptonian aura and her life could have been extended. When that happened there were two possible outcomes, one where her life was extended and the other where it wasn't. This universe is the result of the negative response to that sensitization. Incidentally, that Lois received a medallion also and enjoys not only the extended life but the powers that Lori will have in just three years. One further thing, Lori, you must be wearing the medallion to have the powers and as soon as you remove it you will not have them. Also, there is no fear of your

enemies gaining powers from the medallion as it will only give the powers to a hybrid Earth/Kryptonian human. To anyone else it is simply a piece of jewelry.”

With dawning comprehension Clark said, “So there is a universe where Lois, **my** Lois is still alive and young and has my powers.”

“Yes, my boy, that is correct.”

Clark looked at his family and saw the same emotion he was feeling mirrored in their faces. Their mother was still alive, just not in this universe. The wonder on their faces spoke volumes.

Clark said, “Would it be possible for us to see her?”

“That would not be advisable. Your life is now committed to Lorelei.”

Clark looked at her and said, “I’m sorry, it’s just ...”

Lori replied, “I understand. Remember, I’m her and I remember too.”

A thought suddenly occurred to Clark. The implications of the fact that this pendant could prolong the life of Lori suddenly hit him. He turned to Herb and asked, “Herb, could the same thing be done for all of the Earth human spouses?”

With a slight chuckle Herb began to tell Clark a story. “Clark, we started distributing the pendants some time ago. We were holding it as a surprise for you and Lori. I guess it’s time for your family to reveal themselves.” He turned to the family and asked, “Ready for the unveiling?”

All of the non-Kryptonian spouses smiled at his consternation. Most of the spouses would at this point be in their fifties and were in some cases graying at the temples and showing some wrinkles. At Herb’s signal they removed wigs and makeup to reveal a family all of whom were apparently in their mid-twenties.

Herb explained, “After I transported you twenty years into the future I returned and fulfilled my promise of using the soul tracker to help the unmarried Kents to find their soul mates. At that time I distributed pendants to each of them. As soon as they had been married for about three years and the Kryptonian aura had worked its magic on their physiology they each became super and their aging process was slowed so that it was the same as their spouse. I’m sorry we had to deceive you but, as I always say, ‘Too much information too soon is not necessarily a good thing’. Besides, you’ll have to pardon me, I wanted to see the look on your face when we revealed all to you. The family decided that the super spouses would stay undercover unless there was a real need. If there is a major problem requiring their assistance, however, they are ready to act.”

That became the last word. Herb shook hands around and took his departure. The family members began leaving and taking their family with them, leaving Clark and Lori as the final couple.

Chapter 14 — Working Together

After the party broke up and the Lane family had been returned to San Francisco via superman express, the kids and their spouses had returned home and Clark and Lori returned to San Diego.

They decided to move her out of the apartment she was sharing and into Clark’s, which was now their apartment.

Her roommates had apparently gone home for the weekend so it wasn’t necessary for Clark to change out of the suit while he packed her things at superspeed. Mostly what she had in the apartment was clothing and that was quickly packed for the move.

They moved her stuff to their apartment and into the drawers and closet along with Clark’s. Lorelei placed Clarkie bear on her dresser. Clark was still in the suit when she then went in to prepare for bed.

Lorelei came out of the bathroom wearing the black teddy

that Clark had purchased for her (and himself) as a wedding present. The only jewelry she was wearing was her wedding ring and the pendant. Stopping in the doorway, she placed her right hand on the door jamb and thrust her left hip out. An anticipatory smile graced her face.

Clark stood there holding two glasses of champagne he had poured for them, when he saw her. He stopped dead in his tracks. He spun into a pair of black silk sleep shorts, a matching silk shirt which was unbuttoned and still holding the glasses of champagne, he said softly, “Didn’t spill a drop.”

She looked absolutely incredible. She took his breath away. She looked over at the dresser and thought better of Clarkie bear’s placement. She walked over and turned him around so that he was facing away from the bed. All Clark could do was stare at her as she walked over to him. She took the glasses from his hands and set them down on the side table.

Saying, “I don’t want anything to cloud this moment,” she slid her hands inside his shirt. Sensuously moving her hands up over his pecs to his shoulders, she started pushing his shirt off.

He said, “The moment we were destined for ...”

“That’s what makes it so special.” She murmured as she initiated a very deep kiss.

Still in a clinch, they moved backward to the bed. Clark laid her down with him on top of her and they continued kissing.

“I love you, Clark Kent.”

“I love you, Lori Lane.”

“Clark, there’s only one thing. This time I’m a virgin. I know you will be tender, but just so you know.”

