

Scientific Impossibility

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Summary: With a little help from an old enemy, Clark discovers a new passion to pursue: astronomy! How will this affect his future?

(Inspired by my own Astronomy class.)

The door slammed, shaking the house. The potato Martha was peeling flew from her hands as she jumped at the sound.

Goodness, I hope Clark leaves the house in one piece, she mused to herself as she once more picked up the vegetable and rinsed off the skin peels that had managed to stick to it after it fell. Martha knew Clark would figure out where she was soon enough, and went back to preparing dinner.

“Mom!!”

She had to resist the urge to roll her eyes at his predictability sometimes. “In here, sweetheart.”

Clark came stomping into the kitchen petulantly before plopping himself ungracefully into a chair at the table. She gave him a smile as she turned to look at him. “Hey there, honey. What brings you here so early? Dinner’s not going to be ready for a couple of hours.”

Clark groaned and let his head drop to the table with a thud. Martha gave a brief glance to the table just to make sure nothing had happened to it, before returning her concerned gaze back to her son and planting a comforting hand on his shoulder. “Oh, honey. What is it? What’s the matter?”

Clark didn’t raise his head to look at her, instead just speaking in a muffled tone. “I’m impossible.”

Martha sat down in a chair next to him, crinkling her nose slightly at the funny phrase. “Sweetheart, what on earth are you talking about? You’re not impossible. Maybe a little stubborn sometimes, but impossible?”

That got his attention. Clark lifted his head and gave his mother a scowl. “No, I *am* impossible. I am literally a scientific impossibility. There is no way that I should be alive right now.”

Martha sat upright in her chair, fear and worry flashing through her eyes in a moment. In all his twenty years of living, Martha never heard him speak like that. Sure, he had his moods — what teenager didn’t, particularly though with his influx of special abilities — but this? “Clark Jerome Kent, just what on earth are you on about? You very much should be alive and I would surely hope that stays the case!”

Clark gave her a confused look at first before he recognized his words. “What? No! Not like that, Mom. I’m planning on living a lot longer.”

“I should certainly say so!”

“What I was saying,” he ignored her last comment and dragged out his words to get her attention, “Is that by all logical definitions, I should not have been able to survive the journey from my... my home planet to here. It should have taken me hundreds of years, longer even maybe — and that’s only if it were a close star! Can you imagine, if Krypton were completely on the other side of the universe, outside our visible universe, and my parents wanted to send me here? I should have grown old and died in that tiny spaceship!”

Martha let out a short huff of air. So that’s what this was all about. The globe.

Clark was currently in his second year of college at KU, and was taking an astronomy class. He had always, even as a boy, been fascinated by the concept of space, travelling through it, and the possibilities that existed outside this earthly realm. And that was even before he had his superpowers or knew about his heritage. Therefore, the class had been right up his alley to begin with, nevermind the fact that he had already gotten his science credits out of the way for his Journalism degree. He just had to take it.

Martha felt like she was taking the class herself sometimes. Clark would often fly back home for dinner and spend the whole time in deep conversation about the Big Bang theory or star formation or general relativity. Martha couldn’t wait for this semester to be over — not only so that she could see more of Clark on his break, but so he would find something else to talk about. She loved her son and she loved to learn, but physics and theoretical sciences were definitely not an interest Martha Kent shared with her boy.

She had thought it would all go back to normal after the class was over, but lo and behold, fate would not give her such a break. They were in the home stretch, only a month away from the term’s end, when he had found it.

The globe.

It, and the knowledge it contained, had come as a shock to all of them. They had sort of always expected that Clark might not be of terrestrial origin, but having it confirmed so definitely and with such detail was incredible. Clark himself had gone into a bit of a shock. The five messages the globe delivered about the destruction of Krypton had sent him into another one of his moods for about a week, but then the curiosity settled in. Some of the questions, the globe had answered — who, what, when, why — but the other two were the ones that drove Clark crazy. Where and how. Where was Krypton? What was it like there? How could his parents part with him like that, even for his own good? How would his life have been different if Krypton hadn’t exploded?

