

Pheromone, My Lovely — Matchmaker Style

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Rated: PG13

Submitted: August, 2014

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When Virginia proposed the challenge of taking a first season story and having it result in Lois and Clark being married I took up the challenge and “The Green, Green Glow of Home — Matchmaker Style” was the result.

That was all well and good, but then I started thinking — What about future episodes? How would the fact that they are now married affect the dynamic? For instance, how would “Pheromone My Lovely” be changed by the marriage?

So, to answer the question — What if Lois and Clark were already married when PML happened? I offer the following.

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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.

In this, the sequel to GGGoh — Matchmaker Style. Lois and Clark have been back from the assignment in Smallville for a couple of weeks. Clark has finally removed the sling having recovered from being shot through the shoulder. Lois and Clark now live in Clark’s ‘old’ apartment.

In this particular story a lot of the dialogue is taken from the script text. I wish to express my thanks to my Beta readers Artemis and Ray Reynolds for their invaluable help. This was a VERY rough draft when it first landed in their hands.

* * denotes emphasis

< > denotes thoughts

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

Pheromone, My Lovely — Matchmaker Style

What is past is Prologue

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 — canon universe

Distant future — TTEMPO Headquarters

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At TTEMPO Headquarters in this distant future, shaking his head Herb Wells took the translift to his floor and moved down the corridor to his office. The door, with it usual reliability, opened as he approached. He stepped in and said, “Lights on.”

Once the lights were on, he shrugged out of his coat and removing his derby, hung both on the coat rack just inside the door then moved to his desk. As he was crossing the floor to his desk, he removed his tie, opened his collar by removing the collar-button, and heaved a relieved sigh, thinking, <I really ought to update my wardrobe. These hard starched collars can be very irritating. Oh, well, I guess it’s all in what you are used to.> For the most part his office had been decorated in modern furniture and equipment, but it was made in such a way as to resemble what he was used to back in the early twentieth century. The first thing he did was go to the sideboard and prepare a cup of tea, and then he carried it over to his desk. He set the teacup on the corner of his desk and then smiled when he heard that familiar squeak as he sat in his chair and then simply sat there in thought for a time with his fingers steepled. He was planning his report on this incident.

Finally once he had organized his thoughts, he reached over, pushed a button, and started speaking into the air in his British English accent, “Computer, dictation.”

A very human sounding voice apparently emanating from the very air around him replied, “Working. Will this be a letter, or a journal entry?”

“This will be a journal entry. Addenda to report on incident in Alpha -34 x Gamma 255 x Tau -225, an alternate universe related in many ways to Prime.

“Working, file accessed.”

Herb commenced, “Regarding the incident in Smallville with Trask. It had been determined that in this Alt universe intervention would be required. The Sheriff being delayed in her arrival at the Kent farm by the freight train would prevent her from intervening and preventing Trask from shooting and killing Clark while he was vulnerable.”

“I decided to take this universe on as one of my special projects; therefore the monitoring of this particular universe has fallen under my direct purview. In order to preserve the life of Clark Kent, it was necessary to provide an alternate person to prevent Trask from killing him.”

“Pause recording.”

“Paused.”

Herb was lost in thought for a time before he continued. The next parts were going to be very important to have recorded, and he wanted to make sure he had everything correct. He pulled out a chart of figures that he could refer to in order to have everything correct. Once he had the chart in hand he said, “Resume.”

“Recording.”

“The idea for this entire exercise was a direct result of having sent the Clark Kent now of two universes, his own native

universe, Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 036, Alt 1, and the native universe of his Lois, Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190, Alt 2, on his earlier rescue missions.”

“In preparing for this mission, I had to travel back in time in the subject universe and ascertain if Tempus had been there in any incarnation. Fortunately he is not in all universes, and that was the case here; thus there was no fear of the curse such as that which we had to deal with in Prime.”

“I decided that Lois would be the best candidate to save Clark. She was already on scene and had been working with Clark for some time. In order to ensure that she would act in Clark’s behalf, I decided to give her some extra motivation. I began laying the groundwork as they were leaving on the assignment.”

“After ascertaining the absence of Tempus in their past by using the Soul Tracker, I traveled to their future and recorded some of her memories, and after returning to the time of this incident, I was able to add those to her current memories on a subconscious level. I used the memories of the time after she and her Clark were together. The overlay of these memories lowered her barriers and moved the personal relationship ahead, you might say, rather precipitously. I began the memory overlay when I was in the elevator with them at the Daily Planet as they were leaving on this assignment. The time in the elevator was insufficient, so I arranged for the train to break down keeping them at the rail road crossing for an extended period. I was at that time able to add more memories of her future. I finished the overlay while they were at the Corn Festival. The only time they were aware of my presence was in the initial phase in the elevator which required closer contact to link to her mind. After that I could work from greater distance. I did continue to monitor them throughout. Pause recording.”

“Paused.”

Herb picked up his tea cup and took a tentative sip. The tea had grown cold and frowning, he set the cup back down.

“Resume.”

“Recording.”

“As I said, I continued to monitor their progress. As it turns out it is well that I did. Unknown to me or Lois and Clark, Trask had sent a couple of his men after Lois and Clark. I still do not know if they had been dispatched to simply follow them or if they had orders to kidnap them. However, I did take steps to prevent them from following Lois and Clark by disabling their vehicle. Pause.”

“Paused.”

Herb could no longer suppress his mirth. He chuckled aloud. Standing up he moved to the sideboard and prepared another cup of tea. By the time he had the tea prepared and had returned to his desk he was back in control.

“Resume.”

“Recording.”

“I had not anticipated just how successful the memory overlay would actually be. Lois began to see Clark as a romantic partner almost immediately. I had not been aware that in this universe the state of Kansas had a particular law on their books. Apparently the memory overlay was even more effective than anticipated because as soon as Lois found out that by the laws of Kansas they were married by simply spending the night together she wanted to make it permanent. Even Clark was surprised by her immediate acceptance of the situation. That does make some measure of sense as the memories used were those of their married life.”

“I hadn’t realized, until Clark mentioned it, that I had inadvertently included a memory of the birth of their first child. I was glad that I had checked out their history previously because she couldn’t wait to consummate the wedding, and they almost caught me observing. If Tempus had been a problem in that

universe, I would have been required to choose another protector for Clark. The other possibility I had considered had been Pete Ross.”

“Note: If activities of this nature are called for in the future, I need to exercise more caution. When I moved forward in time to record Lois’ memories, I inadvertently collected memories from a later period, when they had a child. Still I can’t quibble with the results of this exercise.”

“Pause recording.”

“Paused.”

Herb thought for a few minutes, considering how to proceed. Finally he said, “Resume.”

“Recording.”

“When they were captured by Trask, I had to wait for an opportunity to free Lois so that she could go to Clark’s aid. That was yet another difference between this universe and Prime. This Carol Sherman did not help free Lois. It was up to me to perform that task. Up to that point I had been able to operate in the background. Once I released her, I had to depend on her personal motivation and her martial arts skills to protect her ‘husband’, and she performed admirably. A mama bear defending her cubs could not have done better.”

“At the appropriate time Lois came out of hiding and unknown to both Trask and Clark removed the Kryptonite which enabled Clark to begin to recover after only a brief exposure to that deadly rock.”

“Her warning to Clark coupled with the distraction provided by her breaking cover and advancing on Trask, just as he was firing the derringer, was what actually saved Clark’s life. A derringer is an inaccurate weapon at best, but even the most inaccurate weapon at a range of about ten feet is liable to hit the target. Trask was aiming for the center of Clark’s back, and if he had not ducked when he did, he would have suffered a mortal wound.”

“It was unfortunate that, though it was an accident, Lois was required to take Trask’s life; however, if she had not, he would have presented a continuing problem. At the very least he would have revealed Clark’s secret, and at worst if he had convinced the powers that be that Clark was actually a threat, he could have been instrumental in his death or exile.”

“Pause.”

“Paused.”

Herb got up and moved to a sideboard again. He dumped the tea which had gone cold through neglect and prepared another fresh cup, promising himself to actually drink this one. Picking up the cup he held it under a faucet which dispensed near boiling water, then thankful for the advancements in society which made things so much easier, pulled out a tea bag, rather than a container of loose leaves, and he prepared a cup of Earl Grey tea which he carried back to his desk before he continued. Once he was again seated and after first taking a sip of his tea he said, “Resume.”

“Recording.”

“After the Sheriff and her deputies left, I was able to sit down with Lois and the Kents to explain what had happened and why. Lois was somewhat irritated with me for overlaying her future memories. I explained that I had not had any choice in that she was the best candidate to rescue Clark from Trask. She started weeping when the thought of CJ crossed her mind. When I explained that that child was actually going to be her first born, she brightened up and her mood became a happy one. They asked how many children they would have, and naturally I declined to give them that information. When she asked how long she would have to wait to have a child, I told her that unfortunately that would be too much information too soon and that she should simply be patient and let things happen in the proper time.”

“Lois admitted that she had always feared having children because of her family background; however, the memory overlay

had removed those fears, and she was now eagerly anticipating that event. I did not at this time reveal to her that her physiology would have to be changed by exposure to Clark's aura to make their biologies compatible before the blessed event. I also did not tell her that another result of that physiological change would be that her lifespan would be extended. I will schedule a trip back to them at a period after the birth so that I can give her a gift. Pause recording."

"Paused."

Herb pulled open a drawer in his desk and pulled out a box. In the box was a pendant on a necklace. A pendant with very special properties. A pendant holding two different forms of Kryptonite within its silver matrix. On the outside of the box he wrote, "Lois Lane, Ultra Woman, Alpha -34 x Gamma 255 x Tau -225. Lois' birthday, September 23, 1998."

Remembering that he had simply paused the recording, Herb said, "End recording. Do not finalize and allow for future additions and edits. Format it as a document and send a copy of the file to my hand held for review."

"Recording stopped. Formatting. Sending."

Herb's hand held beeped and a small light started to flash indicating the file had been received. He nodded his approval and stood up from his chair. He would review the file and make his edits after taking a brief nap. He moved to his sleeping alcove and after kicking off his shoes and placing his glasses on a side table, he laid down on a trundle bed.