They continued kissing and Clark unconsciously began to float both of them off the bed. He turned them inverted so that she would be on top.

She lay on top of him with as much of her skin touching his as was humanly possible. She shed the top of the teddy and then she started sliding her breasts back and forth across his chest. Every time her erect nipples came in contact with his nipples they both let out a soft moan. While she continued this she initiated another kiss. As their tongues performed a gentle duel she started moving her hips. She could remember all of the times that they had made love in the past and just the thought of how it had felt caused her to want to rush things.

Their lovemaking was slow and sweet. The patience and love that she saw mirrored in his eyes and countenance were almost overwhelming and she would have been overwhelmed, if not for her memories of their many years together.

It was like returning home. There was a comfort and ease of sharing which was based on over sixty years of love. It had been slow and sweet and fulfilling for both of them. When they finished, Lori lay down flat on his chest. Clark’s hands continued to caress her body for a time and then after planting a kiss on the top of her head he started to float.

When they were finished they were both looking down on the bed from the ceiling.

Lori let out a contented sigh. And then she said, “Wow.”

Clark replied, “I know.”

They both laughed lightly.

Lori said, “That was wonderful and you were so tender. I love you so much.”

Clark replied, “I wanted your first time to be extra special.”

Lori replied, “Oh, it was!”

They started kissing some more.

Clark broke away and said, “You know, I could still make reservations in Hawaii for a honeymoon.”

As Lori threw her arm across his chest and pulled him to herself she said, “We are not leaving this room!” She rolled over and they started kissing again. One thing led to another and they had another session of intimacy.

Afterward Lori said, “That was wonderful. I love you soooo much I can hardly stand it. You were so sweet to me, so gentle. It was just like I remembered.”

Clark slowly floated them back down onto the bed. They lay, her head on his chest, arms and legs entwined, and they talked of their future.

Clark started the discussion, “You need to complete your degree. And then we can return to Metropolis.”

“I graduate in the spring. I could transfer to the graduate program for Journalism at MetU. They offer some courses that they don’t offer at SD State.”

“That would work too. Then we could live in the Kent homestead and not have to pay rent here. We could fly out to see your family on a regular basis the same way we used to fly to Smallville to visit my folks. I could get a job at the Planet again.”

“We could both start at the Planet so that we could be together.”

It didn’t take long to decide to wait until she graduated and move.

The following summer, after she graduated and the church wedding had taken place, they moved to Metropolis and took up residence in the Kent homestead. It was early enough in the summer for Lorelei to register for summer classes. Her plan was to take summer classes and an extra heavy load each semester so that she would have her Masters in two years. They decided that she would need a car so they went to a dealership to look around. Naturally the only vehicle that would satisfy her was a silver Jeep Grand Cherokee. Even after all these years they were still making them. The main difference was that now they were using a Hydrogen fuel cell (7) for the power plant rather than an internal combustion engine. As soon as she sat in it she patted the dash and said “I’ve missed you.” Surprisingly enough Clark was even able to get “LL” vanity plates for her.

After they had returned to Metropolis, Clark talked to Jon to see if he could use the device created by Bernie Klein to check Lorelei’s aura. They had been using the device on each of the non-Kryptonian spouses since it had been created. When they did her aura showed up as blue with a slight tinge of red. They planned to recheck every six months to determine when they would be able to start their new family.

It had been over six months since Clark had moved into this time period and he hadn’t had to spend all of that time searching for Lori. He knew where she was so he invested some time establishing his new identity. Part of that was writing for smaller newspapers and journals to establish a portfolio, looking forward to the time he would be returning to the Planet. After they were married, he was also able to do some freelance work.

Frank Richards, the current Editor in Chief of the Daily Planet, had no problems hiring Clark. The city desk had an opening and he had an impressive resume and portfolio. To her disappointment, he would only take Lorelei on as an intern since she didn’t have much of a portfolio. At least he agreed to setting her schedule to correspond to Clark’s as much as possible. She started off as the gofer and after a couple of months moved up to research assistant. The Lois side of her personality rankled at this but Clark was able to smooth her ruffled feathers by pointing out that it wouldn’t last too long. She just had to ‘pay her dues’.

A couple of months later Clark was working on a story about foreign nationals here in the US illegally. He went to Frank and asked to have Lorelei assigned to him to do the research. Frank agreed to his request and told him to adjust his and her hours so that they could work on it effectively.