Then came the technical questions, like how had he made it to Earth alive.

Those were questions for which Martha had no reply.

“Clark, shouldn’t you be focusing your energies more on your writing classes? Or actual classwork? You’ve only got a few more weeks.”

He brushed her off with a wave of his hand. “It’s not really that big of a deal, Mom. I’ve got writing down, and the science is fascinating enough to hold my interest. Actually, I just wrote an analysis paper in Astronomy last week — and I got a hundred percent on it! Can you believe it? Mr. Tempus never gives out perfect scores. He says I might have a real future in the field if I were interested.”

Martha cocked her head to the side at that statement and gave her son’s expression a good long look. “Are you?”

“Hmm?” He gave her an innocent expression.

“Are you interested in science — in astronomy, let’s say — enough to pursue it?”

Clark squirmed in his seat a little uncomfortably. “Well, that’s kind of what I came by to talk to you about.”

Martha found herself in a state of shock. “But honey, you’ve had your heart set on journalism for years now. You think you would really give that up? Not that I mind — you know your father and I will always support you no matter what you decide to do with your life.”

Clark sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “I know, Ma. I just... this is a part of me that I’d never even known before. I always did enjoy science and math, you know that, but to have this sort of... realistic connection to it all... It’s definitely something I find myself considering.”

Martha sat on that information for a while, letting them each

think in silence for a few moments before continuing. “You know, Clark, everyone kind of goes through this phase at your age. They don’t know what they want to do with their lives, they think what they’ve thought before was wrong. It’s all a part of growing up. But it’s ultimately up to you. You do realize that, if you were to switch your fields, you would be studying other things, right? It wouldn’t just be all about you. It couldn’t be.”

“I know, Mom, I know. I mean, that’s part of the advantage even, I suppose. You and Dad always warned me against the government locking me up and dissecting me like a frog, but now... I’d be one of the guys doing the dissecting. I wouldn’t have that same risk any more. There is so much more out there that I need to be able to understand— things that I might not ever come to learn as a journalist, even with a ton of resources at my disposal. It’s not just a phase I’m going through right now. I really think this might be what I want to do with the rest of my life.”

Martha smiled as she reached out and held her son’s hand in between her own. “Sounds to me like you’ve already given this a lot of thought.”

He nodded earnestly. “I have, Mom. I really, really have.”

Martha nodded in response, smiling. “Well then, if it’s what you want, then what’s stopping you?”

Clark shrugged in response and stood up to go get a drink out of the fridge. “I don’t know. It just feels so... risky. I’ve always figured I’d be a journalist. I mean, it’s not like I think it would be the end of the world or change the fabric of time or anything just by changing majors, but it’s still a little overwhelming to part with it.”

“Well, I think a little change never hurt anyone. You could always switch back later if you find out you don’t like it later on. And— Clark Jerome Kent! You use a glass!”

Clark flushed and lowered the milk jug away from his mouth. The ways of college life must be creeping up on him. He sped over and grabbed a glass from the cabinet to pour himself some milk. “Sorry, Ma.”

Martha cast him a disapproving glare before going on. “Anyway, what I was saying is that I think you should do whatever feels right to you. That’s all.”

Clark nodded. “Thanks, Mom. You think Dad will be okay with it?”

“Oh, honey, don’t you worry about him. He’ll be happy with you no matter what. Besides, if it were up to him, you’d be a farmer, and I think that ship has sailed for you. I don’t imagine you’d have a change of heart anytime soon on that front, eh?”

Clark blushed once more. “Sorry.”

Martha laughed and patted his arm. “That’s okay, dear. It’s not for everyone, that’s for sure.”

Clark smiled and turned to face the counter. A million thoughts were running through his head, and for the first in what seemed like a long time, Clark felt as if he had a new and exciting purpose in life. He would do whatever it took to learn as much as he could about himself.

He nudged his mother’s arm lightly. “So, what are we making tonight?”

Five Years Later

Clark Kent sat in the waiting room of the doctor’s office a little less than patiently. He had to admit, he was nervous. It wasn’t quite the job he would like, but it would get his foot in the door. And it was in Metropolis— a city Clark gradually found himself falling in love with. And, to top it all off, the doctor supposedly had some high-up connections, STAR Labs included.