He spoke to the computer again, "Lights off."

After the lights went out and before Herb had a chance to fall asleep, he wondered just how the rest of their lives would work out. His intervention had resulted in them becoming married at an exceptionally early point in their relationship. He determined that he would have to pop in on them and check occasionally just to see how things were progressing.

Chapter 1

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Universal Locator Designation
Alpha -34 x Gamma 255 x Tau -225 — Another Alternate Universe.

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It had been a busy and in some ways frustrating couple of weeks. They had returned from Smallville after Clark had recovered his powers, but because Clark had been shot, he had needed to wear a sling and work only part-time hours while he recuperated from the gunshot wounds inflicted on him by Trask. At least he had been able to do his regular patrols as Superman.

This had actually been serendipitous, Clark was recuperating from gunshot wounds and Superman was fully functional. No one seeing Clark Kent with his arm in a sling would even consider the possibility that the two could be one. How could Superman be wounded?

Last night had been a busy one. Superman had been called upon to drill a relief hole on the side of a volcano to relieve the pressure that had been building. Geologists had called on him to help to prevent another Mount Saint Helens event. He had actually needed to drill three relief vents all of which were oriented away from populated areas before he could return home and go to bed.

An old fashioned, wind up alarm clock on the night stand next to the bed started to ring.

Clark was deep in Morpheus' arms until the piercing *RING*' of the alarm clock jerked him awake. Instinctively he reached over to pound the snooze button, but instead with a loud crunching noise, he *flattened* the alarm clock like a pancake. Clark looked at his handiwork and just shook his head.

The noise awakened Lois. She rolled over and said, "That's the second clock this week. I think we need to put the clock on my side of the bed if we don't want to take out a loan to keep us in clocks."

With a rueful grin he leaned down and planted a kiss on his wife's very tempting lips. She smiled up at him and said, "Morning, handsome."

He smiled down at her and said, "Morning, beautiful. Moving the clock would probably be a good idea." Then he jumped out of bed and in a blur sped into the bathroom, exiting just moments later fully dressed for work.

Lois looked at him with a pouty expression and said, "You know, you could move a little slower while you are still in the bedroom. You move so fast, I don't get a chance to admire my husband's body. As far as getting dressed like that, can you possibly teach me that trick? It takes me longer than that to just brush my teeth in the morning."

"I wish I could, but it takes super speed to accomplish. Tell you what, while you get ready, I'll make breakfast."

Lois smiled and said, "You're on." Lois slid out from under the covers, slipped her feet into her bedroom slippers, stood, and stretched.

All of Clark's attention was on her as she did. He watched as she reached up and ran her fingers through her rich dark hair to work out any knots. When she did, the hem of her shortie nightie crept up above her waist revealing her navel. Her long sleek legs, the swell of her breasts under the filmy material and the pose she struck combined to send Clark's heart racing. It had been a few weeks since they had returned from Smallville as a married couple, and Clark still had to pinch himself to prove that he wasn't dreaming. <Wife! Lois Lane is my wife! How did I ever get so lucky?>

Lois finished running her hands through her hair fully aware of Clark's eyes on her; in fact she had held her pose a fraction longer and lifted her arms a bit higher than was actually necessary because she enjoyed seeing her husband's reaction and boy, was he ever reacting. Smiling a slightly wicked smile, she slowly lowered her arms and headed for the bathroom to prepare for the day, adding an extra little sway to her hips as she did. She loved the way he made her feel, infinitely sexy and desirable. She just couldn't get over the fact that this man, this super man, loved her and was her husband. Of all of the women in the world, any number of whom would be more than willing to be with him, he had chosen her to be his wife. It was mind boggling, and she was smiling all the way into the bathroom. She heard him gasp when she reached down and grasped the hem of her nightie and pulled it off over her head. She did this while she was still in the bedroom, while she walked away from him, leaving the only scrap of clothing on her body a pair of bikini panties. Looking back over her shoulder, she saw him staring at her with rapt attention. She stopped and turning around slowly, struck a pose and said, "Maybe we can take a long lunch today."

Losing the battle for control, at super speed Clark moved over and wrapping her up in his arms dipped her and kissed her deeply. Looking down into her face he said, "Anything my beautiful wife wants."

With a coy smile she lifted her head and planted another kiss on his lips before saying, "Right now I think you need to work on breakfast, and I need to get ready for work. Since you are now healed from your shoulder wound, you're back to full time, and we need to get in," and headed for the bathroom to prepare.

When Lois exited the bathroom, she could smell the coffee and toast. As she crossed the bedroom hopping, as she put on first one heel then the other, she passed through the archway that separated the bedroom from the rest of the apartment. She saw Clark as he cracked four eggs on two plates. As she crossed the floor, Clark lowered his glasses, and Lois could see steam start to

come up off the eggs as Clark cooked them with his heat vision. She quipped, “That sure saves of dishes to wash. Next time could I have mine scrambled?”

“Tell you what, next time I’ll make it a cheese omelet.”

“You’re sure spoiling me. Breakfast used to be coffee and a donut. Your breakfasts are almost as good as your mom’s and a lot quicker.”

Smiling he replied, “I aim to please my wife.”

As Lois started to dig into her eggs toast and coffee, she said, “I’m just glad you don’t subscribe to the ‘barefoot and pregnant’ stereotype.”

“I don’t know about the barefoot part, but the pregnant part will come eventually.”

Lois smiled at the memory, “Yeah, I know. I’m looking forward to it. The patter of little feet.”

“I wish Herb had told us how long.”

“I’m just happy to know that it will happen eventually. Let’s just enjoy being together and let it happen when it happens.” She paused and then said, “You know, we never really discussed using protection.”

He smiled and said, “Well, as far as protection from diseases, there is no need. You will never catch anything from me. Because of my invulnerability, I can’t catch anything, and even if I wasn’t invulnerable, I’ve never been intimate with anyone else, and I never will be.” Clark moved over behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist as he kissed the back of her neck and said, “I agree. Let’s enjoy being together.”

Lois giggled because when he kissed the back of her neck it tickled. She spun in his arms and said, “There’s more to it than protection from disease, although, I’m happy that we don’t have to worry about that. I was on the pill before and reacted badly to it. I can’t take it so that’s out as far as birth control is concerned.”

In a serious tone he asked, “Are you saying that we should limit our activity because of that?”

She only thought for a second before she answered, “NO! I’m not saying that at all. I remember our baby, and I can’t wait to hold him. I don’t want us to do anything other than enjoy ourselves and let things happen naturally.”

Clark smiled and leaned in for another kiss, “Whatever my lover wants is fine with me.” Releasing her so that she could resume her breakfast, he moved to the refrigerator and pulled out a gallon container of milk which was half empty. He upended it and drained it completely. The jug was crushed it in the process of being emptied, and after blowing it back up like a balloon, he tossed it out the window over the sink. It landed in the trash receptacle just before the trash man arrived to push it over to the truck.

Realizing what he had done, he spun into the Suit, and in a gust of wind that stirred Lois’ hair, at super speed flew out through the French door in the bedroom and up over the building, coming down just as the trash man started to move the receptacle. He reached in and pulled out the plastic jug and floated over to the recycle bin. There was a child in the alley who was in the process of taking out the trash for his mom. He stopped and stared in open mouthed awe as Superman appeared. As he dropped the milk container into the recycle bin, Superman said to the boy, “Remember, it’s not just trash anymore. We must remember to recycle,” before he flew off.

Just as she was using a piece of toast to sop up that last of her runny yolks, there was another gust of wind that stirred her hair as he returned. She nonchalantly reached up and straightened her hair while he spun back into his work clothes.

Seeing that she was also finished, he collected the plates and at super speed washed them and put them in the rack to dry.

Seeing the dishes disappear and reappear in the rack, Lois said, “You know, a girl could get used to this. No more dishpan hands.”

Clark finished up by filling their travel mugs with a Columbian blend of coffee to which he added flavored creamers, Hazelnut for him and Chocolate for her.

When they arrived at the Planet, they each brought up their workstations and checked their schedules. Lois noted that they only had a few minutes before the staff meeting, and then she got a pained expression on her face and called Clark over, “Clark, look at this.”

Moving over to her desk so that he could look at her monitor Lois pointed at her schedule. “What is it, Lois?”

“While we were away, I missed a meeting with Lex Luthor.”

“Don’t you mean date?”

“Well yeah, I guess it would have been, sort of. I was trying to get an interview.”

“I’m pretty sure that Luthor was looking at that as a date. What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to call and reschedule.”

“Lois, we’re married now.”

“You know that and I know that, but Lex Luthor doesn’t know that. Look, it’s my chance to get that one-on-one interview I’ve been after.”

“Lois, before you make that call, there are a few things you need to know about Lex Luthor that I haven’t been able to tell you about until now.”

Just then they were interrupted by Perry shouting, “Staff meeting everyone!”

Perry was the first one in the conference room with a cup of coffee in his hand. Jimmy, Eduardo, Cat, Lois, Clark and other members of the staff all filed in. Some were yawning because of the early meeting call and in serious need of caffeine. Most like Perry had coffee cups in their hands. Lois and Clark sat in adjoining seats, and Cat sat on Clark’s other side.

People were grumbling as they took their seats. Perry took a tentative sip of his coffee, winced, grimaced as he swallowed, and muttered, “Dishwater.”

Looking around Perry surveyed his staff taking particular note of Lois and Clark. He was used to Lois being as grumpy as he felt at these early morning staff meetings, but there had been a change in her ever since she and Clark had gotten back from Smallville. She was happier and more relaxed. This morning she appeared to be well rested and ready to go. No one could miss the little touches and looks that passed between the two on an almost constant basis and the absolute adoration in the looks. He looked with envy at the matching travel mugs that the couple had in hand. They had obviously brought their coffee from home. He frowned again at the memory of what he had just imbibed.