Lorelei, while in the process of gathering data on a list obtained from the State Department, came across a picture that she recognized as a student she had had a run in with at MetU. The individual was a real male chauvinist. It turned out that he was a Muslim from Saudi Arabia here on an expired visa. She did

more in depth research and found that he was linked with a group called the Muslim Fellowship. She knew that this group had been behind a lot of unrest in Muslim countries early in the century. She then cross-checked this information against the rest of the list and found that the majority of the Arab nationals here illegally were also associated with that group. She brought the information to Clark’s attention.

“Clark, about a month ago I had a run in with this guy on campus. Actually, he was hitting on me. When he found out I was married, his tune changed and he got a real attitude. I’ve done some more checking and I think we could be onto something big here. Most of the members of this list belong to a particular group. That group has been responsible for governmental unrest and terrorism in the past. I think that we ought to narrow our research to Middle Easterners since we may have a local connection. Now, you know, I don’t have any real dislike of Muslims. I had several friends, well, maybe acquaintances, of Muslims in college and they were fine people, but this guy was creepy.”

“Are you sure about this guy you believe you recognized?”

“I’m as sure of it as I am that I’m sitting here. I couldn’t mistake him. He made **quite** an impression. A negative one, that is.”

“Okay. Maybe we could tail him and perhaps get a line on some of the others on the list?”

“If there’s one of them here, there’s a good possibility that more of them are around. Let’s give it a try.”

Lorelei hacked into the MetU system and started by checking the registrar’s information on the individual. They got the address of an apartment building in the Suicide Slum area. When they staked it out they saw several Middle Easterners moving in and out of the building. It was unclear if they all lived there or if they were coming and going from meetings. They continued the stakeout using a camera with a telephoto lens and night vision capabilities. They were able to match up a majority of the images they had gotten with pictures of the individuals on the list they were working from. Clark used his enhanced vision to check out what rooms were in use. All the rooms in the building were inhabited. There would be no opportunity to get into a room near the one being used for meetings.

“Clark, we can’t get in so we won’t be able to plant a bug inside. They’d see you while you were doing it. Take us home, I have an idea.”

Clark flew them back home to pick up a couple of things. They changed into dark clothing and then he flew them back. They had picked up some surveillance equipment. It was dark so Clark was able to fly up and attach a miniature wireless microphone to the frame of the window, making sure he couldn’t be seen by anyone inside. When he returned they checked the recording equipment and found that they were getting a good signal so they started recording. They were able to record the proceedings of the meeting. Those in the meeting were all speaking in Arabic so Lorelei didn’t understand what was being said but Clark translated for her.

Lori and Clark found out that there were plans afoot for a major terrorist attack on Metropolis. The group was going to have possession of one of the ‘rogue’ atomic weapons that had gone missing with the breakup of the old Soviet Union. The plan was to bring it to Metropolis inside a cargo container by ship. It was very heavily shielded so that it wouldn’t be picked up by radiation detectors. It would be placed in the old sewer tunnels below center city and detonated mid morning one day the next month. Flying at just below the speed of sound, Clark fetched the microphone so that it wouldn’t be spotted in the morning.

The next morning they wrote up the story, without filing it. Then they contacted the Department of Homeland Security and asked for an appointment to meet with the local director. The

meeting was scheduled for 2:00 that afternoon.

Chapter 15 — The Intervention

At 2:00 PM they arrived at the local office and were shown into the director's office.

"Mr. Kent, Ms Lane how can I help you? Is this interview about any specific aspect of our operations?"

Clark replied, "Mr. Jackson, we really aren't here for an interview. We have been engaged in an investigation into the presence of illegal aliens in the country for a story. In the process of our investigation we have uncovered information that we felt needed to be turned over to your office for action."

"What information do you have for me, Mr. Kent?"

Lorelei pulled out a sheaf of pictures and placed them on Mr. Jackson's desk. "These individuals have been seen congregating at an apartment in Suicide Slum. The majority have been identified as being in the country illegally. Furthermore, they have all been identified as being members of a radical Muslim organization, the Muslim Fellowship. We gained access to the area and were able to record the proceedings of a meeting."

Clark said, "Here is a copy of the recording." He placed a memory chip on the desk. Clark continued, "I speak Arabic so I know what was said in the meeting. When you have it translated you will find that it is a planning session on the placement and detonation of an atomic device under Metropolis."

Mr. Jackson called in his operations officer and asked Clark to repeat what he had just told him. The Ops officer took notes, picked up the photos and memory chip and departed.

"Mr. Kent, Ms. Lane, The residents of this city and our nation are in your debt. What can we do to thank you for this information?"

"If you could keep us 'in the loop' and allow us to be there when the intervention occurs giving us an exclusive, we would be well compensated."

