

Hattie Kaplin, Reporter – Matchmaker Chronicles Volume 1 – N

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Rated: PG-13

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Summary: Hattie is now in her twenties and is working at the Daily Planet, on the city desk as an investigative reporter under the editorial direction of the team of Lane and Kent who were promoted to co-editors-in-chief when Perry White retired. This story is a sequel to “After Summer Camp – Matchmaker Chronicles Volume 1C – A.”

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/ denotes telepathic communications./

A/N – Hattie Kaplin has had a long standing relationship with Jon Kent and the entire Kent family, but, she doesn’t know that he is Kam-El or the fact that the Kent clan is the super family.

Hattie is now in her twenties and if this part were to be cast for TV, I would picture a red headed Scarlet Johansen in the part.

Chapter 1 – Hattie

June 2028

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Universal Locator designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 Canon universe also called – Prime

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Henrietta (Hattie) Kaplin shot out of the elevator just as soon as the doors were open far enough for her to squeeze through. She hurried down the ramp and almost pounced on her desk. She dropped her bag on the floor next to her chair and was simultaneously turning on her computer with her other hand. She dropped into her chair and almost pounded her desk in frustration with how long it was taking her computer to boot up. Once it came up she logged in and brought up her word processor and started typing furiously.

Five minutes later she finished typing and started proofing her story. Satisfied that it was worthy she LANed it to Lois Lane and Clark Kent, co-Editors-In-Chief of the Daily Planet. Once she hit the send button she sat back and relaxed for a few seconds, knowing that the relaxation would be short lived.

While she waited she thought back on her history. She had started at the planet a few years ago as a gofer and then worked her way up to research assistant. She had actually helped Lois Lane on some of her assignments. She had learned a lot from Lois; how to pick locks, how best to disguise herself, she even gave her singing lessons in case she had to work as a chanteuse as part of a cover story. Once she had moved from research she had done the obits and the dog shows just like everyone else, paying her dues, as it were. Her big break had come two years earlier when Perry White had retired. Lois and Clark had been promoted to co-Editors-in-Chief leaving the city desk open. Lois

had offered her the job and she had jumped at the chance. Since then she had been working on bigger and better stories all the time. She had slowly built a stable of informants so that she could keep her finger on the pulse of the city.

Her reverie was short lived because a little over a minute after she sent the article she heard Lois call her from the doorway of the editor’s office.

Hattie closed the door and moved over in front of Lois’ desk.

Lois was looking at a printout, presumably of Hattie’s article, and she took her time with it. Finally she put it down and picked up her blue pencil and started making some notations. While she was writing she said, “You did good on this one Hattie, almost as good as me at the same point in my career. There are just a couple of word changes. You tend to reuse the same word over and over. You ought to start using the Thesaurus function in your word processor to come up with synonyms to mix it up a little.” Lois picked up the sheet of paper and handed it back to Hattie and said, “Make these changes and send it back to me. Good job!”

Hattie was flushed with pride at this praise coming from her hero and mentor. She said, “Thanks! I’ll get it right back to you.”

As Hattie turned to leave, Lois couldn’t help a small smile of pride at the job her protégé was doing. She was serious in her statement that Hattie was doing every bit as good a job as she had done at the same point in her career. Mulling on it some more she thought, <She’s good and so was I, but, it wasn’t until I was teamed up with Clark that I, we, became great. Like me she has the hard hitting news down. I wasn’t much on the touchy feely stuff, but, Clark brought that into the partnership and we both profited. Maybe I should team her up with someone. I think I’ll talk it over with Clark when he gets back from his rescue.>

Hattie made the changes and sent it back to Lois and in the evening edition was a story:

“Kam-El Rescues Window Washer, Metro-Serv Culpable.”

By: Hattie Kaplin

“A window washer suspended from the roof of the Foundation building on a hanging scaffold was rescued by Kam-El when the cable attached to one side of the scaffold broke as a result of chafing of one of the cables against a decorative ledge on the side of the building. Sudden increasing wind conditions caused the platform to sway from side to side and one cable rubbed against a decorative ledge, causing that cable to part, nearly dropping the worker to the ground. He was able to grab onto the framework to keep from falling. Then the remaining cable parted due to the lack of support from the first cable. But the worker held on tenaciously until local superhero Kam-El caught the platform and leveled it out. He then flew it and the worker safely to the ground.

This reporter has been investigating Metro-Serv, a company which contracts services such as carpet cleaning and window washing to businesses in Metropolis. There have been numerous violations of federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations which have now been documented and turned over to the authorities.

This latest is a breach of a safety regulation and it nearly cost the worker his life. Each cable on this type of equipment should be capable of sustaining the weight of the entire unit independently. The company chose to use a cheaper, lighter cable which could not sustain the weight as a cost-cutting measure.

It is this kind of lack of consideration for the safety of workers of Metro-Serv that causes untold numbers of injuries and deaths in this city each year.

If it hadn’t been for Kam-El another would have been added to that list today.”

Story continues on 2A

Later

When Hattie walked in the door of her apartment she was

wearing a loose cover-up. She dropped her gym bag containing her gi on the floor next to her washer and her bag next to the sofa. She pulled off the cover-up to reveal a slim, trim athlete's body in the royal blue spandex work out gear of a halter top and short shorts that she routinely wore under her gi when at the Dojo. After changing into a set of sweats she put the gi and her workout gear into the wash and started it. Then she called and ordered take-out Chinese for dinner. While she waited for it to be delivered, she opened her laptop and started reviewing the results of some research she had done into the operations of Metro-Serv's sister company, Metro-Staff.

There had been a rash of industrial espionage incidents and the most likely suspects were temp workers, both technical and non-technical that had been placed by Metro-Staff.

She had been reviewing the files for a while when there was a knock on the door. She moved over, plucked her wallet out of her purse and pulled out a few dollars to pay for her meal and then answered the door. When she did, she gasped and stepped back in surprise.

The individual at the door chuckled and asked, "Well, aren't you going to invite me in?"

"Jon! What are you doing here? I haven't seen much of you since you and Jen got back together. How is she doing, by the way?"

"I think she's over the worst of it. The death of her parents really hit her hard. I was just on my way home from work and was passing by. I thought I'd stop in and see how you were doing. Jen asked me to invite you to dinner at our place. Jen would like to ask you a favor, that is, as long as you're available."