He just shook his head in amazement. Lois had always been like the daughter he had never had to him, and he had worried about her, that is, until Clark came along. He had taken a liking to Clark almost immediately. He still couldn’t believe that he had almost missed out on the opportunity to have him on staff. If Clark hadn’t shown initiative and written that mood piece on the razing of the old theater, Perry could have blown an opportunity to have them working together. Lois was a top notch reporter in her own right, but together they were an outstanding team. Right from the start he had seen their potential to be every bit as good as Norcross and Judd or Woodward and Bernstein, even if Lois hadn’t. He was gratified to see that they wouldn’t be falling prey to the problems that had plagued Norcross and Judd. Suddenly, inexplicably, unexpectedly they were totally in love and married. Norcross and Judd had fallen apart as a team as soon as the relationship moved from the newsroom to the living room, let alone the bedroom.

He didn’t feel like he would need to worry about Lois any longer. Marrying Clark was the best thing that had ever happened to her. He still wondered how it had happened so quickly. They

had gone on that assignment to Smallville, and while they hadn't been fighting like cats and dogs, they surely weren't lovey-dovey when they were leaving. Lois was more like resigned, but when they came back, they were like two different people, well actually, Clark hadn't changed that much, he was happier, but Lois, she had really turned a corner. She was like a different woman entirely. Married life, at least life married to Clark Kent suited her. He was still convinced that there had been more to that trip than either of them had said. There were details of the fight for one thing that didn't add up. It all added up to a mystery that one day he hoped they would feel comfortable enough with him to let him in on.

As he watched, Lois took a sip of her coffee. Her expression became one of rapturous delight, and she released a happy sigh. "Ummmmm, Clark these blends you come up with are heavenly. Where have you been all my life?" she asked as she set her travel mug down.

In irritation, Perry set his cup down and complained, "How's a newspaper supposed to run without a decent cup of Java?!"

From the seat next to Clark, Cat said, "Anyone for herbal tea? Does wonders for the complexion." Looking past Clark she said, "You should try it, Lois. Really, you should. I know, you've already got your man, but you want to keep him, don't you?"

Lois placed a hand on Clark's forearm as she addressed Cat's comment, "Clark makes tea for us in the evenings, but he has these imported coffee blends that we have in the morning. It gets the day off to a good start."

Cutting through the chatter, Perry said, "Much as I hate to interrupt this discussion on the relative merits of tea and imported coffee blends ... Clark, the dockworker strike."

As Perry addressed him, Clark could see through the window over Perry's shoulder two men arrive in the elevator. He smiled and said, "Negotiations have broken down again. I'm interviewing the union and management reps ... separately." Pointing past Perry he continued, "They just arrived."

Perry looked where Clark was pointing and saw two men. One man in a suit, the other in rough, workmen's clothes and he could see that they were in each other's faces. "I take it that the negotiations aren't going well. Good idea, keeping them apart. You are back on full time now, correct?"

Holding up his arm and moving it around, Clark said, "Right, see, no more sling."

"Okay, that's good news. I realize that you guys haven't had anything big since Smallville, but Lois, about that article you wrote on the fruit fly infestation ... could you maybe, if it isn't too much trouble, give it another go? And this time, put some zing into it!"

Lois was chagrined that she would have to do more on this story. It was soooo beneath her as an investigative journalist. She was hoping that now with Clark back on full time, she wouldn't be saddled with any more stories like this. How to display her displeasure without directly incurring the editor's wrath was the question. Coming to a decision, she looked at Perry and said, "Happy to, Chief. It's such ..." She gave an exaggerated yawn before finishing, "Exhilarating subject matter."

Jimmy asked, "Here's what I don't understand. If this Malathion spray is so safe, how come they tell you to keep your pets inside when they're using it?"

Perry answered in an offhand manner, "Precautionary measure ..." His answer was interrupted by the door of the conference room opening and Rehalia, the fifty-ish Ecuadorian janitress entering to empty the trash bins. She hesitated for a moment, but Perry waved her inside. Perry interrupted what he was saying to address her, "That's okay, Rehalia, come on in." Turning back to the staff he continued, "I suppose we should lead with the latest counter-revolution in Russia."

Clark quipped, "I believe it's a counter, counter-revolution,

Chief."

Shaking his head, Perry said, "Who can keep track ..." His statement was interrupted by a disturbance in the newsroom. They all turned to see that the elevator doors were open and a lot of strangers were descending on the bullpen. Cameras, lighting equipment, and a model's runway were being hauled in followed by troops of technicians, denim-clad photographers, and their assistants. In an irritated tone he continued, "What the Sam Hill's going on?"

Jumping to her feet, Cat came to the rescue, eyes wide seeing celebrity models come in, she said, "Chief, you remember. Today's the day they're using the newsroom as a backdrop to introduce that new fragrance, *'Exclusive*.' Marketing set it up."

Bewildered Perry muttered, "Marketing ... no, I don't remember."

Cat was growing more excited as time went on. In an offhand manner she answered, "It's been on for months. There was an email reminder just last week." She was looking from face to face as more and more people stepped out of the elevator. Her excitement was peaking as she said, "Look, there's Elle Taylor, and ... Rachel Roberts." Her excitement was building with everyone she recognized, "And *April Stephens*! I *have* to get an interview!" Cat looked at Perry imploringly.

Bowing to the inevitable, Perry nodded his permission. This was Cat's bailiwick after all. Cat immediately gathered up her materials and headed out of the conference room.

Lois, never one for such activities, grumbled, "How're we supposed to get any work done around here?"

Now that Cat had drawn his attention to the arrivals, Jimmy was staring at the girls as they exited the elevator and replied to Lois' sally, "Who cares? Chief, look at *her*!" The apparent object of his statement was April Stephens.

Jimmy was pointing at her, but Perry turned away. He said, "I can't look, Jimmy. Alice would have my hide."

Jimmy asked, "How would she find out?"

Shaking his head, Perry said, "The woman has spies, everywhere."

Picking out April Stephens, one of the most attractive of the models, Jimmy stroked his hair back as if preparing for a date and asked, "Do you think there's any small possibility that a girl like that would go out with a man like me?"

He looked around and seeing the looks of disbelief on the faces around him muttered, "Thought so."

Chapter 2

Earlier that morning:

Two fencers, in masks and full fencing gear, were dueling the length of an elegantly decorated room. One fencer in an attempt to avoid the un-blunted point of the epee of his adversary gave ground. He ducked a sweeping cut that sent bits of flowers flying everywhere as the blade sheared off the tops of the flowers in a vase he was standing next to as the blade passed mere inches over his head. Standing and jumping to the side, he knocked the vase off of its pedestal. It fell to the floor with a crash along with the pedestal, and he tripped over it. Scrambling to his feet, he barely parried another thrust and stumbled back into a chair. Rolling over the chair, he placed it in the way of his attacker. The attacker shoved the chair aside but in doing so stopped being on the offensive. The other fencer seeing this opening took the offensive and with a series of slashes and thrusts forced his opponent back. With a deft move the defender gained a second's respite and seizing the opportunity turned and fled. Remembering Alexander the Great's motto, 'seize the high ground', he jumped up on the desk. His opponent approached aggressively, however, fighting someone so much higher is a problem, so in an attempt to force his opponent down, he took a sweeping cut at his legs. The fencer

on the desk easily leapt over the sweeping blade. The force of the move caused the one on the floor to turn slightly and lose position. Seeing this opening the one on the desk jumped down and thrust avoiding his opponents guard and thrusting his blade into his opponents side

The two adversaries stood, transfixed for a seconds as the realization of what had happened sunk in to the now wounded man.

With a sweeping gesture Lex Luthor pulled his blade from the body of his erstwhile opponent as he removed his mask. Once the blade was removed, blood began to seep out marring the pristine white of the dueling togs

The victor, Lex Luthor, bowed to his fencing partner, who removed his mask, returned the bow, then exited the room to seek medical attention, holding his side.

Luthor released a satisfied sigh as he picked up a cloth and wiped the blood off the tip of his sword. As he was thus occupied, Nigel entered.

Giving a slight bow, Nigel announced, “A Ms. Miranda to see you, sir.”

Luthor’s displeasure at this news was evident in his expression. He glanced at the clock hoping that he would be able to use an upcoming appointment as an excuse to avoid the inevitable. Reluctantly he said, “All right, Nigel, show her in. Two minutes only.”

With another bow, Nigel replied, “Very good, sir.”

Turning his back to the door, Luthor was occupied looking at his calendar as Miranda swayed in. Miranda a beautiful blonde dressed in a style reminiscent of the Woodstock generation entered. Her hair was worn loosely. Her blouse was white with long sleeves, unbuttoned in a deep ‘V’ almost to her navel and with a ruffled collar. She wore a vest of gold brocade over and a long dark skirt. She wore a black velvet choker with a very ornate cross pendant.

She was barely in the room when she launched her opening salvo, “You cut me off, you rotten son of a ...”

Luthor interrupted her as he turned to face her. “Temper, temper, Miranda. There’s no reason to resort to name calling.”

As she sauntered over closer to Lex, she continued, “You cancelled my funding! How am I supposed to continue my research?”

“Miranda, let’s face facts. Two years ago you walked into this office and offered me a working, practical application of your theory within six months. You claimed that by adding an animal pheromone to your perfume it would cause the person wearing it to lose all their inhibitions and ...”

In an almost pleading tone Miranda replied, “But I’ve done it! I can prove it to you!”

Luthor spat out, “Hah!” He turned away and delved into his humidor.

With a chagrined look, Miranda pressed on, “True, the solid compound wasn’t working, but I reduced it to a liquid and ...”

As she had been speaking he had been preparing a cigar. “Sorry, Miranda. In the final analysis, I ... do not ... fund ... losers.”

Changing her approach, Miranda closed the distance between them and using sensual movements ran her hands over his chest and in a sultry tone asked, “What about ... us?”

Luthor took a long pull on his cigar and after blowing out the smoke replied in an insulting tone, “Us? You were an itch. You’ve been scratched.” Bringing his cigar back up he puffed on it again.

Miranda was in shock at his attitude; feeling used, she dropped her hands from him and stepped back. Hurt by his attitude and words she said, “You can’t treat me like this. It was a labor of love, for you ... all for you!”

Nigel entered, paying no attention to Miranda’s ranting.