Mr. Jackson laughed, "Mr. Kent, I believe that that can be arranged. Tom Jacobs will be running the show. Look for a call from him." He took Clark's card and promised to be in touch.

Clark didn't hear anything for three weeks. Then one afternoon he received a call from Tom Jacobs, Ops officer for the local Homeland Security office. "Mr. Kent?"

"This is Clark Kent."

"This is Tom Jacobs with Homeland Security. We have been following up on your information. We have had the apartment building under surveillance and have gotten more details on the attack. They are expecting the bomb to be delivered tonight and we plan to grab the conspirators at that time. We want to catch them with the goods so that it will be an open and shut case. Can you join us at Pier 85 Metropolis harbor at 11 tonight?"

"We'll be there. Thanks!" He hung up the phone and turned to Lori. "Okay the bomb is due in tonight and Homeland Security is planning to catch them in the act. I would suggest that we wear dark clothing. I may have to make my return debut tonight because, if something were to go wrong . . . well, that's a nuclear device we are talking about."

"How do you propose we handle it?"

"We should try to remain unseen. That way if I need to change, I can."

"Okay, now, if you have to act, will you give me an exclusive interview?"

"I can't think of anyone I'd rather give an exclusive interview to."

"Oh goody, maybe I can get back to the reporter ranks sooner."

"Let's see how things work out."

At 11:00 PM they arrived at Pier 85, which was the staging area for the operation. The delivery was actually being made at Pier 75. Mr. Jacobs was briefing the HS personnel. This was the Terrorist Take Down Squad, TTDS. They were dressed in black para-military type uniforms. Each had two side arms. One was a stun gun and the other was a tranq gun which fired tranquilizer darts. They each also had a carbine with night vision scope and laser targeting. The infrared laser was activated as the trigger was depressed and showed as a white spot in the night vision sight. Each individual also was wearing a Kevlar™ vest and helmet. On the helmet was mounted a night vision device. Across the back of the vest was printed HOMELAND SECURITY in yellow. Current doctrine was that if the individual was armed with a projectile weapon then they were to be engaged with the carbine. If a lesser weapon was needed, then either the tranq or else the stun gun was to be used depending on the situation.

When Mr. Jacobs had completed their briefing, the TTDS formed up in two ranks and they moved out at the double for Pier 75. They made sure that they remained out of sight of the crew of the ship as they approached and spread out to surround the area. Each taking up concealed positions, they were ready and waiting by 11:35. They each had communication with Mr. Jacobs who had also provided Clark and Lori with communicators so that they would know what was happening and not get in the way. Lori and Clark took up a position where they couldn't be observed by HS personnel so that if Superman was needed, he could spin into the suit and act.

The perpetrators were actually due at midnight for the pickup. They arrived right on schedule with a panel truck for transporting the weapon from the ship. They were armed with AK-47s and deployed around the truck as they got out. The leaders went aboard the cargo ship. After half an hour the leaders came back down the gangway while movement on deck indicated that an item was being prepared to be transshipped to the dock. They watched as it was lowered over the side of the ship to the dock. What they saw was one of the so called 'suitcase' bombs. It was somewhat larger than a standard 'three suiter' suitcase with a panel with glowing lights and some switches visible on the end facing them. Clark and Lori were both taking pictures as the scene developed.

The TTDS personnel waited until the device was removed from the sling before moving. Since the perps were clearly all armed with AK-47s with live ammo, rather than risk a protracted gun battle, standard practice in these types of situations was to shoot first to disable the armed adversaries. Following protocol therefore the TTDS, on Mr. Jacob's signal, started by shooting all those with weapons. Most of them were simply wounded; however, there were a couple of fatalities.

Clark more than Lori was surprised at this because having leapfrogged ahead twenty years, Clark had missed some of the developments regarding dealing with terrorists and terrorist activities. Gone were the polite days of "Drop your weapons". Those warnings only provided the terrorists with an opportunity to seek cover and shoot back which could prolong the conflict and generate even more casualties.

The leaders, who were unarmed, both put their hands up. However, one of them held a small object in his upraised hand and shouted, "I have a detonator and if you don't throw down your weapons I will trigger the bomb, now. We are willing to become martyrs - are you? I will give you ten seconds and then I will detonate the bomb!"

Clark and Lori were still in hiding. They had been directed to remain concealed until given the all clear by Mr. Jacobs. Clark said, "I need to handle this."

"Go!"