Just then the delivery boy showed up with her dinner. She said to Jon, "Hold that thought." She turned to the delivery boy and said, "Here you go. Keep the change." She accepted the bags and turned back to Jon and holding them up said, "Dinner. Let me put this in the fridge and grab my things. I'm not about to turn down Jon Kent's cooking."

A couple of minutes later they were in Jon's car headed for the apartment.

When Jon opened the apartment door, Jen was there waiting for them. Hattie said, "Hi, Jen," and walked over and gave her a hug.

Jen said, "Hi Hattie. I'm glad you could make it. How have you been?"

"Oh, I can't complain." Looking around Hattie spotted a copy of the evening edition of the Daily Planet on a side table and started to grin. She stepped over to it and picked it up. Opening it she turned around and held it up for them to see. Her article was the headline of the evening edition. She said, "Ta da!"

Jon and Jen were both duly impressed and listened as she read her story aloud to them.

Jon said, "Wow, that's some story! Do you think this series of articles exposing them will be a Kerth worthy series?"

Hattie replied hopefully, "I don't know, we'll have to wait and see. I'll be doing follow-ups for a week or more." Getting a faraway expression she said, as if reciting memorized facts, "At this point in her career, Lois Lane had won a Kerth, let alone been nominated for one. I can't top that record but, if I can win one for this I will come close to tying her record."

Jon started laughing. He said, "When are you going to stop competing with my mom?"

Hattie replied, "I'm not competing with her. Well, maybe, but not really. I mean, it's just that, well, she's my hero and I want to be as good as her so bad I can taste it."

Putting on a serious expression, Jon said, "Okay, that I can understand. Speaking of taste, I have a suggestion to make in that case."

Jon had her full attention. She asked, "What is it?"

He couldn't hold the serious expression and he started to

chuckle as he said, "If you want to be just like my mom, go out and buy a case of Double Fudge Crunch bars. If you weren't already like another daughter to her, if you shared them with her she'd adopt you."

Hattie slapped him on the arm and with a sheepish expression said, "I already have a case in my desk. I can see why she likes them so much. *They're really good!*"

They all started laughing even harder.

When they all settled down some, Jen asked Jon, "What are you cooking for dinner?"

"I hadn't decided. What do you guys want?"

Hattie said, "I had ordered Chinese and it's sitting in my fridge, so, anything else."

Jon looked at Jen and asked, "Italian?"

Jen nodded.

Jon said, "Italian it is. You ladies can make yourselves comfortable. It'll take at least half an hour."

Jen hooked Hattie's arm and said, "Take your time. Hattie and I have to talk."

Jon nodded and headed for the kitchen.

Jen pulled Hattie over to the sofa and they sat down together.

Jen said, "I hope you don't mind Jon bringing you here tonight. I needed to talk to you."

Hattie waved off any apology by saying, "That's never a problem. I jump at any chance at a home cooked meal, especially Jon's cooking." She paused in thought for a few seconds and then resumed, "You know for a long time I wished that the relationship that Jon and I have was different than what it turned out to be. It's like we were just destined to be friends and nothing more." She hastened to add, "He never led me on or anything, but, you know how it is. He's just a great guy and any girl would want to have a relationship with him. If I can't be married to him, I'm just glad to have him as one of my best friends. I'm also glad that he found someone that he did feel he could marry. I'm also glad that I like you. If I didn't it would be easy to hate you."

"I know how you feel, Hattie. I can't tell you how happy I am that we're getting married. Actually, that's why I asked Jon to invite you over tonight. The ceremony is in a couple of months and I am planning my bridal party. I would like you to be in it. Would you consider being one of my bridesmaids?"

Hattie started to tear up and said, "Oh, Jen, I don't know what to say. Thank you, yes, I'd love to be one of your bridesmaids. At least that way at the reception I'll have someone to be with. Otherwise I was going to be coming to the wedding solo."

"Oh, Hattie, don't you have anyone you're dating?"

"Who has time for dating? I'm working on winning my Pulitzer."

For the next couple of weeks along with doing the follow-ups on the Metro-Serv expose, Hattie was working on the investigation into Metro-Staff. Their offices were on the forty-fifth floor of a building in downtown Metropolis. Hattie had managed to get on the good side of one of the employees. This person didn't like what she could see was going on around her and after seeing Hattie's expose of Metro-Serv had contacted her at the Planet.

Her informant had told her that within the next couple of days there would be a meeting attended by the head of Miralabs which had originally been named Lexlabs as part of Lex Luthor's old empire. This really got Hattie's attention. She knew all about Lex Luthor and the problems he had presented to Lois and Clark. She found herself hoping that history was repeating itself, at least in some aspects. If some of the advances that Miralabs was making were the result of industrial espionage it would make some story especially if Metro-Staff was providing the spies.

Hattie found a rooftop across from and a little above the offices of Metro-Staff and started a surveillance. Using

binoculars she was able to see almost everything that went on in the director's office. Mostly it was dreary routine but the supposed meeting wasn't going to occur until the next day. Now that she was sure that she had a ring-side seat she could follow through and get the goods on them.

When she got back to the Planet there was a phone message for her from Jon. She called him at his office at STAR Labs.

"Hi, Jon. Hattie. You called?"

"Hi, Hattie! Listen, Jen wants to go over dress patterns with you. Are you available tonight?"

"Is a Jon Kent cooked meal included?"

She could hear him laughing as he replied, "If that's what I have to offer to get you to come over then so be it. What do you want?"

"Well, we had Italian the last time. How about Chinese this time?"

"Shrimp Stir Fry sound good?"

"Excellent! My mouth is watering already. What time?"

"How's 6:30 sound?"

"I'll see you then."

"Want me to pick you up?"

"Nah, I'll drive the Jeep. See you at 6:30."

That evening over dinner Hattie was telling Jon and Jen about her latest investigation. "So I have this crow's nest that looks right down into the office. I'm going to be up there to document the collusion of Miralabs with Metro-Staff. If I can prove that Metro-Staff's personnel are stealing secrets for Miralabs I'll have them cold."

Jen asked, "Won't that be dangerous?"