Clark was very interested in that particular connection. Which was what made him accept the internship at this facility. It came right out of the blue, too, and just in the nick of time. He’d been about ready to run off again to another distant land when the

letter came.

A small, odd looking man in a bowler hat exited the office and gave Clark a smile and a quick nod in passing. Clark certainly hoped the man wasn’t applying for the same position.

“Mr. Kent? Doctor Lane will see you now.”

He jumped up out of his seat like a shot, controlling himself so as to not speed straight into the office. He would be working with Sam Lane— a big name in the field of science and medicine. He hoped it would get him somewhere.

Clark knocked on the door as he walked into the main office. “Dr. Lane?”

The older man turned to face him with a critical eye. “You Clark Kent?”

He nodded and stepped forward with an outstretched hand. “Yes, sir, I am.”

Sam took it and gave it a nice firm shake. “Good to meet you. I’ve heard a lot of good things about you from your professors. Tell me you’re as bright as they come. Modest, too.”

Clark flushed slightly, unsure how to take such a compliment. “Uh, thank you, sir. I do my best.”

“So, may I ask what an astrophysicist is doing looking for work at an experimental medical office? Hard times?”

“Actually, sir, I really am interested in expanding my knowledge, getting a more well-rounded look at the way the world around us works— and that includes people.”

Sam grinned. “You actually sounded genuine there.”

Clark nodded eagerly. “I am, sir.”

Dr. Lane looked down at his papers, shuffling them around briefly. “Well, you’re the best candidate I’ve had yet, and you come highly recommended. And almost over-qualified.” Dr. Lane paused there, and Clark had to swallow back the lump that managed to get stuck in his throat as he waited nervously. Then the man across from him smiled and outstretched his hand once more. “Welcome aboard, Mr. Kent.”

Clark practically jumped out of his seat and grasped the man’s hand perhaps a little bit harder than he should have. “Thank you, Dr. Lane. I promise you won’t regret your choice.”

“I certainly hope not.”

Suddenly the door to the office swung open and both men turned to look at the intruder.

Clark’s eyes widened in surprise and he felt his pulse quicken. In stormed the most beautiful woman he had ever laid eyes on, with the most angry expression on her face. He could tell she was about to explode and that maybe he should gracefully duck out, but Clark couldn’t seem to pull himself away from this mystery woman.

“Dad! I have a bone to pick with you!”

Clark’s face fell briefly before returning to its previous state of awe. *Mystery solved.*

Samuel Lane winced and turned to face his daughter. “Lois, can’t you tell I’m sort of in the middle of something here?”

“Oh, you mean like how I was sort of in the middle of something last night when I was undercover at the Senator’s ball and you called me out?! Are you in the middle of something like that?”

“Lois, now’s not the time,” Sam clapped Clark on the shoulder, nearly making him jump out of his skin at the sudden intrusion on his thoughts. “This here is Clark Kent, he’s going to be working with me. Clark, this is my daughter, Lois Lane.”

Clark swallowed thickly, his throat suddenly very dry. “It’s very nice to meet you, Miss Lane.” He reached his hand out to shake it and hoped it wasn’t as sweaty as it seemed.

As luck would have it, he didn’t find out. Lois gave his gesture a withering glare and turned her gaze back to her father. “Yeah, nice to meet you too. We’ll chat some other time.”

“Lois,” Sam chastized for her rudeness.

“Dad, you made me lose the story! Do you realize that? Ugh.

It's bad enough I have to see you more than a couple of times a year, but can you at least stay out of my same social circles and not ruin my job too?"

Clark's brain and mouth hadn't quite caught up with each other yet. "You work at the Daily Planet?"

Finally, exasperated, Lois turned and looked at him. She gave him a good once over but kept her features neutral. "Yeah, what's it to you?"

Clark nearly shrank back at another rebuff. "Nothing. I always wanted to work there when I was growing up. Spent my first two years of college majoring in journalism."