Clark spun into the suit and took off straight up so that it wouldn't be obvious where he was coming from and swooped

back down from a different direction. He snatched up the bomb and sped away again, straight up until he hit the ionosphere and launched the device out into space as fast and as hard as he could.

He then reversed course so that he could avoid as much of the effects of the detonation as possible. He hoped that he could get the device out of range of the detonator so that it wouldn't go off but, unfortunately that didn't happen and the weapon detonated. Fortunately, Superman was far enough away that there was actually not much of a compression wave due to the extremely thin atmosphere. He quickly returned to Metropolis and landed at pier 75.

Mr. Jacobs approached and introduced himself. "Superman, Tom Jacobs, Homeland Security. I don't know how you happened to be here when you were needed, but you just saved the entire city."

"Well Mr. Jacobs, I was nearby when I heard gunfire and decided to investigate. I saw 'Homeland Security' on the vests and knew that this was a government operation and determined not to interfere. When I saw what appeared to be a detonator being held up by one of the individuals I knew that I needed to help out."

"That was a nuclear device, but I guess I don't need to tell you that. What did you do with it?"

"I sent it into space. Fortunately I was able to get it high enough that the compression wave was almost non-existent and also high enough that there was no EMP effect. You probably saw the flash a couple of minutes ago. It was probably a couple of hundred miles up when it went off. I don't think that it will be a rainbow bomb but I think that there are a couple of satellites that might have been affected by the EMP and will need to be replaced. Geosynchronous orbits aren't all that high but they could have been within the zone of EMP effect. There may be communications or GPS outages until replacements are made. If called upon I am willing to offer my services as a launch vehicle and I'm sure that the other supermen and superwomen would be willing to help as well."

Mr. Jacobs replied, "Thank you Superman. I'll pass that along to the upper echelons."

Lori had been approaching as Superman had been talking to Mr. Jacobs. Lorelei had come out of concealment when it went down and had been using her 'Reporter's Assistant' taking pictures of the action including Superman taking the bomb away. Their 'Reporter's Assistants' were a combination still camera, minicam, voice recorder and personal assistant with solid state memory and internet capability. They could edit and file their stories within the device to send directly to the editor or they could upload the document to their workstation for final editing. She approached Superman and asked, "Superman, would you be willing to allow me to interview you?"

Superman replied, "I might. Who do I have the pleasure of addressing?"

"Lori Lane, I work for the Daily Planet."

"Well, Ms. Lane, what would you like to know?"

"Are we to assume that you are now back with us permanently, or will you be returning to New Krypton?"

"As far as I know I will be here for the foreseeable future."

"How will we be able to get hold of you when you are needed?"

"Oh, I'll be around. I need to go now."

"Thanks for the interview, Superman."

"Happy to oblige. Bye."

Superman took off and disappeared into the darkness.

A few seconds later, Clark came out from an area off to the side. He approached Lori and asked, "What did I miss? I finally got my assistant working."

"If you hadn't been trying to repair your assistant you would have been here to interview Superman."

"Oh, which one?"

"No, not one of the supermen, Superman! The original one."

"Oh, he's back?" Clark started looking around as he said, "Where'd he go?"

"He said he had to go and he just flew off."

Clark turned to Mr. Jacobs. "Did Superman say anything to you? Can we get a quote?"

"Superman said that the device was nuclear and that he launched it out into space where it wouldn't do any harm when it exploded."

"Thanks, Mr. Jacobs. Can we do some more interviews?"

"Sure, help yourselves."

Seeing that the threat of the bomb had been removed the leaders both surrendered. All those alive were taken into custody.

Mr. Jacobs used a communicator to call in the police, emergency and Coast Guard personnel that had been on standby at another location. They all arrived, code 3, lights and siren, and took custody of the perpetrators. Emergency personnel treated the wounds of the injured, placed them on stretchers and loaded them into ambulances for transport to the hospitals, each accompanied by a police officer. A group of police accompanied Coast Guard personnel as they boarded the ship and took the crew into custody. All the unwounded perps and the crew from the ship were loaded into detention vehicles and taken away.

Lori identified her previous 'acquaintance' as one of the leaders; in fact, he was the one with the detonator.

As she approached him he recognized her and in a threatening tone said, "You are a worthless female who should be confined in your husband's home and beaten by him until you are more submissive."

Lori retorted to his rhetoric with a confident, "Can I quote you on that? I work for the Daily Planet. Oh, and by the way, that will never happen to me!"

He responded with a threat. "May Allah destroy your house!" he cursed as he was dragged off.