Hattie replied, "Nah, I'll be far enough away, they won't even know I'm there."

Jen said, "All the same, please be careful. Remember, I need you in my wedding party."

"I'm not about to forget that. I'll be careful."

Later, in bed, Jen turned to Jon and said, "I think you need to keep an eye on Hattie. She's so much like your mother it's scary. She could be getting in over her head."

"You're right. She has always been driven to be just like mom. I'll have to adjust my schedule to give me some free time when she's in her crow's nest."

Jen asked, "Jon, why didn't you wind up with Hattie? You've known her a long time and you've been friends since middle school."

"The way Mom and Dad explain it, it's a Kryptonian thing. When we meet the one we are to be with we just know. I knew the minute I saw you on that raft that you were the one. It just wasn't the same thing with Hattie. Yeah, we hit it off as friends, but, that's all it could ever be with her. She just didn't have what you have."

Jen giggled and said, "Yeah, for one thing I've got you, but, I know what you mean. I felt it when you pulled me out of the lake. I just knew you were the one and I'm not Kryptonian." She scooted over and started kissing him.

This started a period of intimacy.

Afterward, Jon lay next to her caressing her and kissing her. She said, "Wow! It just seems to get better every time. How do you do it, please me so much, I mean?"

"It has to be because we are soul mates. Now I know how Mom and Dad feel. It's a special relationship, a very special relationship. I feel sorry for those that don't find their soul mates."

"All I know is, I'm glad you found me. I'm glad you were patient with me too. I was wrong to blame you for my parent's death. Your family can't be everywhere at once. You can only do so much."

"In a few years you'll be getting powers yourself. Are you going to be okay with that? You don't have to take a pendant, if you don't want to you know. I'll love you just the same."

She looked deep into his eyes and said, "Having the powers from the pendant will make it so that I live as long as you do. I want that. I want to be with you as long as I can be. Who know, maybe I'll like having the powers."

"I hope so because, I want you around for as long as I can have you, and with the pendant that means a long time."

"I have a class of fourth graders to teach tomorrow, so, I'd better get some sleep." She kissed him goodnight and, still naked, nestled against his chest. Within a few minutes she was fast asleep and he lay there cuddling and stroking her, the love of his life and soon to be wife.

Chapter 2 – Hattie and Kam-EI

June 2028

Hattie was prepared. She had a telephoto capable digital camera and a mono-pod. She had selected a mono as opposed to a tri-pod because it was easier to carry and conceal.

Taking the elevator to the basement garage, Hattie went over to her Jeep. As she was crossing over to it from the elevator she hit the button on her key fob to release the locks. She opened the back hatch and pulled out her disguise, a workman's coverall. She shook it out and stepped into it. Her skirt was bunched up around her hips but that would simply make it look like she had a paunch and add to the disguise. Into a passport pouch went her ID, driver's license and a \$20 and she hung this around her neck. After zipping up the coverall she put a ball cap on her head, pulling her hair through the back opening in a pony tail. It was at that point that she realized that she had forgotten her running shoes and she thought, <Oh well, I'll just have to wear these heels. At least they are my short ones. If they had been stilettos they would have been very obvious.>. She picked up her mono-pod and clipped the fake sponge mop head to it. Into the cleaning tote went the camera and some rags went in on top of it. Picking up the tote she closed the hatch, hit the lock button and started her five block trek to her lookout building.

Once there she took the elevator to the top floor, moved to the stairs and went up to the roof access. She used her lock picks to open the door and then left a wad of paper in the strike plate to prevent the lock from engaging.

She moved over to the coping and set up. She had a quick disconnect on the base of the camera for quick set up so she slid the release and placed the base in the receiver on the monopod in place of the mop head.

When she looked through the rangefinder she saw the head of Metro-Staff just turning away from his window. She watched as he crossed his office and exited. After a minute he returned to the office.

Hattie turned on an infra-red laser that was attached to the camera. With the laser on the window it would pick up vibrations affecting the glass and translate them into sound. She started the recorder. Hattie started snapping pictures. After almost fifteen minutes he had a visitor, the head of Miralabs. She still had an hour's worth of audio capacity and probably another thousand picture capacity when she heard a squeak as the door behind her opened.

Hattie knew that this meant trouble because there was no reason for anyone to be up here. Slowly she turned and saw two toughs come out onto the roof through the door.

The first one said, "The boss was right. He said he saw the sun being reflected from something. See what we have here?"

His partner grunted an acknowledgement.

The first one, obviously the leader said, "Okay girlie, give me the camera and no one will get hurt."

Hattie said, "Come and get it." While saying this she hit the

quick release of the camera, separating it from the monopod. As the thugs started to move in her direction she hit the lock on the monopod and pulled it open to its full six foot length. She allowed the camera to dangle from her neck by the strap as she whirled the monopod around like a bo staff. Crouching almost like a sprinter in the blocks, one foot under her center and the right foot back with her left arm out for balance and the middle of the staff in her right hand laying up along her right arm and extending three feet past her fist.

As soon as the leader came in range she spun the staff around and brought it down, with force on his left elbow at a nerve plexus. He felt his whole arm go numb and let out a shout of pain and surprise and stumbled back.

Hattie twirled the staff around using a two handed grip, the staff performing a figure eight in front of her to keep the other assailant at bay but he started to reach into his coat, obviously for a firearm. Hattie closed with him and swung the staff again, hitting him on the right side of the neck. His right arm stopped responding to his will as his entire right side went numb.

Before Hattie had a chance to recover the leader lunged at her and almost fell into her, knocking her backward. Her left foot hit the parapet, her heel caught and she fell backwards over it into space. As she went over she screamed.

“Hhhheeeeeeeellllllppppppp!!!!!!”

As she was falling past the tenth floor suddenly a black and red clad superhero swooped in and caught her. He continued their descent and as he did she shouted, “No! No! Take me back up! Up not down! We have to catch those guys.”

Kam-El looked back up over his shoulder and used his x-ray vision. In a deep voice he said, “They’re not there now. They could be anywhere.”