“Excuse me, sir. You wanted me to remind you to call Lois Lane to confirm your dinner for Friday night.”

“Yes, Nigel. I’ll make that call. I believe Miranda’s time is up. Will you kindly show her out?”

Luthor turned his back to her, picked up the phone, and dialed.

Nigel move to hustle Miranda out, but as Miranda passed by she looked down at a table and picked up a copy of the Daily Planet that rested there. The byline on the headline read: by Lois Lane. She nodded her head in acknowledgement of the name and stopped. As Luthor was dialing, she turned to observe. <So, that is who he’s after now. Well, I saw him first. We’ll have to see about this.>

Luthor’s call went through, and he got Lois’ answering machine, “This is Lois Lane, please leave a message after the beep.”

Luthor spoke to the machine, “Lois, I was hoping to speak with you to confirm our dinner on Friday night. It has been a couple of weeks since we have spoken. I was wondering how you have been. I have been following your stories in the Planet and wondering why you haven’t returned my calls. I’m looking forward to seeing you. Please call and confirm.”

As Luthor started to speak into the phone, Nigel took Miranda’s elbow in a tight grip and led her out of the office; however, she maintained her grip on the Daily Planet as she left.

After Nigel escorted Miranda from Luthor’s office, he took her down in an express elevator to the ground floor. Miranda was still in something of a daze as a result of Luthor’s attitude and her abrupt dismissal. Apparently Nigel had called down, and when the elevator’s doors opened, Nigel turned her over to a doorman who escorted her directly to the curb and hailed a cab which he assisted her to enter. Automatically she gave her address, and the cab took off.

Minutes later the cab dropped her off in front of her shop. She paid him off and unlocking the door entered. Leaving the closed sign in the window, she closed and re-locked the door. Passing a counter with a display of various styles of atomizers and bottles of various colored liquids and then the counter with her cash register, she rounded it and went into the back of the shop. Once there she moved to her desk and dropped dejectedly into her chair. She threw the copy of the Planet on her desk.

Her black cat, Drau, sensing her mood, jumped up into her lap and tried to comfort her mistress. Absentmindedly Miranda began to stroke her soft black fur. The feel of the silky fur under her hand was comforting, but even as she stroked the cat, Miranda heaved a disconsolate sigh. Not knowing what else to do, she picked up an antique letter opened and started slicing open her mail.

As she was doing this, she looked at the contents and absently sorted it as bills and other communications. When she opened a particular envelope near the bottom of the stack out tumbled a piece of cardstock. She picked it up and turned it over to reveal an invitation. She read:

“You are invited to attend the premiere party of our newest fragrance,

‘Exclusive’, at the *world famous* Daily Planet.”

Reading the invitation provoked a reaction. The words, Daily Planet, struck a chord. She dropped the invitation and picked up the paper she had picked up in Luthor’s office, the Daily Planet. Her eyes zeroed in on that byline, “By Lois Lane”, and her ire began to rise. An idea began to form, and she picked up the invitation. As her plan began to crystallize, she started to smile an enigmatic smile.

With a new determination she picked up Drau and after a final pat placed her pet on her feet on the floor. Miranda moved over to what looked like a chemist’s lab bench and pulled a bottle

of clear liquid from a shelf. After putting on a charcoal mask, she transferred a small quantity of the liquid to an antique atomizer and then filled it with alcohol. Once she had the spray head in place, she shook it for a time to mix the contents and then held it up and looked at it admiringly as she said, repeating what she had said to Luthor, “I *can* prove it to you.”

Quickly she checked herself in the mirror and satisfied that her makeup was well done, she bent down and patted Drau again and said, “Be good and watch the store. Momma has a job to do.” As she exited the shop, she donned a hat which partially concealed her features and re-locked the door behind her.

It was a short time later:

When the staff left the conference room, they found that the newsroom was being transformed into a veritable perfume and fashion show with decorations and a runway of sorts. More and more workers, photographers, and models were arriving all of the time.

After a time it appeared as though all of the preparations were complete, and the show was begun with high fashion models walking the runway to the flash of strobes while others strolled around the bull pen spraying individuals with various fragrances. The cameramen didn’t limit their activities to the runway either. They circulated and snapped shots of the models spraying the fragrances as well. Not to be left out, Jimmy had grabbed his camera and started taking pictures as well.

Taking a break from picture taking, Jimmy joined Lois and Clark. Thus Lois, Clark and Jimmy were standing in front of Perry’s office watching all of the activity when in a disgusted tone, Lois commented, “The beautiful people.”

Entranced by all of the beautiful women parading around in high fashion and not picking up on the sarcasm, Jimmy replied with an awed and heartfelt, “Yeah.”

Lois began to wax eloquent on the subject, “It’s such a sad comment on society. Dress a certain way, smell a certain way, and the world will love you.”

Just then a gorgeous model passed close by and gave Clark the eye.

As he started speaking in response to Lois’ comment, Clark looked at the model, perhaps a second too long as she passed, “Yeah. Sad, Lois, very sad.”

Seeing the look that the model was giving Clark, if Lois hadn’t known Clark so well, Lois might have felt threatened, but Lois did know Clark. Her newly acquired memories of their married life left her in no doubt, but rather than play with fire, Lois put her arm around his and looking at the model with a warning in her eyes, Lois said, “Sorry, Sweetie, this one isn’t available.”

Holding up his hand, Jimmy quickly chimed in, “But I am.”

Hearing Jimmy, the model looked his way and with a disappointed look, she turned away and continued walking.

With her arm still possessively wrapped around Clark’s, Lois started moving in the direction of their desks. “Anyway, like I said before, we’ll never get anything done today.”

Clark stopped and pulled Lois around facing him and into a hug, “So ... why don’t we take the day off?”

“Because it’s a work day, Clark.”

In a teasing tone Clark asked, “Haven’t you ever played hooky, Lois?”

With an unladylike snort, Lois replied, “Never!”

Clark gave her a look of disbelief. “You’re kidding!”

“No, really, Never! I was student body president in high school and college. I had to set an example. Besides what’s so great about playing hooky anyway?”

“Oh, I don’t know. Being someplace, doing something you’re not supposed to be doing. It’s just, you know ... fun. I guess having some fun runs contrary to the Lois Lane work ethic.”

As if she had to defend her position, Lois continued, “I had a lot of fun in high school. Chess club. Math club. Year book editor.”

Totally unimpressed Clark said, “Wow.”

Lois, feeling somewhat insulted asked, “What are you saying, Clark? That I’m not fun? That I’m not a fun person?” Lois was standing there almost glaring at Clark, and he could feel her wrath. Jimmy who had followed them to the vicinity of their desks came under that baleful glare simply because he was also there.

Putting up his hands in a defensive gesture he said, “I didn’t say a word.”

Lois lowered her voice and said, “Clark Kent, of all people, you should know how much fun I am.”

Suddenly he had a goofy smile as he remembered just how much fun they had together. He didn’t have to say a thing. That smile said it all.

Seeing that smile, Lois started to blush because she knew just where his thoughts were taking him.

Unknown to the presenters, their ranks had been infiltrated by an outsider. Along with the other models that were walking around indiscriminately spraying perfume was Miranda. She was operating her atomizer as she circulated, however she was looking for a specific target.

Before Lois had a chance to say anything, she was interrupted by Perry stepping out of his office and approaching her desk, “Lois, about those fruit flies ...”

Seeing Lois turn in reply to that hail, Miranda thought, <That’s her!> She asked, “Have you tried my new fragrance?”

Lois replied, “No, thank you. I don’t wear ...”

Miranda sprayed Lois, catching Clark, Jimmy and Perry at the same time.

Lois realized that while she had been distracted by Perry, she had been sprayed, finished her statement, “perfume,” and waved her hands in the air to ward off the scent to no avail.

Perry, Jimmy, and Clark were all similarly occupied as Miranda sauntered off into the crowd, spraying as she went.

As she disappeared, Perry made a face and made the comment, “Smells like ‘eu de sweatsocks’.”

With a disgusted look Jimmy asked, “What died?” as he continued to wave his hands in the air.

Perry turned away and headed for his office, completely forgetting what he had wanted to talk to Lois about. He was waving his hands in the air, attempting to clear the offending odor.

With a cynical tone Lois said, “That stuff’s probably \$300 a quarter ounce. Highway robbery.”

Chapter 3

Across the newsroom Cat Grant had cornered one of the models, April Stephens, and was interviewing her, “April, what about the rumors about you and Kevin?” She readied her pad to take down April’s comments.

April who was used to dealing with rumor mongers and paparazzi smiled and said, “We’re just friends, really.”

Not one to be put off so easily, Cat followed up, “Uh huh, if you say so. What about that story about you and Mel?”

April smiled and said, “No comment.”

Unnoticed by Lois and Clark, Miranda continued to circulate around the newsroom spraying her concoction on staffers and models as she headed in a circuitous route for the elevator.

Later that afternoon all of the hustle and bustle had faded. The crews that had come in to set up that runway had returned to remove it after most of the models and photographers had left. Finally the staff members were able to concentrate on work.

Lois was at her desk, and she was struggling with the assignment regarding the Malathion spray for fruit flies. This was just so mundane a story that she couldn't make herself concentrate on it, and she found herself glancing more and more frequently at her new husband, the man that had come to mean literally everything to her. She thought back to the time in Smallville and the time they had spent on the swing after returning from the Corn Festival. In her memory she could feel those first tentative kisses which had quickly escalated to high passion. That passion had led her to call Clark to her bed. She would never embarrass him by admitting that she had detected and was very gratified by his very physical response. She knew that he wanted her ... wanted her desperately. Wanted to make love to her but still allowed her to set the limits and the pace that their relationship would take. The thought of their time in the hay loft brought color to her cheeks and an increase in her body temperature.