Clark had claimed his Reporter's Assistant was malfunctioning and requiring him to work on it as his reason for not being in the thick of it when Superman intervened. After things had calmed down they each interviewed some of the people involved. The perps all refused to comment but they did get some good quotes from the HS personnel, the Emergency personnel, the police and the Coast Guardsmen.

When things had all been wrapped up Mr. Jacobs said, "Well, there you go, Kent. There's your exclusive."

"Thank you, Mr. Jacobs. You'll see it in the morning edition."

Mr. Jacobs said, "By the way, Kent, how were you so easily able to get a recording of that meeting? We had one heck of a time bugging that apartment."

Clark laughed and then said, "I guess that will have to remain a trade secret."

"Okay, but if you ever decide to change vocations, keep HS in mind. We could use people like you and your partner."

Lori replied with a laugh, "We'll keep it in mind."

Lorelei and Clark went straight to the office and finished the write-up of the story and Clark was about to submit it to the night editor when Lorelei stopped him.

There was a full color photo of Superman taken as he grasped the bomb preparatory to launching into space with it followed by the headline.

"SUPERMAN RETURNS — SAVES METROPOLIS FROM NUCLEAR DESTRUCTION"

By Clark Kent and Lorelei Lane

"In the early hours of the morning while most of the inhabitants of Metropolis were either in bed or preparing for slumber, Homeland Security was protecting the citizens of Metropolis. A plot to detonate a nuclear device under the city had been uncovered and an operation designed to capture the

perpetrators and prevent the disaster was underway when one of the leaders attempted to perform a suicide bomb attack with the nuclear device. The only thing standing between the city and total destruction was Superman. Superman swooped in at the last second and launched the bomb into space. In an exclusive interview your reporters were told that the ‘original’ Superman had returned from his mission and would again be protecting the city.” (Story continued pg A2)

“You’re sharing your byline with me?!?! I’m not back in the reporter ranks yet; I’m your research assistant.”

“I’m sure Frank will agree that you deserve it. You did just as much work on this story as I did. Besides you’re the one that got the interview with Superman. Maybe this will move you from research to reporter.” He gave her a wink.

“Wow, Okay but, that byline, there’s just something wrong with it. I don’t like it - By Clark Kent and Lorelei Lane. I think I’ll use a ‘professional’ name.” She thought about it for a few seconds then snapped her fingers and said, “I know, I think I’ll go with my middle name. I didn’t know it until I started doing some family research that I **was** named after a famous relative.”

She reached over and deleted the name on the byline and then retyped it as:

By Clark Kent and Lois Lane.

“There, that more accurately reflects who I am now.”

Clark smiled. He hadn’t known what her middle name was. It just hadn’t seemed important. It was almost like old times and he looked forward to the day when she insisted on top billing.

Epilogue

Herb Wells was sitting in his office. He reached into a drawer and pulled out a jewelry box and after opening it he sat there looking at a very special pendant, a very special pendant indeed. This one was inscribed with the name Lorelei L. Lane on the back. Encased within its Sterling Silver body were a piece of red Kryptonite and a piece of a special blue Star Sapphire. As he sat there contemplating this piece of jewelry he pushed a button on his desk and spoke into the air. “New document.”

A very human sounding voice replied “Working. Will this be a letter, or a journal entry?”

“This will be a journal entry. Actually it will be an addenda to case Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124. Re: Lorelei Lane

“Working, file accessed.”

Herb commenced, “The medallion for Lorelei has been fabricated by Jean-Luc Artois at his shop in Brazzaville. We have been working on the other item, and I believe the problem of the bear is going to be overcome. After discussing the problem with the board we put out the request to the members of the family who are direct descendants of Lorelei and Clark. As a result I have had a number of volunteers who have come forward and offered their hair for the construction. We will use platinum blond and black hair for the outer covering, and the remaining hair for the plush stuffing. By constructing it in this fashion the bear should be literally indestructible.”

Herb picked up a pea-sized device which was a marvel of micro-miniaturization. “The module has been constructed. It will be placed within the body of the bear and when I trigger it, as long as it is within five feet of Lorelei and she is the closest individual to it, it will lock on to her bioelectromagnetic signature and begin to function.”

“As long as the device is within 5 feet of Lorelei when its sensors indicate that her respiration rate and pulse as well as the electro encephalogram all indicate that she is in REM sleep, it will begin to perform its task. Being a low power soul tracker, it will enable past memories to manifest themselves as dreams revealing to Lorelei just who she is on a subconscious level. In this way she will be prepared for the time when I bring Clark to

her.”