He landed with her on the sidewalk. Surprisingly she still had her staff in hand; she hit him with it and said, “Thanks a heap! I didn’t get enough of that meeting *and* we didn’t catch those thugs.” Reaching up she grasped the zipper and yanked it down displaying her frustration. She shrugged out of the shoulders and pushed the coverall down. She revealed her long shapely legs as she did before she pushed her skirt down. Jon was looking at her feet and noticed that one of her heels was missing and was ready to catch her when she finally went to put weight on that foot. He did see her legs and when he did he flashed back in his memory to the last time she had gone with him, Jen and his siblings swimming a few years before. It was before Jen’s parents had died in the accident. Hattie always wore a one piece suit because of her fair skin while his sisters and Jen all wore as little as they could get away with. Thinking about that he thought about Jen and what they shared and he started to smile.

Hattie saw this smile as he was apparently gazing at her legs and she thought, <I guess he likes what he sees.> She was distracted by this and that is when she tried to put her weight on her left foot. The missing heel threw her off balance and Kam-El caught her.

Getting herself back together and thinking about the job at hand in an increasingly sarcastic tone she said, “You’ve been a tremendous help. What good are you?”

Chagrined he replied, “You could at least thank me for saving your life.”

As she was picking up the coverall and throwing it across her arm Hattie said, “Well, yeah, thanks, but, next time, try to catch the bad guys, okay?”

Kam-El said, “Okay, next time, I’ll try to do that. Are you okay?”

Hattie, feeling very disappointed said, “Yeah, I guess so.” She continued in a subdued tone, more to herself than to him, “Stupid rookie mistake. I let them know I was there. Shoulda been more careful.”

Jon offered his hand, “By the way, I’m Kam-El. Haven’t I seen you around?”

Hattie took his hand and shook it as she replied, “Yeah, Hattie Kaplin, Daily Planet.”

Kam-El said, “I think I’ve read some of your stories. You do good work; it reminds me of Lois Lane’s writing.”

Hattie started beaming at this statement, she asked, “Really, you think I’m that good?”

Jon said, “I think you are.”

It suddenly occurred to Hattie that she had a five block walk back to the Planet, on a broken heel, so she asked, “If you don’t mind, could you give me a lift to the Planet?”

“Sure.” Jon leaned down and picked Hattie up with one arm behind her back and the other under her thighs. In this position the slit in her skirt opened to show off her very shapely legs. She wrapped her free arm around his neck and as he lifted off got a huge grin on her lips.

Jon flew her slowly to the Planet and using his super breath blew open the large windows opening onto the bullpen. He flew her in and set her on her feet near her desk.

Kicking off her heels and seeing just where he had put her she looked at him and asked, “How did you know this was my desk?”

Jon pointed at her name plate and said, “It has your brand on it.”

Chagrined she said, “Oh, yeah, I guess it does. Well, thanks, Kam-El. I guess I’ll be seeing you around.”

“Yeah, I guess you will.” With a little grin he added, “I’ll try to do better next time.” He lifted off and slowly flew out the windows before putting on a burst of speed.

Hattie watched as he disappeared out the window and had a dreamy expression as she turned to her desk. As she did she suddenly realized that everyone was staring at her. She mentally shook herself and asked, “What’s the matter, haven’t you ever seen one of the supermen before?”

One of her co-workers said, “Yeah, but we’ve never seen you with a man before. Way to go!”

Rolling her eyes she dropped into her chair and pulled her camera off of her neck and plugged it in to download what she had gotten. Once the download was started she opened her bottom drawer and pulled out another pair of shoes. They were really the wrong color, but, they would have to do until she got home. She picked up her short heels and looked at them with disappointment in her eyes. She thought, <These were my favorites. I hope they can be repaired.> Stuffing them into her bottom drawer she went back to her computer to see just how much she had gotten.

Standing in her doorway, Lois, was an interested observer. She sent a thought, /Jon, do you realize that the stunt you just pulled with Hattie is a close duplicate of when your father made his debut and he flew me in the same way?/

She received, /Yeah, I remember you telling us the story. Hattie wants so much to be like you, I just couldn’t resist./

/I think you really made an impression. Are you going to be her special superman the way your father is for me?/

/I’ll take her on as my special project, if that’s what you mean. After all, she is one of my closest friends, almost like a sister./

/Just be careful, okay?/

/I will./

Later that afternoon Hattie had a call from her informant. “Daily Planet, Kaplin.”

“Ms. Kaplin, I saw what happened. It’s a good thing for you that Kam-El was around.”

“Yeah, if it hadn’t been for him I’d have been a big red stain on the sidewalk. Listen, I got some pictures but those goons got

to me before anything really incriminating was said. When will the next meeting be?”

“Since they know you were watching they aren’t going to do any more face to face meetings. I’m going to have to be careful. If they find out I tipped you off it could be a problem.”

“Darn! Okay, if you hear anything, let me know, but, be careful.” With a thoughtful expression, Hattie hung up the phone. This was going to require some thought.

A little later she had another call, “Daily Planet, Kaplin.”

“Well, Kaplin, what are you doing this evening?”

Immediately she brightened, “Hi Jon! No plans. What’s up?”

“How about dinner? Jen wants to get your opinion on some of the reception arrangements.”

“Sure, what are you cooking?”

“I was thinking about Indian tonight.”

“I can’t tell you how much I appreciate your dad and the time he spent teaching you how to cook. If you didn’t have a good job at STAR Labs you could open your own restaurant.”

“We already had one of them in the family. My Great Uncle Mike had one. Of course, that was years ago. Want me to pick you up?”

“Nah, I’ll drive. What time?”

“Does 6:30 suit?”

“Yeah, 6:30 will be fine. I have some things to finish up here. I’ll come right from work.”

“See you then.”

The next day Hattie came up with a plan. Banking on the fact that they would think that she wouldn’t return to the same place she had been caught just the day before, she picked up the equipment she would need from the equipment locker.

After work, when it was dark she headed out. For this mission she changed out of her work clothes and donned her ‘snooping’ clothes, a form fitting and flattering black cat suit. She carried her lock picks and other tools in a couple of pouches at her waist. One of the items she carried was a telescoping baton. It could be used like an eskrima (1) as a defensive weapon.