Dr. Lane turned and gave him a surprised look. "Journalism too? You're just a jack of all trades, aren't you?"

Clark smiled genuinely at that compliment, and noticed Lois giving him an odd sort of stare all of the sudden. He cocked his head to the side slightly, trying to figure her out.

Lois gave a frustrated groan and headed back towards the door. "Fine. Whatever. Ignore me. I'm going to go out to lunch. We can talk another time, when I'm not going to embarrass you in front of any new hires."

Clark stammered as she stormed back out of the office. "I-I don't mind— I'm not—"

The door slammed behind her before he could get any more out. He heard Dr. Lane sigh and take a seat behind his desk.

"Sorry about that. My daughter and I don't exactly... get along great. She can get a bit explosive sometimes."

"Firecracker," Clark murmured mostly to himself, still gazing off in her general direction.

Dr. Lane gave the young man an appraising look, unsure of what he meant by that comment, but deciding that he wasn't so keen on the man's expression. It was starting to make him a bit uncomfortable. He cleared his throat and Clark jumped slightly.

"That will be all for today. I'll see you first thing tomorrow morning, if that works all right for you."

Clark smiled at him and shook his hand once more. "I'll be here bright and early. Thank you again, Dr. Lane."

"Don't mention it."

Clark felt like he was floating on air as he walked out of Dr. Lane's office, and even had to subtly check to make sure he wasn't. He got the job! And he met the most beautiful woman, and she had such a spark! Granted, she was the boss' daughter, but Clark wasn't going to allow that thought to rain on his parade today. Today, he was going to go out to lunch and celebrate.

The front door to the office almost swung and hit him in the face. Clark stepped back at the last second but was blinking in surprise when Lois stormed back in without so much as an apology for almost knocking him off his feet. Literally, this time. She was focused, intent on finding... something. "Uh, Miss Lane? Could I help you with something?"

"Thanks, pal, but I really don't need any of your help. I'm just fine on my own."

Clark felt his shoulders slump over. "Sorry. I-I didn't mean to offend you or anything."

Lois sighed and turned to look up at him from where she was crouching on the ground. He had this defeated look on his all too adorable face, and damn it all, she took pity on him. "I'm looking for my pager. It must have fallen out of my purse somewhere and I'm hoping it at least happened here, because if I didn't lose it here then I have absolutely no idea where it could be. This would be the third pager in a year! Perry will kill me if I've lost another one."

Clark was lost a moment in her long string of babble, but brightened when he realized she was opening up to him. "I can help you look for it— I mean, if you're okay with that."

"Would you? I'd appreciate that. More than standing around gawking anyway."

And the sarcasm was back. Clark still couldn't help his smile

as he turned and gave the room a quick survey, allowing his glasses to dip down his nose subtly. His grin widened when he hit paydirt. He bent over near the couch in the waiting room and pretended to look for a moment before reaching just under the furniture and grabbing it. "Aha! I believe this is what you're looking for." He turned around and found Lois staring at him in what he thought was disbelief.

"How'd you find it so fast?" She asked, pushing aside her thoughts on how nice a butt this Clark Kent seemed to have and adding a lilt of suspicion to her tone as she snatched the device from his hands.

To this he shrugged and nervously pushed his glasses all the way up his nose. "What can I say, Lois. Some people are just finders."

At this, Lois scowled good naturedly. Clark, always the gentleman, collected himself and stood, offering a hand to Lois, which she graciously accepted.

"So, Lois," he began, unsure of where to go from here. "Do you know any good places around here for lunch?" *Why do I make myself sound so cheesy?*

But to his surprise, Lois smiled at him. As he turned and held open the front door for her, she replied, "I think I know a couple of places..."

And somehow, that was the best news Clark had gotten all day.

H.G. Wells sat across the street from Dr. Lane's office on a bench, holding a Daily Planet newspaper to hide himself from any prying eyes. He watched carefully from the pages as Lois Lane and Clark Kent stepped onto the pavement and began an almost hesitant journey together down the street, the first of what promised to be many afternoons shared in the future.

Herb smiled. Another one of Tempus' plans foiled.

THE END