“There is some uncertainty in doing this. There is no way to limit the memories to those of Lois Lane and it is possible that additional memories will manifest. We know from a previous adventure when the soul tracker was used that Lady Loiset and Lulu Kent were two previous incarnations of the Lois soul. I just hope that this doesn’t complicate matters too much.”

“Once the bear has been fabricated I will take it and the pendant to 2065 and it will be to be deployed. A determination will need to be made as to just how much to tell her parents. The presence of the pendant can be explained away as simply the symbol used by the Superman Foundation; however, in this case it really means so much more. It is my personal belief that the sooner the bear is deployed the more effective the memory recall will be. Therefore I will make the visit when she is six months of age.”

“I have already determined by moving ahead in the time stream that this plan was totally effective. The wedding was performed on November 30, 2085 in Las Vegas with a dinner afterward. I will attend the dinner to make the explanation about the pendant. I should be able to combine the trips moving directly from March 23, 2064 to November 30, 2085 with a brief side trip to use the soul tracker to help the unmarried children of Lois and Clark to find their soul mates.”

“As a result of having the pendant Lorelei will start to acquire powers sometime around May or June of 2088 starting with superhearing, followed by the rest in their natural order.”

“They will be starting the next generation of supermen in 2089 with Clark Junior, or CJ.

In view of what is to happen to them I need to start considering alternatives for his temporary care. Careful consideration must be given to this decision as custodial care will be extremely important as the duration of the care will have to correspond to the duration of the mission. The child must age at the appropriate rate so if the mission lasts six months then the custodial couple will have the care of the child for that long a period. My first choice would be Lois and Clark in Prime since they are the actual father and the prior incarnation of that particular Lois soul but I will have to discuss this with the board. End entry.”

“Ended”

“Tickle file reminder.”

“Recording.”

“The bear is to be delivered to the residence in San Francisco on March 23, 2064 when Lorelei is six months old. That trip to be continued by moving directly to November 23, 2085 for the wedding dinner.”

“Trigger?”

“Trigger reminder for anytime after the bear has been finished and I have been in the office for a period of no less than three days with no other mission. End entry”

“Trigger recorded.”

“Memo”

“Letter or Journal entry?”

“Addenda to previous entry.”

“Recording.”

“Side mission — track Lorelei through first twenty to twenty-one years at one year intervals and document with both still and vid files for display to help convince the Kent family of Lorelei’s true nature.”

“Trigger?”

“Add this as a side trip to the previous mission. I will document her ages as I move to the wedding dinner and then go back to pick up Clark going directly from one to the other via TaDT. End entry”

“Ended.”

- End of Volume 2 of the Matchmaker Chronicles

Author's Note:

Please note that everything up through and including chapter 4 of this work also occurred in Matchmaker Chronicles Volume 1 — Lois Lane Mother of Utopia. It isn't until Chapter 6 that the universes split. That is the point where the effect of the presence of a Kryptonian aura is that of slowing Lois' rate of aging occurs only in Prime.

Sidereal (pronounced sai'diera.el) time is a universal constant based upon the movement of the planets and stars. It is primarily used by astronomers. In my L&C universe (this and other stories to come) it will be used. Because in other stories I will be having events occur 'out of sequence' with the L&C universe of the series but the ST or UT will provide the touchstone.

TTEMPO (pronounced Tempo) is the Time Travel Enforcement and Multiverse Protection Organization founded in 2435 by Herb and a group of research scientists working at what was then called Uni (short for Universal) Labs, a descendant of S.T.A.R Labs. They were a multi-disciplinary group with specialties ranging from computer science to particle physics and beyond. When Herb approached them with the method he used for time travel they were interested enough to hear him out on his proposal. He had seen the effects of uncontrolled time and dimensional travel and saw the need of an organization which would oversee such travel and which would be able to take the necessary steps to correct alterations to the time lines as needed. Thus the organization was formed with several branches, Admin, Research, Documentation and Enforcement. They approached the Superman Foundation which had assumed certain governmental responsibilities with the establishment of Utopia, and were granted a charter for their activities.