Clark was working on his article about the dockworkers strike and was unaware that she was staring at him. She had already removed her jacket, and now in response to her increased body heat, she reached up and unbuttoned first one and then a second button of her blouse pulling the lapels apart revealing her cleavage. She still watched him as she reached for her compact and tube of lipstick. She only tore her eyes away from Clark long enough to assure herself that she was applying her lipstick appropriately. After putting the cap back on the tube of lipstick and closing the compact, Lois made up her mind and stood. After smoothing down her skirt which was a floor length wrap skirt, she swayed her way over to his desk. Clark was so absorbed in what he was doing that Lois had actually managed to sit on his desk and bring her leg up, planting her foot on his desk without him even looking up. When she did, her wrap skirt opened revealing her leg almost all the way to her hip.

Clark was busily typing on his computer keyboard when Lois in a singsong tone said, "Cllllaaarrkkkkk."

Without even looking up Clark said, "Just a second Lois, I..." At that point he glanced up, and his breath caught in his throat as he saw Lois' leg and then where she was and her modified attire hit him. His head slowly swiveled up to look at her.

She flipped her hair and casually asked, "What'cha workin' on?"

This very uncharacteristic behavior, the unbuttoned blouse, the dreamy eyed expression took Clark aback, and he automatically replied, "The dock strike. You know, the two sides really aren't that far apart."

Lois leaned in so that she was closer and Clark had a good view down her open blouse. In a husky tone she asked, "How far apart are they, really?"

Glancing around to see if anyone else had noticed Lois' uncharacteristic behavior, Clark finally decided that he had to question it, "Lois, are you feeling okay?"

In that same husky, sultry tone she replied, "Never better." She moved in even closer and reached out to run her fingers through his hair and trail a finger down the side of his face, "I just ... couldn't help noticing how very ... sexy ... you look today."

Looking down at his attire, white button-down shirt with the collar open and his tie loosened and his sleeves rolled up, he had to question her appraisal, "Sexy?"

Lois released a sigh and said, "Very, and I meant it when I said I want you to give me time to admire your body in the morning."

Looking around making sure that no one would overhear, Clark said, "Oh, I get it. What do you want, dinner in Paris, a weekend in Hawaii?"

Lois leaned in and placed her finger on his lips to silence him as she said, "No. I don't want anything. Except ... you ... making

... love ... to ... me." She was practically lying across his desk at this point.

Looking around again he realized that there were just too many people around. Now, if they had been alone he might have accommodated her and made love to her right there on the desk or floated them up into the air, but good sense overruled and Clark said, "Honey, you've already got me, but don't you want to wait until we get home for that kind of ... activity?"

In a pouty tone, Lois said, "I can't wait that long. I'm still a newlywed, you know. We haven't had a *proper* honeymoon."

Leaning in to give her a kiss, he said, "Yeah, I know. Me too. I'll have to see what we can do about that."

Perry White was leaning back in his office chair listening to Elvis singing 'Burning Love'. He had his feet propped up on his desk while he nodded his head and tapped his hand in time to the beat. Just as Elvis was singing the line, 'Girl, girl, girl, girl you're gonna set me on fire' he was interrupted by Rehalia coming in to empty his trash can.

When she bent over, she presented her derriere to his view. Perry straightened up in his chair, slowly lowered his feet and sat up for a better view. A lascivious smile slowly formed on his face as he watched her work.

Long after the rest of the other models had left Cat finally finished her interview with April. Jimmy had been a very interested observer, and when he saw Cat leave, he saw his chance. He pulled up his collar and looking very dapper in his photographer's vest and carrying a camera approached the desk that April had taken as a refuge. She was in the process of checking her makeup when Jimmy walked up. His attempt at being Mr. Cool however was doomed to failure because at the last second he stumbled and knocked over some of the knickknacks on the desk. He quickly recovered and grabbed the objects, replacing them in their former positions. Acting in a way that he thought was suave and sophisticated he said, "Hey there."

April had looked at him when he had knocked over the items and now looked back at him, dismissing him immediately by going back to powdering her nose.

Undaunted Jimmy addressed her, "The name's Olsen. James Olsen. I guess you've heard of me."

Finally looking directly at him disdainfully, April said, "No, I haven't."

Jimmy replied, "No *prob*lem. Most people just know me through my photographs. Bosnia? Beirut?" He coughed a couple of times as the lie stuck in his throat. "Nam?"

April looked him up and down. He obviously wasn't old enough to have been involved in the Viet Nam conflict she decided. This was a line, and a poor one at that. "Look, James ..."

Jimmy grabbed the desk lamp and swiveled it out of the way drawing a look of annoyance from April because she had been using that light. "You can call me Jimmy. Listen, let's cut to the chase. You like what *you* see. I like what *I* see. Shall we say, cocktails, tomorrow night, your place?"

April closed her compact with a snap, stood and with a sneer on her face she breezed past Jimmy and out of the newsroom without so much as a backward glance.

As April was leaving, Jimmy was undaunted and finished up saying, "Okay. No problem. My place," to her retreating figure.

A little later, Cat was in the copy room and was beating on the machine in anger and frustration. Unknown to her, the machine had been reported as out of order, but no one had thought to put up a sign to that effect. Just as she was about to commit major mayhem to the recalcitrant machine, the copy room door opened, and a slightly balding individual who

appeared to be in his forties stuck his head in. Spotting the machine he opened the door and stepped through carrying a tool bag.

As he entered he asked, “What seems to be the problem?”

Cat, stopped in the middle of her wind up which promised major damage to the offending machine and asked, “Who are you?”

“I’m Phil, the copier repair guy.”

“Oh, you’re just in time.” She gave the machine a sideways kick as she said, “This thing ate my originals!”

“Well, let me have a look,” he said as he moved to the side of the machine and placed his tool kit on the floor. He opened the side of the machine and immediately started pulling out slide drawers and fishing around in the guts of the machine with his hands.

Cat had moved away to give him room and leaning back against a table which position hiked her skirt up even higher than it had been watched with interest for a time finally beginning to blatantly stare at him with her arms folded across her chest. He finally succeeded in rescuing Cat’s originals. When he handed them to her, she gave him an appreciative look. In an almost sultry tone she said, “You’re pretty deft at this... I mean, it looks like you know what you’re doing.”

Phil had returned to the problem at hand and had his hands inside the machine again as he turned his head and replied, “I’ve always been good with my hands.” As he said this he was giving her a very appreciative look, taking in her long bare legs, tight dress, and ample bosom.

Cat reached up and started fingering a dangling earring as she asked, “Really?” She ended her statement and removed the earring and started closing the distance between them.

Clark thought that he had settled Lois down but decided that one sure way to distract her was to find her a candy bar, preferably a Double Fudge Crunch bar. He left her sitting on the edge of his desk as he headed for the candy machine. When he got there, he reached into his pocket and found only a few coins. He was turning to retrieve a dollar from his billfold in his jacket, but unknown to him, Lois had followed and was right behind him. As he turned Lois almost literally tackled him, driving him back into the candy machine. He had been so distracted that he hadn’t heard her following him. Her arms quickly snaked up around his neck and looking around he said, “Lois, please, get a grip.”

With a wanton look Lois’ hands started traveling downwards as she said, “Believe me, I’d love to.” He stopped her hands from continuing their downward path, so she moved in for a kiss which at any other time would be generating cheers and calls of ‘Floor Show’ or ‘Get a room!’ from other staffers.

Much as he was enjoying it, they were still in the office, and his personal sense of propriety was offended at what she was doing. He reached up and disengaged her arms and pushing her away slightly said, “Lois, I don’t know what kind of game you’re playing, but this is making me very ... uncomfortable. We’re still at work. We should save this for home.”

Lois was very agreeable, “Okay, then, let’s get out of here.”

Aghast Clark sputtered, “Out of here?”

Lois nodded enthusiastically as she said, “Yes!”

Dumbfounded Clark asked, “Now you want to play hooky?”

She looked offended and replied, “We’re married, so it’s *not* hooking. How could you say something like that anyhow?”

Clark was exasperated, “Not hooking, hooky. Playing hooky.”

Her frown turned upside down into a smile and brightening, she said, “Oh, right. Hooky. Yes, let’s play hooky.”

“So now you’ve changed your mind. Now you want to play hooky?”

“Desperately!” Lois reached for and put her arms around his neck and started playing with his hair.

Clark pointed out, “But ... we still have work to do.”

Clark couldn’t believe his ears when the success driven Lois said, “Forget about work, forget about time, forget about the rest of the world.” In a whisper she added, “Forget about Superman. No, on second thought, let him take us away from all of this.”

Just then the door to Perry’s office was flung open and a screaming Rehalia came stumbling out, blubbering in Spanish, and waving her hands as if warding off an assault. She was immediately followed by a distraught Perry who was pleading with her, “Wait! Mi amor! My peach pie! Te adoro!”

Rehalia fled right past Lois and Clark. Clark had managed to hold off Lois’ continued amorous advances, and Clark called to Perry, “Chief. What happened? Is Rehalia okay?”

Perry stopped and addressed Clark. In an offended tone he said, “‘Okay’ doesn’t begin to describe her. I want to shower her with gifts, build her a golden pedestal, and adore her. She’s everything I’ve dreamed of.”

Astonished at this, Lois and Clark were both looking at him, and Lois’ hands slipped down and grabbed his tie as Clark asked, “What about your wife?”

Bewildered by this change of subject, Perry asked, “My wife?”

In an I-told-you-so tone, Clark replied, “Yes. Alice. Your wife. The woman who has spies everywhere.”

Perry smiled an odd sort of smile and replied, “Plenty of love to go around, son.” Ending this Perry turned and took off in pursuit of Rehalia.

As he did, Lois renewed her assault on Clark trying desperately to pull him into another kiss, and Clark shouted after Perry, “Elvis never cheated on Priscilla!”

Perry shouted back over his shoulder, “He never met Rehalia!”

Clark turned back to his more immediate problem, Lois. He didn’t know what exactly had gotten into her, but she had come close to revealing his secret accidentally a couple of times. Something was happening. She was acting out of character and so was Perry. What was the common denominator? Maybe he should take her home, but if he did that, he was sure he’d have to stay with her to keep her out of trouble. That would mean that Superman would be unavailable, but he couldn’t leave her alone in this condition.