She returned to the same rooftop she had been on the day before. She had a digital recorder in a waterproof container and the same type of infrared laser that had been attached to the camera in one of the pouches. It had a sighting device so that it could be aimed. Staying below the coping around the edge of the roof as much as she could she sighted in the laser and locked it in position. Turning on the voice activated recorder she left the roof. She would check on the recorder every other day to replace the memory chip and see what she had recorded.

When she knelt down to place the recorder she came down on something hard. “Ouch! What’s that?” She picked it up and realized that it was the heel she had lost. She thought, <Well, I’m glad to find you. Now I can have those shoes repaired. I wonder if the mop head is here as well?> She felt around and found the errant mop head. It really wasn’t that important, it was just that it had a quick release mount attached. She put both items in the pouch the recorder and laser had occupied.

The next day she was in the office all day doing research just grabbing a cheese sandwich from the machine for lunch.

At 5:30 Hattie shut down her computer and grabbing her bag, headed for the elevator and took it down to the basement garage. Her first stop was going to be the crow’s nest to pick up her memory chip. As she left the elevator and headed toward her Jeep she hit the remote unlock button. As usual she could hear birds chirping in the girders above her head and suddenly she felt something wet and warm hit her outstretched hand. She looked up to see the source of this material and saw the birds. Looking at her hand she saw that the bird had accurate aim and had bombed her. She reached into her bag to get a tissue to clean it off.

About the time she finished wiping her hand and wadding up the tissue she was knocked off her feet when her Jeep exploded.

Within seconds the overhead sprinkler system started spewing water.

Seconds later Kam-El flew in and landed next to the flaming wreckage. When he shouted, you could hear the anguish in his voice, “Hattie!”

She must have been knocked out momentarily, but the water from the fire sprinklers had awakened her. She was just sitting up when she heard him and she replied, “Yeah, over here.”

He turned at the sound of her voice and spotting her, sped over and kneeling, enveloped her in his arms. He was choked up and almost crying.

She was startled by this outpouring of emotion and thought, <This is more attention than I expected. I wonder, could he be interested in me? Why else would he react this way? Do the supermen have human spouses? I wonder.>

In a shaky voice, Jon said, “I thought I had lost you.”

“I’m okay. I guess we can thank that bird.” <He thought he had lost me??>

“What bird?”

Gesturing vaguely at the ceiling she said, “The one that used my hand as a restroom. I stopped to clean up and that kept me from getting into my car.”

As he was helping her to stand he said, “It sure looks like you’ve ruffled some feathers so I guess it’s only fair that some feathers saved you. What do you want to do about this?”

“It might be a good idea to let whoever did this think they succeeded.”

They were beginning to hear sirens in the distance and approaching. The Jeep was still burning but the overhead sprinkler system had been spewing water, including the ones over their heads. Hattie’s hair was plastered to her skull and her suit was soaked.

“Do you want to talk to the police or not?”

Looking at her clothes and reaching up and feeling her hair plastered to her head she said, “I think . . . not. Can you get me outta here?”

“Sure, where do you want to go?”

“My apartment. I need to change out of these wet clothes, then, if you don’t mind, Jon Kent’s apartment.”

Jon sent, /Pop?/

Immediately he got a response, /What is it Jon?/

/Hattie’s car was bombed in the parking garage. She’s okay. She wasn’t in it when it went up. I’m taking her to her apartment. Can you come to the Planet and deal with the police for me?/

/Sure thing. You take care of Hattie./

/Thanks./

Jon picked her up and flew off just as the first responders were arriving. Without thinking about it he flew her to her apartment. At her door he stopped her and asked, “Do you want me to dry you off?”

She was distracted and asked, “What? How?”

He stepped back and said, “Just stand there a sec. A little heat vision will take care of it.”

Hattie could feel the heat. It wasn’t like being baked in an oven, more like standing outside in the sun on a summer day. She could feel her clothes and hair drying. She reached up and even though her hair was now dry it was still matted down.

When he was done she pulled out her keys and opened the locks. When the door opened she gasped. The sight that greeted her was appalling. Her apartment looked like a cyclone had passed through. Everything was thrown around, cushions were cut open, drawers pulled out and dumped, even her freezer was emptied. She moved into the kitchen and picked up a bag of frozen vegetables. They were still partially frozen. She said, “They were here only a short time ago.” She moved into her

bedroom. It was the same story. One small comfort was that her clothing was intact even if it was spread all over the floor. She looked at Kam-El and asked, “Can you help me pack all of this stuff up? I want to take it with me.”

At super speed Kam-El picked up, folded and packed her clothes. He did experience some little embarrassment as he was picking up her underwear. He had never been intimate with her that way and this was the first time he was seeing what she liked to wear under her clothes. Very feminine, lacy underwear and some plain, utilitarian things as well. Her night wear was the same mix, whew. He actually started to blush. To him it was like going through his sister’s lingerie drawer. When he had completed this task he asked, “What next?”

When she turned to face him at his question she noted the color in his cheeks, at least what wasn’t covered by his mask. She said, “Just take me to Jon Kent’s apartment.” She thought, <Why is he blushing? Does he wonder what I look like in some of my underwear? Perhaps a nightie?>

“I’ll take you and then come back for your luggage.” Once outside he picked her up and flew off.

The door of Jon Kent’s apartment was answered by Jen and seeing Hattie in her disheveled condition and Kam-El she asked, “Hattie, what happened?”

“You’re not going to believe it. Can I bunk with you guys for a few days?”

Jen stood back and allowed Hattie to enter and after she had passed Jen gave Jon a quizzical look that Hattie couldn’t see. He nodded imperceptibly so Jen put her arm around her shoulder and led her to the couch.

Kam-El said, “I’ll be right back with her luggage.”

Jen said, “Alright, go ahead.” As soon as Kam-El turned away Jen sat next to Hattie and put an arm across her shoulders.

Chapter 3 – Uh – oh

July 2028

The reaction finally settled in and Hattie started to cry. Jen tried to comfort her as best she could without knowing the story. Slowly, the story came out, in between sobs.

Shortly, Kam-El returned with Hattie’s luggage which he put in the guest bedroom. When he came back out he said, “I don’t think I’m needed here any longer. I’ll check back on you later.”

Hattie said, “Thanks, Kam-El. I don’t know what I’d have done without you.”

He nodded his head and exited.