TaDT - called a 'Tad', actual name - Time and Dimension Transporter. It is a small device slightly larger than a Blackberry or I-Phone type Smart phone with a full keypad (no need to use alt characters to type in numbers) and a large display. It has a tremendous amount of computing power and memory and is powered by a Kryptonian power source of tremendous power for its size. In its initial form it was only capable of moving through time since it was based on the principles of Herb's Time Sled and was called a TT — Time Transport. After a while the ability to move geographically was added and the name was changed to TLT — Time and Location Transport. Once this was accomplished and the actual nature of the alternate dimensions was determined it was a simple matter to use the base algorithms from the geographical movement to add dimensional movement. It is capable of opening a 'portal' either within time lines, alternate dimensions or both. The default setting when crossing the time 'barrier' is location zero (Please see Herb's recounting of his initial adventures in his book "The Time Machine"). The default when crossing the dimensional barriers is time zero, current time Sidereal, NOT local. Tempus had managed to acquire one of the later versions which enabled him to cross the dimensional barrier to Alt 1. The one unpleasant 'side effect' of using the TaDT is that it does tend to create an almost imperceptible weakness in the dimensional barrier and a 'worm hole' type effect which has two fixed end points. Tempus' use of the device created a paradox of sorts in that it alerted Herb to the existence of alternate dimensions. Herb was able to bring this knowledge to TTEMPO which facilitated the development of the TaDT which device Tempus later stole.

The multiverses are separated from each other primarily by their vibratory state expressed as 3 vectors. Imaging a cube having 3 dimensions — length, width and height. The vectors used to express the vibratory rate and direction represents the directions of the vibrations. Imagine 3 vectors each perpendicular to the other 2. The closer the 3 vectors are to each other in total

indicates the relationship of one universe to another. For instance universe: Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 040 would be more closely related to and in fact an offshoot of Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 036 (Alt 1) than Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 (Prime) as can be seen by the similarities in the Gamma and Tau values.

The creation of universes within the multiverse occurs when an inflection point is reached. There are certain 'key' individuals who, when their circumstances have 2 possible outcomes, cause a disturbance in the space/time continuum which results in 2 or more universes being added to the multiverse. The number of possible outcomes determines the actual number of universes created each having its own unique vibratory signature. In all cases the variation in the vibratory change will be just sufficient for a complete differentiation to occur. In the event of multiple 'new' universes being created simultaneously they will automatically assume vibratory rates sufficiently diverse so that no overlap occurs.

To date there have been few 'key' individuals identified which will bring about this development. The establishment of Utopia and those circumstances which cause it to be delayed seem to be the critical factor which causes this to be the case. In this particular instance, the first split recorded in this story occurs when Lois becomes pregnant without developing the sensitivity to Clark's aura which slows her aging process and manifested itself when the aura of her first child made itself apparent. The fundamental rule which seems to apply to the multiverses is that the shortest path to the objective is that straight line path that is followed. The straight line path is Lois's increased longevity and birthing a rather significant number of half Kryptonian children, thus hastening the foundation of Utopia. This being the straight line path, any inflection point will result in a universe wherein the foundation of Utopia will be delayed.

The Kryptonian naming convention is as follows: The male children carry the family name, or surname, after a hyphen which follows the given name. The female children carry the family or surname as part of the given name without a hyphen. Upon marriage they then adopt the family name of their husband in a format similar to the males it being added after the given name and hyphenated. For instance Zara was Za of the house of Ra (An example of this coming into play is the story "Backwards" by CarolM when Lois Kent 'hears' a message from Jor-El when examining Kal-El's ship telling her "In the absence of the House of Ra, you have my blessing." which was referring to Zara.) Kal-El's mother Lara would have been La of the house of Ra indicating that Kal-El and Zara were distant cousins at the time of their birth marriage as infants. Although it is not mentioned in either movies, series or comics Lara would most properly have been Lara-El having taken the family name of El upon her ceremony of union to Jor-El as Zara would have become Zara-El if the ceremony had been completed wedding her to Kal-El. In this story Lara Kent's Kryptonian name is My of the house of El — Myel. In "Luck and Consequences" by Bob Bartholomew, Lois made up a Kryptonian name. At the press conference she said her name was Lor of the house of El as her married name. This would have had to be L of the house of Or prior to her marriage indicating to me that this was a spur of the moment creation or else she would have come up with a longer given name, although this is still perfectly legitimate. This naming convention is an aid to Kryptonian genealogists in tracing family histories. There are cases such as Lieutenant Ching or Lord Nor where the surname is not mentioned. This could be due to the presence of the title: Lieutenant or Lord. In the case of Lt. Ching the reason would be the presence of a **military** title. The same would apply to General Zod. With Nor and Trey it could be because they are members of the aristocracy. I seem to recall at some point that Nor is referred to as Zara's brother which would

make his complete name Nor-Ra.

Footnotes:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firefighter%27s_helmet

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Squamous_epithelium

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirlian_photography

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Saxton_Burr

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L-field>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bioelectromagnetism>

This version of the song *Borrowed Time* is by Leahy.

A concert video can be found here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UbRJEE9hkg>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrogen_vehicle

For additional reading -

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Kilner

klj

THE END