He turned back to Lois, and she tried to put her arms around his neck again. He said, “Just a minute, Lois,” as his super sense of smell picked up a whiff of smoke. He did a quick sweep with his enhanced vision and saw wisps of smoke coming out from under the door to the copy room. He tuned in with his super hearing, and all he could hear was the copy machine running, making copy after copy after copy. Sliding his glasses down his nose, Clark switched over to his X-ray vision and looked through the door. Immediately he closed his eyes and had an embarrassed expression because of what he had seen.

Lois claimed his attention once more. She grabbed his tie again and pulled him to herself as she said in an assertive tone, “Minute’s up, Clark. Come to *mama*.”

Chapter 4

Discretion being the better part of valor, Clark felt it would be best to give in to Lois and take her where they could be alone and not risk revealing his secret, so he guided her over to her desk and told her to grab her things.

She almost jumped up and down in glee like a little kid and clapped her hands. She said, “Ohhhhhh, goody, goody. Hooky!” Lois grabbed her stuff so quickly that she rivaled Superman for super speed. Before Clark even had his sleeves rolled down, she

was next to his desk bouncing on her toes expectantly. When Clark had his jacket on, Lois looped her arm through his and practically dragged him along in her wake as they started walking to the elevator.

They were only half way across the newsroom when Ralph approached Lois and made goo-goo eyes at her. He said, “Hey, Lois, why not dump this deadwood and go out with a real man?”

Lois sneered at him and said, “If you were any kind of a man, you’d see that I am already with a *real* man, and you’d leave me alone before I ask him to break you in two.” Lois started to shift her burdens as she said, “On second thought, I don’t need Clark to ...”

Clark took a firm hold on her arm and led her to the elevator so that he could remove her from temptation.

It was now some time since she had done her dirty work, and Miranda wanted to see just what effect her potion had had, so she had returned to the scene of the crime, as it were, and rode the elevator up to the newsroom. When she stepped out onto the elevator platform at the top of the ramp, she moved to the railing and stood there surveying her handiwork. There were numerous couples scattered around the newsroom in various forms of amorous embraces, but no real work was being done. Absently she noted the absence of Lois Lane and her partner, Clark Kent and wondered just what had happened to them. After all Lois had been her special target. Seeing that love had a figurative stranglehold on the Daily Planet, she nodded in satisfaction and turned to depart.

As soon as they were in the door of the apartment, Lois dropped her bag and threw herself into her husband’s arms. Her arms went around his neck, and her lips sought his. The kiss quickly escalated in intensity.

Clark was startled. This was even beyond Lois’ usual fervor, and her intensity actually frightened him. Something was happening. She wasn’t her normal self. He had also been shocked at Perry’s behavior. It seemed like her inhibitions were lower than normal. She had almost exposed his secret a couple of times. Keeping that from happening had to be given top priority. How to do it, that was the question. He had a couple of ideas, but which one to exercise was the question.

Just then his phone rang. He disengaged himself from Lois’ arms and took the call. It was his contact within the dock workers union alerting him that they had come to a settlement. There would be a meeting to announce the settlement in an hour, and he needed to be there.

<That’s just great! What am I going to do with Lois?> “Look, Lois, I have to go out for a while. Will you be okay here?”

In a pouty tone she said, “Without you?”

“Just for a short while. I have to go cover this announcement.”

In a whiny tone she said, “Oh, okay. Hurry back. I miss you already.”

“I’ll get back as quickly as I can. I promise, we’ll do something very special when I get back.”

“Oh? What? Tell me, tell me, tell me.”

“I haven’t decided yet but trust me. It will be very special.”

“Okay. Hurry back.”

He grabbed his jacket, gave her one final kiss, and headed out the door. He ducked into an alley and spun into the Suit and flew to the roof of the Planet building. He spun into his street clothes, and then he sprinted down the stairs.

As soon as the door closed behind Clark, Lois was bored. Forgetting his promise that quickly, she started to think about what she could do to make sure that Clark would stay with her the rest of the night. Lois had a twinkle in her eye as she said to

herself, “Yeah, I have something in the closet that I have been dying to wear. It was supposed to be for Halloween, but I can’t think of a better time than now.”

She moved into the bedroom and opened the closet. Removing the small garment bag she zipped it open and removed the contents. Holding it up she got a mischievous grin on her face as she contemplated Clark’s reaction when he saw her. Laying her prize on the bed, she removed her jacket. The wrap skirt and blouse quickly followed. Standing there in her lacy bra and panties, she picked up the costume and moved over to the mirror and held it up in front of herself while she looked in the mirror. With a nod of satisfaction she moved into the bathroom and stripping off her bra and panties climbed into the shower.

The entire time he was at the news conference, Clark was puzzling over what was happening to Lois and Perry and several other members of the staff at the paper. He looked over at Johnson, and he was all business. It didn’t appear as though he had been affected by whatever it was that was driving the rest of the staff love happy.

He had come up with two possibilities. One was to take Lois to Smallville so that they could spend the time with his parents until he could figure out what was happening. The other was to take her to a desert island where they would only have to worry about sea gulls hearing about his secret. It would all depend on how it went when he got home.

After the news conference Clark returned to the apartment, and as he approached he could hear music. The thing was, it wasn’t the kind of music he and Lois usually listened to. He recognized it as a recording he had picked up while he was on his world travels. One he had picked up in Turkey as a matter of fact. Mostly percussion some strings and recorders. He was wary as he opened the door to let himself in. When he closed the door behind himself, he stood on the top landing and looked at Lois. She was apparently wandering aimlessly around the living room. She was barefoot and wearing her big schlumpy robe her feet moving to the beat of the music.

When she realized that Clark had entered, she turned to face him. Her arms were moving in time to the music as were her feet and even with the robe he could see her body moving in a sinuous fashion under it. As the music progressed, she slowly did some turns and as she did she unfastened the belt of the robe. When she turned to face him again, she quickly pulled the robe open and allowed it to fall from her arms.

Clark’s breath caught in his throat. They had been married now for several weeks, but the intimacy they shared was still so new and wondrous. At times he still almost needed to pinch himself to convince himself that he really wasn’t dreaming. Reflecting back on it, he was disappointed that Herb had performed the memory overlay on Lois and hadn’t done the same thing for him. She now had memories of their future married life, but it was all new to him. So, when the robe fell from her body to pool at her feet on the floor, he was stunned to see that she was dressed in diaphanous veils and a skimpy, a very skimpy sequined bikini which jingled as she moved. Suddenly she started moving her fingers like she was snapping them, but there was a tinkling sound, and he realized that she had on belly dancing finger cymbals.

He was as one mesmerized as she danced, and he descended the stairs slowly crossing the floor until he was right in front of her.

She was shimmying and swaying to the music. Rolling her head and shoulders and making her arms look like serpents as they moved. As she danced, she slowly, sensually removed first one veil and then another. She had used some of them as lassos around his neck to bring him closer.

Once the final veil had been removed, she started removing his shirt her hands still moving in time to the music while she rubbed her body against his.

Her dance had been so sensual and exciting that he had enjoyed every move she made. He was happy that this hadn't happened before they were married because this performance would have put a serious strain on his super will power. As it was, he could give free reign to his desires and satisfy his wife's at the same time with a very clear conscience and heightened libido.

When she got his shirt off, she grabbed one of the discarded veils and used it to lasso him and pull him in the direction of the bedroom. Once there she climbed up on and then knelt on the bed. On her knees she still moved to the driving beat of the percussion. As he removed his pants she deftly released her top and enticed him that much more by making her now unencumbered breasts dance to the rhythm.

By the time he had removed his clothing, he was in a sweat of desire, and within mere seconds he had removed her final piece of apparel and laid her on the bed and lay down beside her.

No sooner was he next to her then she said, "Ohhhhh, come to mama" A few seconds later she said, "That's just what I have wanted and needed all afternoon. Why did we wait so long?"

Without waiting for him to reply, she started working her hips and thighs.

He reached up and cupped her breasts and gently squeezed them.

Her head flew back as the rapturous sensations flooded her body. He was sending earthquake like shocks throughout her body. She leaned forward and lifted her mouth to his sharing a sensuous kiss as her body started to shake all over.

After they had both resumed a normal breathing rate, Lois displayed her insatiability by reaching over and toying with his nipples.

Coming to a decision, he turned on his side facing Lois and asked, "Do you want to take a short trip?"

The thought of flying somewhere with her husband overrode her lustful desires and sitting up she asked, "Where?"

"I thought we'd go somewhere that we could be alone."

"Really alone?"

"Totally alone."

"What should I wear?"

When he replied, she was overjoyed and started clapping, "Clothing — optional, but you'll need to put something on for the trip. It's kinda cold out."

Jumping up, Lois ran to the closet and started pulling out clothes. She ended up in jeans and a sweater with sneakers.

Clark spun into the Suit and placed an arm under her knees and another behind her back. She wrapped her arms around his neck and nuzzled her face into his neck where it joined his shoulder as he lifted her up and floated out the French doors to his balcony. After closing the doors they took off, straight up until they were out of sight, and then he shaped a course for the south Pacific, destination — a small uninhabited island near Pitcairn Island.

It felt so good cradling Lois' soft form to his chest. He would never tire of this feeling. Her arms were around his shoulders, but she was so curious as to just where he was taking her that she had started watching as cities and rivers, mountains, and then suddenly an ocean passed by under them. Seeing the vast expanse of ocean with no land visible, her clamp on his neck tightened slightly. If anything were to happen to his power of flight now, they would be in really big trouble. Since there was now nothing but water below them and no sights of interest, she buried her head in her favorite spot, that crook where his neck met his shoulder and with a dreamy sigh, closed her eyes and relaxed. She was confident that her husband would not let her down.

Even though his aura protected her, she knew that the air had been chill in Metropolis and for the majority of the trip thus far. Now she realized that the air was warmer, almost sultry, so she realized that they must have crossed the equator and were in the southern hemisphere. Again she marveled at her husband and his powers. To have not only traversed the continent of the United States in mere minutes, but to now be over what was apparently the Pacific ocean, the southern Pacific at that in this short time was amazing.