A few minutes later Jon Kent entered and said, “I just saw Kam-El fly away. What was he doing around here?” As if he just spotted her he asked, “Hattie! What are you doing here?”

“Jon, am I glad to see you! You’ll never believe what happened. First my Jeep was bombed. It’s just dumb luck that I wasn’t in it when it happened. Then Kam-El took me to my apartment. Wait a minute, how did he know where I live? I wonder. Anyhow, it looks like my apartment was searched. Fortunately, I was carrying my laptop in my bag so they didn’t get that. I don’t know what they were looking for and I hope whatever it was they didn’t find it. My guess is that it was Metro-Staff. They know I’m after them. Kam-El was a tremendous help. You know, I think he likes me. I could tell. I just wonder.” She fell silent for a minute then she looked at herself and said, “I guess I need to get out of these clothes.” She stood up and moved into the guest bedroom to change.

When she closed the door, Jen gave Jon another quizzical look. He shrugged his shoulders and said, “We can talk later.”

Hattie was thinking about her encounter with Kam-El as she was getting out some clothes to change into. He had said he would be back later to check on her. Subconsciously, thinking about him must have influenced her decision as to what to put on. She pulled out a lacey turquoise bra and matching thong. She

found a light blue scoop neck top and a short dark blue skirt. She pulled out her comb and brush and worked on her hair. She decided that it would require a shower and proper care before it would look right and she hoped she would have a chance to do that before he returned. Giving it up as a lost cause, until a shower she put down her utensils, picked up her clothes and rejoined Jon and Jen in the living room.

Jon said, “You look a lot better.”

Hattie replied, “Thank you. I feel a little better. Mind if I use your shower?”

Jen said, “Not at all. Make yourself at home.”

Jon asked, “Who’s hungry? It’s steak night. I was planning to make sides of mac n cheese, green beans and a salad.”

Hattie said, “Comfort food; just the thing. Thanks. I don’t know what I’d do if I didn’t have friends like you guys.” She headed toward the bathroom for her shower.

Once the door to the bathroom was closed, Jen turned to Jon and asked, “Okay, what happened?”

“Well, she was almost killed. Somebody booby trapped her car. I didn’t get there until it had already happened. I thought she was dead. I’m afraid I might have let my guard down and reacted emotionally. I don’t know if it will be a problem or not. We’ll have to wait and see.”

“You’re going to need to be extra careful.”

“Don’t I know it? I’m going to go start dinner while she’s in the shower.”

“Okay, I need to work on my lesson plans for next week.

Shall I bring my book out and work at the table? I can keep you company that way.”

Jon leaned in, gave her a kiss and said, “I can’t think of anyone I’d rather have keeping me company. What can I carry for you?”

“It’s in my bag. I’ll get it and join you in a minute, Lover.”

He wiggled his eyebrows and with a wicked little grin said, “The joining will be much later.”

Jen giggled and looked toward the bathroom as she said, “I don’t know if I can be quiet enough not to disturb Hattie. You know, I really feel sorry for her. She doesn’t have a boyfriend. She says she’s too busy chasing a Pulitzer.”

A few minutes later they were in the kitchen.

Jon was starting the meal preparations as they were talking. Jon asked, “Who are you matching her up with in the bridal party?”

“I was thinking about your cousin, Jimmy Junior. What do you think?”

“Yeah, that might just work. He’s a good guy. He’s been working for the Gotham Gazette. I hear he just got an offer from the Planet. His specialty is human interest, mood type pieces. The word is that Mom and Dad asked him to come over especially. The editor of the Gazette was complaining that it was nepotism and poaching, but, what could he do about it? It isn’t like he had a long contract or anything.”

Suddenly Jon received a thought, /Jon, you busy?/

/Kinda, is it important?/

/No, it can wait a while. The police have finished their investigation. They pulled the security tapes and ID’d the bomber. There’s an APB out for him. I can give you the details later./

/Thanks, Pop. I’ll get back to you./

Using finger quotes, Jen said, “Okay, I saw “the” look. What’s up?”

“That was Dad. They ID’d the bomber. I’ll need to get together with him later.”

Just to be on the safe side from that point on Jen talked about her fourth grade class while Jon finished the meal. Hattie came out after her shower and joined them and was fascinated by some of the anecdotes Jen told about her students.

They spent the rest of the evening together and then Jon and Jen said they were going to bed so all three went off to change.

After they were in their bedroom, while Jen prepared for bed, Jon spun into his Suit and flew out through the bedroom window to meet with his dad.

Remembering that Kam-El had promised to look back in on her later, Hattie decided to wear a semi-transparent nightie and put this on over her bra and thong. She was still restless after what had happened so she put on a robe and went out to the living room and turned on the TV with the sound off and the closed captioning on.

She was half asleep when the door quietly opened and in stepped Kam-El.

She was instantly awake. She stood and walked toward him. In a hushed tone, so as not to disturb Jon and Jen in their bedroom she said, “I knew you’d come.” Her face began to flush with her thoughts. She said, “I know that you have feelings for me. I heard what you said.” She started opening her robe. “I heard the emotion in your voice when you thought I had been killed in the explosion.” She finished undoing her robe. “You said that you had been afraid you had lost me.” She pulled the robe open and allowed it to fall to the floor revealing almost her entire body to his view. She was excited and it was evident because her nipples were hard and erect and her lacey bra did nothing to hide their condition.

Jon was embarrassed and looked up as if praying to a higher power for strength. When he looked down he looked at the TV.

She stepped up to him and wrapped her arms around his neck. She said, “You don’t have to hide your feelings anymore.” She stretched up on tiptoe and kissed him. He really didn’t reciprocate and she pulled back and with a funny almost disgusted look on her face said, “That felt like I was kissing my *brother*.” She stepped back and seeing that he wasn’t looking at her, feelings of inadequacy started to assert and her voice started to lost its quiet register. Her volume started to increase as she asked, “Am I that ugly that you can’t even look at me? Do I disgust you that much?” The hurt was very evident in her voice as it finished on a high and rather loud note.

Jen was in bed waiting for Jon’s return when she heard raised voices in the living room. She slid out of bed and grabbed her robe and started putting it on. She didn’t immediately go into the living room because it could just be the TV.

Kam-El said, “I’m sorry Hattie. I ... I can’t really ...”