She was starting to get anxious to actually reach their destination. He had said that clothing would be optional, and she now knew that she would be free to indulge her fantasy of spending an extended time with him, and they would both be nude and uninhibited by any possibility of Jimmy interrupting them.

A few minutes later they landed on a sandy beach, and Clark set her down on her feet. As soon as she was released from his aura, she felt the stifling heat and taking advantage of the fact that they were totally alone, started to divest herself of her clothes. She toed off her sneakers and then grasping the hem of the sweater pulled it off over her head. After unbuttoning and unzipping her jeans, she wiggled her hips to facilitate sliding them off of her legs. When she straightened up again, she was standing there in what amounted to a very brief, very see through bikini, and the sight of her sent all of his blood rushing south.

Smiling she twirled her finger and said, "What are you waiting for, an engraved invitation? Get undressed."

He didn't do his normal spin change. He did remove the Suit, but he did it in parts. After removing his cape, he laid it out on the sand.

Smiling Lois strode over and sat on the scarlet fabric her attention on Clark, waiting for him to remove the rest of his Suit and watching in anticipation.

He didn't disappoint her. Instead of a rapid spin he took his time, remembering her comment about admiring his body in the mornings. He didn't do any dancing, but he did the equivalent of a male striptease for her. His eyes were on hers the entire time, and he could see the desire or shall we say lust build as he proceeded.

Using his super hearing he could hear her heartbeat speeding up as her desire escalated. With his super vision he could see her pupils dilating, yet another indication. Topping it off his super sense of smell was picking up the musky odor of her arousal. The lacy bra that she was wearing did nothing to hide her erect, hard nipples.

When he was down to a set of silky black briefs, he knelt next to her, and she almost literally melted into his arms. Reaching around he released the hook of her bra, and it fell away as she shook her shoulders to allow the straps to slip down her arms.

Gently he laid her back on the crimson material of the cape and moved in for a kiss. As she lay back she wiggled out of her panties. He started by simply brushing his lips against hers lightly. After a second he returned and gently took her bottom lip in between his teeth and sucked on it. When he released her lip, he brushed his tongue across her lip, and she parted her lips in response. Her tongue came forward and sought his. When they made contact they started a slow tango.

Lying on their sides as they were, Lois started to allow her hands to roam all over his broad chest around his sides and over his back. She used her fingernails against the skin of his back like the claws of a cat as her arousal escalated. Rolling onto her back she pulled him on top of her. As he finished she let out a breathy sound that sounded like, "Wow."

The sensations that were filling her were overwhelming, and the instinct to move was driving her, but he refused to move and that drove her wild. She was moaning and exclaiming, "Wow."

Oh, wow,” over and over. The tension in her body was building, and as it did she started calling his name as she continued to exclaim, “Wow, oh wow, Clark, wow,” but the tension did not build in the same way as when they moved. The feeling of needing to move could only be satisfied by moving her arms and legs which she did. Her arms were stroking and scratching at his back for all she was worth. If he hadn’t been invulnerable his back would have been a patchwork of scratches and welts.

They started a dance as old as time itself. As far as they were concerned, they were the only people in the entire world, in fact *he* was *her* world and *she* was *his*.

His face came close to hers, and she quickly moved to capture his lips with hers. She ran her tongue along his lower lip, and he parted his to allow her access. She started stroking her tongue into his mouth.

Her hands were on his back pulling him tight and she wrapped her legs around his hips. That was the trigger that sent her over the edge as a whole series of Fourth of July fireworks went off behind her eyelids, and she screamed “Clark!” once again.

She turned to him and sighing in contentment cocked her right leg over his, put her right arm across his chest, and her cheek on his shoulder. “You know, you have to be *the* absolutely *best* lover in the whole world. I’m sorry I didn’t wait for you. I love you so much.”

“Only half as much as I love you. I’m glad I waited, and I’m glad I haven’t disappointed you.”

“You could never disappoint me, ever. You are so careful and caring and considerate. You always see to it that I’m satisfied, and boy, am I ever satisfied. That was something else. I’ve never experienced a truly loving relationship before. Being with you ... it’s ... you’re special. I never dreamed it could be this good. The example set by my parents was of a failed marriage which put me off. I never wanted to get married. Then we met and well, Herb gave me those memories of our future, and I could see that our marriage wouldn’t be anything like my parents. It is more like your parents relationship, and I love it and I love your parents for modeling that kind of relationship for you.”

“I’m glad you like my parents. They love you. You’re the daughter they have always wanted.”

“At times I wish they could have been my parents, but then we’d have been brother and sister, and I’d have missed out on all of this. Your parents are some special people. To find a baby in a spaceship and take it in and raise it as their own. Manage to deal with your powers as they came on and keep you grounded and good. That took some special people.”

The conversation petered out, and Lois took a short nap. When she awoke, her desires reawakened with her.

After what seemed like their ninth lovemaking session on the island, Lois had finally fallen asleep for more than a short nap.

Clark was thanking his luck stars for his super stamina. He was sure that it was the only reason he was able to keep up with her and satisfy her rampant desire.

He watched her sleep, sprawled out on his cape on the sand with the sound of the surf in the background. As he watched over her, he was thinking. Ever since Smallville, when Herb had given her the memories of their married life and they had gotten married, in fact they had experienced a rich sex life, but this was something else again. Her behavior at the Planet still puzzled him. That coupled with her insatiability had been a pleasant distraction, but then he thought about their co-workers, Perry in particular. He just couldn’t understand Perry’s obsession with Rehalia. And it had all come on everyone at the same time. It had even affected the representatives of the dock workers and management. Suddenly rather than being at each other’s throats, they had all become best friends.

He was going back over the occurrences of the morning, and the only thing he could come up with was the fashion/perfume show. There had to be something about that to explain what was happening.

Eventually, Lois awoke and with a wanton look did a slow, sexy stretch of her still naked body. When she finished, she reached for him and said, “Come to mama, big boy,” and he fell into her arms.

When they finished he said, “I think we need to get dressed and head back. We’ve had a very enjoyable night, but we need to get in to work.”

They had gotten dressed, and Clark had flown them back to Metropolis. He hoped that he had satisfied Lois desires sufficiently so that there would be little risk of her accidentally revealing the secret.

To her disappointment, Clark had left her alone briefly yesterday afternoon when they were supposed to be playing hooky because his contact within the dockworkers union had contacted him about a contract deal.

Now, Clark had dropped Lois off at the office when he’d had to leave to deal with an emergency. It tore her up to be separated from him even for the short time it would take for him to handle it. She picked up a copy of the Planet on her way upstairs. She was gratified to see that the night editor had managed to get Clark’s submission into the morning edition.

Lois looked at the paper as she rode up in the elevator to the newsroom floor. The headline of the morning edition of the Daily Planet read — “Dockworkers Embrace New Profit-Sharing Plan.” And there was a photo which accompanied the story. A photo is of the union and management reps hugging each other. The photo credit was given to Johnson. Lois briefly wondered why it hadn’t been Jimmy. Johnson had been out of the office in the morning on an assignment, and Lois figured that Clark had caught him as he was returning and taken him along to the meeting.

Chapter 5

When Lois returned to the newsroom, she was surprised to see red, white and pink balloons hanging from desks and other furnishings. Perry was calling for a staff meeting.

Gathered in the conference room were the staff members, minus of course Clark and surprisingly Cat. Lois was euphoric after her night and early morning trysts with Clark and looking around, it seemed like the happy glow she was feeling was being reflected by everyone else. They were all dressed like they were about to head out on dates. All except Jimmy. Jimmy had decided not to shave and was going for the ‘rough’ look of a battle weary photojournalist.

Perry entered and looked around seeing who was there. In a bright tone very unlike his usual gruff voice he said, “Good morning everyone! And a beautiful morning it is.” Turning to Lois he asked, “Lois, have you seen Clark?”

“Uh, yeah, Chief. He had to go meet a source. He dropped me off on the way.”

“Were the two of you home last night? I called and called, and there was no answer.”

Lois blushed at the memory of what they had been doing and where. She reached up and loosened her collar as she replied, “Uh, we decided we didn’t want to be disturbed. We pulled the plug on the phone so we wouldn’t hear it.”

Giving her a knowing look, he said, “Oh. Okay.” He looked around taking inventory again and asked, “Where’s Cat?”

Jimmy replied, “Oh, Cat’s here. She’s in the copy room.”

Lois looked startled and blurted out, “Again or still?”

Jimmy looked weary as he replied, “Still. She even asked if there were any reports *I* needed copied.”

Shrugging it off Perry said, “Okay, our lead story for the next edition is obvious ...”

One of the staffers shouted out, “Russia? The counter-revolution?”

Shaking his head, Perry replied to this sally, “Revolution! Who cares? That’s not what the people want to read. Now *this* is a story. A man and woman meet on a train, fall in love, but then somehow they lose each other. Thirty years later on that same train, they see one another from across the dining car ...” Perry pulled out a handkerchief and blotted his eyes. “It just ... breaks me up.”

Lois was caught up in the emotion with Perry and standing, moved over to give him a hug. As she did, several of the other staffers joined in, and it became a group hug.

Jimmy was moved to tears by the story but had other things on his mind. As he walked to the door, he wiped a tear from his eye. Over his shoulder he said, “Chief, I can’t stay for the meeting. I have something much more important to do.”

From the depths of the huddle, Perry’s voice could be heard, “Go ahead, son.”

Hearing this Jimmy dashed out of the room before Perry would have a chance to change his mind.

After he was out the door, the rest heard Perry say, “I love that kid.”

When the huddle broke up, Lois realized that she was missing Clark. She had sudden inspiration. In her locker Lois had a dress that she had been planning to use the next time she had to go undercover. The more she thought about it, the more she wanted to do it. Making up her mind, Lois headed for the locker room.

Running a criminal empire required just as much paperwork or possibly more paperwork than a legitimate enterprise, and as a result Lex Luthor was sitting at the desk in his office wading through the pile of paper that had accumulated on his desk when the door opened and his fencing partner dressed in the full garb entered.

Lex looking up and seeing the outfit he glanced at his calendar and said, in some surprise, “Oh, Emil ... I didn’t see you on my schedule. If you’ll wait a few moments, I’ll ...”