With this statement some of the hurt she had been experiencing was removed. If this was the case, then there was no hope of a relationship. “You can’t be with Earth women, is that it?”

“Well, no, that’s not it.”

This statement brought all of her anger back and she almost shouted, “If that’s not it, what’s the problem? I know you have feelings for me. I have feelings for you.” She reached up and cupped her breasts as if offering them to him.

Jen heard this clearly, <That surely wasn’t the TV.> she moved toward the door of the bedroom.

Again he said, “Hattie, I ... I can’t .. I ...”

He still wasn’t looking at her so she gasped the sides of her nightie and pulled it off over her head so that she was standing there in just a couple of bits of lace. All the bra did was outline her breasts without concealing them. She said, “Look at me! Am I that hard to look at? Am I that repulsive?” She started weeping in frustration at his apparent rejection.

Just then the bedroom door opened and Hattie heard Jen gasp very loudly. Then Hattie heard Jen say, loudly and angrily, “Hattie! What are you doing?” Jen looked at Kam-El and saw that he was looking at the silent TV and *NOT* at Hattie.

Hattie half turned toward Jen and holding out her hand in

Kam-El’s direction said, “Kam-El ... he came to check on me.”

In a tone of her voice, that of someone who was exasperated Jen said, “You’re not exactly dressed for visitors.”

Defensively, Hattie replied, “I am for him. He has feelings for me, I know it.” She reached down and picked up her robe and started to put it back on.

Jen transferred her attention to Kam-El and said, “I think it’s time she was told.”

Hattie looked back and forth between Kam-El and Jen and asked, “Told? Told what?”

Kam-El pointedly looked and Jen and said, “You’re right.”

Jen asked, “Why did you come in through the door anyhow?”

“There were people outside. They would have seen me. I thought she would be in bed.”

Hattie was getting the impression that these two knew each other better than she ever could have imagined. As they were talking she had finished fastening her robe.

Jen said, “She is one of your best and oldest friends. Don’t you think you can trust her by this time? *I* think you can.”

As Hattie was listening to this exchange Kam-El’s voice had started to change. It became a little less deep, took on a new tone and timbre, became less and less formal, softer, more friendly, more ... familiar.

Kam-El nodded his head and said, “You’re right, of course.” He reached up and removed his mask.

Hattie stood there in shock. It was like a bomb had gone off in her brain. Her thoughts were in a whirl. <Jon??? Jon Kent! The guy I have known from middle school, my best friend ... he ... is ... Kam-El!?!?! Kam-El! I just tried to seduce Kam-El, Jon, I just tried to seduce Jon! But, if he’s Kam-El, then that means that Clark Kent, Clark Kent is Superman and OH ... MY ... GOD ... that means that Lois is .. Lois Lane is Ultra Woman!> Hattie felt faint.

In a dazed state Hattie clutched her robe closer. As she was cinching the belt tighter, in a distracted manner, she said, “All of these years, all these years I’ve been spending all my spare time with the super family. I basically taught you French. You taught me Algebra. No wonder I could never be as good as Lois Lane, she had a super edge.” She was slowly becoming slightly hysterical.

Jon said, “Actually, Mom didn’t have her powers back until I was ten.”

Hattie didn’t understand this and said, “What? How?”

Jon started to move over to comfort her, but, Jen shook her head and moved over in his place to comfort Hattie. She said, “Now you can see why it never would have worked out for you with Kam-El. He’s ... already spoken for.”

Hattie turned to Jen and put her arms around her, buried her face in her shoulder and started crying. She said, “Oh, Jen, I’m so sorry. I didn’t know.”

Jen patted her back and then made a hand motion, twirling her finger around indicating that Jon should change which he did.

Jon stepped over to them and placed a hand on Hattie’s shoulder. He said, “Hattie, we need to talk.”

She stopped crying and nodded in understanding. They moved over to the sofa. Jon turned the TV off and when he sat down, Jen sat in his lap, facing Hattie.

Hattie said, “I never even suspected. I call myself an investigative reporter and I never for a moment considered the possibility that the entire super family was right there under my nose the whole time.”

Jon said, “That’s not too surprising Hattie, we’ve had a lot of practice hiding and after all you and I almost grew up together. You just saw me as your friend, the guy you studied and played games with. *You* are like a *sister* to me and I *do* have feelings for you. Hattie I *do* love you. I love you like a sister. The only one I have stronger feelings for is Jen.”

“Why didn’t you tell me before?”

“It wasn’t until recently that you were in need of assistance. It just sorta worked out that I was in the area when you needed me and yes, I was heartbroken when I thought you had died in that explosion. I didn’t really, deliberately keep it from you, it’s just family policy. We have only ever told our spouses. There have been some close, very close friends that have figured it out on their own, but, mostly it’s just relatives. It’s actually for their safety as much as ours. If it became known that someone knew who we were, think what a criminal would do to get the information. We don’t want to risk that.”

“But, I would *never* tell. I don’t care what they would do to me. They could stick burning bamboo stakes under my fingernails and I wouldn’t tell.”

“We know you wouldn’t Hattie, but, we wouldn’t want you to have to go through that.”

Hattie asked, “But, what about Jen? Won’t she be susceptible to that kind of torture, or worse, as the wife of one of the supermen, they could threaten to kill her if you didn’t do what they wanted.”

“That would only be for a short time. What you don’t know, what nobody outside of the family has known till now is that all of our spouses are super as well. In just a couple of years, Jen will be a superwoman and all of our children will be super.”

“You mean that if I had married you, I would have become super?”

“Yes.”

“How does it happen?”

“By being together, by being intimate our spouses bodies are changed over time and when they have reached the point that they are half Kryptonian we can have children and they have powers.”

With a thoughtful look Hattie said, “If you and I were intimate, could you make me super?”

Jen replied, “I’m sorry Hattie. Jon is spoken for. Remember, he and I are getting married in just a few weeks. I guess he should explain.”

“Hattie, there’s something about Kryptonians. We are driven to find that one person, the *only* person that completes us. It’s called a soul mate and once we find our soul mate, they are the only one we can be with. I’m sorry, Hattie. It’s a case of love at first sight. If it doesn’t happen immediately, it won’t happen. It happened immediately with Jen. You and I were already friends but the first time I laid eyes Jen, I knew she was the one. Plus, it isn’t that simple. It takes up to three years.”

“I guess I’ve lost out all around then.”

“No Hattie! Don’t think that way! Just because I’m not the one we’re still friends, now, more than ever. You’re part of this family, whether you want to be or not. You’re almost as much a part of this family as Jen is, in fact you’ve been with us longer.”

Suddenly a thought hit her, she said, “Wait a minute, I just thought, if you’re Kam-El then Lara is ...”

Jon finished for her, “Ultra Woman two.”

Hattie asked, “How did that happen?”

“That’s a story for another time.”

Jen looked at the clock and said, “I have a fourth grade class to teach tomorrow. I need to get some sleep and I need Jon in bed with me. Are you going to be okay?”

Hattie thought for a second and then said, “Yeah, I guess so. I still have a lot of questions though.”

“We have a lot of time to answer them. Now that we don’t have to hide everything, we can talk.”

“In that case, I guess I’ll go to bed, but, first I’m going to change into, something a little less ... revealing.”

Jen and Jon both chuckled and said, “Goodnight Hattie.” They both gave her a kiss on the cheek and headed for their bedrooms. Hattie went to the guest room and Jon and Jen to

theirs.

The next morning at breakfast Jon told Hattie that the bomber had been identified and that the police were after him.

They decided that she should work from the apartment for a couple of days.

Hattie told Jon about the recorder and he retrieved the chip for her while putting a new one in place.

After listening to it she called the police and asked to speak with Inspector Cardona.

“Cardona here.”

“Inspector, this is Hattie Kaplin.”

“Ah, Ms. Kaplin. Superman just brought in our person of interest in the bombing of your car.”

“Superman, which one?”

“Oh, it was Superman himself. I heard about your incident and that Kam-El was the one that saved you. Do you have some kind of pull with the supermen that they go out of their way to help you?”

This simple question yanked her back in her mind to the previous night and the conversation they had had. She knew now just what it meant to be in on the family secret and just how important it was to guard that secret. She knew instantly that in order to protect Jon and the rest of his family she would need to lie, or if not lie outright, at least muddy the water somewhat. She phrased her answer carefully, “Not that I am aware of. I think that they help anyone when the need arises.” She decided not to press her luck any farther and change the topic by asking, “Has the bomber talked yet?”

“No, we’re still grilling him.”

“What I have here might just help to get him talking. I have a recording of the conversations conducted in the offices of Metro-Staff”

“Oh, that’s interesting. I’m not going to ask how you acquired this recording.”

“Good, that way I won’t have to lie to you. It would not be admissible in a court of law as evidence, but, I think you will find it to be very interesting. The director of Metro-Staff hired the bomber that booby trapped my Jeep. He also sent the team out that ransacked my apartment. They were trying to find out just how much evidence I had on them. The most interesting thing for the bomber is that he was scheduled to be ‘taken care of’ so that he couldn’t testify later. It could make interesting listening for the bomber.”

“I’ll send a courier over to get it. Where are you?”

She gave him Jon Kent’s address and while she waited she copied the file to her laptop.

Phone conversations and other meetings were recorded and all incriminated Metro-Staff in her attempted murder and also the corporate espionage.

After a time she had a call from Inspector Cardona. “We played that recording for the suspect and he copped to the gig and cut a deal. He’ll plead to a lower charge and testify against Metro-Staff. We got enough out of him to get a warrant. We are going to go after them on the attempted murder charge, but, who knows just what we might turn up in the search. You’re interest is in the corporate espionage, right?”

“Right, can I get whatever you dig up?”

“Would you like to be there for the bust? It was your recording, after all, that busted this case wide open. You get the exclusive.”

“Inspector, a team of wild horses couldn’t keep me away.”

“I’ll get back to you.”

She typed up what she had and e-mailed it to Lois and Clark.

The police notified her when they were set to do a round up and she was there for the take down.

As anticipated all of the evidence she needed to make the link between Metro-Staff, the industrial espionage and Miralabs was uncovered.

Her articles exposing Miralabs and the corporate spying being done by Metro-Staff won her not only a Kerth nomination but the award itself and this was just a few months farther into her career that Lois was when she won her first Kerth.

The wedding went off without a hitch. The bride was radiant in her white gown. Pete Ross, husband of Jen's cousin and closest relative, Lana Lang Ross, gave her away as the stand in for her deceased father. The groom looked very dashing in his tuxedo with a white cummerbund and white tie. Lara Kent Lee was Matron of Honor and Mike Lee was Jon's best man. All of Jon's sisters and Hattie were in the bridal party as bridesmaids and all of Jon's brothers and his cousin Jimmy Olsen Junior were groomsmen. Hattie as a bridesmaid was paired up with Jimmy. Hattie and Jimmy hit it off and both had a thoroughly enjoyable evening, dancing the night away. When it came time for the tossing of the bouquet, Hattie caught it. The garter was caught by, you guessed it, Jimmy Junior. There was some rather raucous cheering and encouragement as he was putting the garter on Hattie's leg to keep going higher and higher. She called a halt when it was at mid-thigh which is when the photographer took the picture. Nobody let on, but, there just might have been some collusion on the part of the girls and guys to have it turn out that way.

Jimmy Junior had been told to keep his new job a secret, so at the wedding he had limited himself to family and his work at the Gotham Gazette. The fact that he was also a reporter and could converse on her level attracted Hattie to him immediately. The fact that he was also part of the family and knew the family secret fostered conversation. Since he had been told that she knew the family secret, it established a lot of common ground for a relationship.

The wedding was on Saturday and Jimmy had convinced Hattie to give him her address and phone number so that he could call her some time.

On Monday, to her complete surprise that same groomsman started working at the Daily Planet.

Oh, and, by the way, when Jimmy Olsen Junior started at the Planet, he was teamed up with Hattie Kaplin. He brought the same balance to the writing team that Clark had to the team of Lane and Kent. Before long the reporting team of Kaplin and Olsen were the inheritors of the title, 'The Hottest Team in Town' and before too much more time had passed, Hattie really became a member of the family by marrying Jon's cousin.

THE END

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eskrima>

Stick used in hand to hand combat either singly or in pairs.