His statement was interrupted when the point of his opponent’s blade touched his chest. Astonished at this behavior, Lex dropped his pen and looked up at his attacker. His astonishment grew as his attacker put some force behind the blade, and it pierced his chest slightly, and a trickle of blood started to flow staining the white of Luthor’s shirt dark red.

Luthor tried to back off, but his attacker maintained the pressure.

Luthor said, “If you’re upset about our last session, please, let me make it up to you.”

His attacker stood impassively, maintaining the pressure on the blade as the bloodstain on his shirt grew.

Luthor’s eyes flew wide as his attacker reached up and removed the fencer’s mask to reveal ... Miranda.

Immediately his mind flew back to his last encounter with this woman. His very callus statement — “Us? You were an itch. You’ve been scratched.” His eyes widened even farther as his fear increased. The thought of the old quote, ‘Hell hath no fury, like a woman scorned’ crossed his mind, and he was afraid that he was facing the embodiment of that proverb. He knew that most animals reacted aggressively when they sensed fear in their prey, so he tried to hide his abject terror. In a voice that wavered only slightly he said, “Miranda. What a pleasant surprise. What can I do for you?”

Without backing off one iota on the pressure she was

applying to the sword, she said, “You wouldn’t return my calls, so I decided to get your attention in my own way.”

Luthor put up his hands in surrender as he said, “You’ve got it.”

Still not relenting and keeping him firmly fixed with her eyes, Miranda nodded in the direction of his phone and said, “Call your man. Tell him to have the car brought around.

Starting to lower his hands, Luthor asked, “Are we going somewhere?”

Finally backing off on her sword, Miranda replied, “*You* are. To the Daily Planet. I think you’ll find it ... interesting.”

As she finished speaking she pulled a copy of the Daily Planet from her jerkin and tossed it onto the desk in front of Luthor. As soon as she had done this, she turned and sauntered out of Luthor’s office.

Luthor picked up the paper and looked at it closely. He had a hard time convincing himself that what he was seeing wasn’t a fake that Miranda had cobbled together to fool him. He couldn’t believe that a major, *the* major paper in Metropolis would publish what he was seeing. The headline read: “Couple Reunited! Love Wins Out!” The headline wasn’t what he would expect from the Planet. This was not ‘hard news’ such as they was their norm. He did a double take and looked more closely. All of the A’s in the Masthead were shaped like red hearts!

After contemplating the paper for a few more seconds with a shake of his head, Luthor depressed a switch on his intercom and said, “Nigel. Have the car brought around.”

After giving this order, he got up from behind his desk and moved into his residence. He removed his shirt, dressed his wound, put on another shirt, and still in a state of disbelief and shaking his head strode to his private elevator for the trip to the garage.

Clark was finally back from his rescue, and as he exited the stairwell into the newsroom, he stopped dead in his tracks. Looking around all he could see were red, white, and pink balloons, flowers, and paper hearts.

While Clark was standing on the landing staring around mesmerized, Lois spotted him. She was so anxious to be in his arms again that she started running to him.

As she neared him, Clark finally spotted her. He almost didn’t recognize her because she had changed her clothes. She was wearing a white lace creation which clung to her figure accentuating all of her curves and had a deep yoke neckline that showed off her cleavage. The skirt was tapered, high in the front reaching a point above her knees and low in the back, mid-calf. She had done up her hair in an upsweep which accentuated her long neck. She had flower petals in her hand which she strewed along the way. When she finally reached him, she literally flung herself into his arms and throwing her arms around his neck said, “Clark! Where have you been, my darling?!?”

Clark automatically grabbed and held her in his arms. As she snuggled into his shoulder, he looked over her shoulder at the newsroom and saw couples scattered across the room walking hand-in-hand or in various postures of intimacy. Steve from Travel was actually lying on a desk with his head in Denise’s lap as she stroked his face with a rose. The lovefest was in full swing.

Clark slowly lowered Lois back to the floor, and she took the opportunity of his distraction to steal a quick kiss. Clark took Lois by the hand and said, “Lois, come with me. We have to talk.”

Lois smiled and said, “Yes, we do! I have so much to say.”

Across the newsroom Jimmy was at his desk intently scrutinizing his computer monitor. Anyone looking over his shoulder would have realized what he was doing. He was scrolling through an address list. He had used his computer skills

to access the city directory. He rapidly scrolled through until he found what he was after, the address for April Stephens. He pulled out a notepad and wrote #11, 55 West Elm. Heaving a relieved sigh, Jimmy sat back with a smile on his face. <Mission accomplished.>, he thought. It had been worth the effort.

Meanwhile in the Editor's office Rehalia, with one hand on her hip, was standing in front of Perry's desk.

In a strong Latino accent she said, "My husband says I should file a harassment suit against you."

Perry, with a besotted grin on his face, was looking at her with adoration. The threat of a suit didn't even seem to faze him as he replied, "If that's what you want, then go ahead. But nothing can keep me from proclaiming my love. I won't force anything. I'm content to adore you from afar. Listen ... I've composed a little something ..." Perry pulled a piece of paper from his desk and continued, "I call it 'Rehalia'." In a sing-song voice he read the poem, "I plucked a rose. I smelled its dew. That fragrant scent, embodies you. Rehalia, Rehalia."

Rehalia allowed Perry to finish and then mulled over what he had said for a second before she flared up and said, "I smell its dew? Dew doesn't smell!" As she finished she stormed out of the office.

As she turned, Perry looked again at what he had written and placing the paper down on his desk started to edit his own copy.

I'm content to worship you from afar.

Back in the newsroom, Clark led Lois back to his desk. As they were moving in that direction, Clark noticed that the copy machine was still in operation and running non-stop. Shaking his head, he didn't even bother to slide his glasses down to check. That last time had been too embarrassing. Finally reaching his desk, he tried to get Lois to sit in his guest chair; when he sat, however, she had other plans, and as soon as he sat, she jumped into his lap and threw her arms around his neck.

Clark reached up to gently disengage her arms as he looked around nervously to see if anyone noticed the PDA but after just a second decided that it would go totally unnoticed amongst all of the PDA that was going on around them.

Holding her arms and looking into her eyes he said, "Lois, listen to me. You are not in control ..."

Her reply was immediate, "I know that Clark! For the first time in my life, I feel free to express how I feel about you! I don't care who knows."

"Lois, no, there is something very strange going on here."

"Yes, strange and wonderful!"

"Lois, you're not yourself! You've changed, *everybody* around here has changed."

Smiling and giggling like a teenager in love, Lois replied, "But for the better."

Realizing that he needed her help, he tried once more to get through to her, "Lois, snap out of it! I need you to help me figure out what has happened. Please. Concentrate."

Contritely like a six year old, Lois said, "Okay."

Clark nodded and said, "Good. Now, it all started yesterday afternoon."

Lois nodded and brightly replied, "I remember."

Clark started doing what he and Lois usually did together; he started throwing out ideas, brainstorming. "It seems to have affected almost everyone in the newsroom. Maybe something we drank or ate?"

Lois put her arms around Clark's neck and brightly, like a child playing a game replied, "I had Chinese Chicken salad from Wong's. You had a steak sandwich with fries."

Clark disentangled her arms again and continued, "What else? The models were here with the perfume." He stopped speaking as he considered the implications of his statement, "The

perfume."

As he was considering the implications of what he had hit upon, Jimmy dropped a pile of black and white photos on the corner of his desk. As Jimmy was about to walk away, Clark stopped him and asked, "What are those?"

Jimmy, with a dreamy expression replied, "Photos from yesterday's show." He plopped down into Clark's guest chair and contemplated the photos he still held. Turning one around so that Clark could see that it was a picture of April, he asked, "Beautiful, isn't she? And she's all mine."

Clark was now convinced that there was a problem and that Jimmy was affected as well. All he could do was warn him, "Jimmy, be careful. I ... don't want you to get hurt."

Surprised Jimmy asked, "Hurt? How could *I* get hurt?" Jimmy stood up and walked off in a romantic haze.

As Jimmy walked off, Clark started leafing through the photos. Lois craned around so that she could see them as well. She asked, "What're we looking for?"

As he was leafing through, he replied, "I don't know. But remember when ..." Suddenly he had the picture which showed Miranda spraying Lois, Perry, and himself. With conviction he said, "There!"

Lois looked at the picture, and Clark zoomed in with his microscopic vision. He fixed Miranda's appearance in his memory and took a close look at the atomizer that she was using fixing it also in his memory. He muttered to himself, "Probably leaded glass, hand blown shape, antique, very rare."

Chapter 6

Lex Luthor stepped off of the elevator onto the newsroom floor. Looking around he was amazed and shocked at what he saw. Red, white, and pink balloons, many shaped like hearts. Paper cutout hearts and flowers abounded. Couples were strolling hand in hand. Steve and Denise were still at it. As he moved away from the door to the elevator, Perry rushed past. Luthor said, "Good morning, Perry."

Perry rushed past and into the elevator. As he was hitting the button he said, "Gotta run, Lex. Love waits for no man."

While Lex was staring after Perry in shock at this change in his behavior, Clark had a sudden inspiration. He picked Lois up and deposited her in his guest chair. She jumped up grabbed his hand and asked in a hurt tone, "Where are you going?"

He patted her hand and said, "Just downstairs, to the newsstand."

Not wanting to be separated from him, she offered, "I'll come with you."

Wanting to complete his errand in the shortest possible time and knowing that would only happen if she stayed where she was, he said, "I'll be right back."

In a teasing tone Lois said, "Cross your heart and hope to die?"

Warily he held up three fingers in the scout salute and said, "Scout's honor."

Relieved Lois hugged him, and he turned to go.

Luthor caught the end of the exchange between Lois and Clark with interest. When Clark walked away, Luthor approached Lois. She was wearing a dreamy expression as she watched Clark walk away.

As Lex approached Lois, a female staffer passed by and said, "Have a love balloon," as she handed a red balloon on a red ribbon streamer.

Lex automatically accepted the balloon, his attention centered on Lois.

Lex approached Lois and said softly, "Lois?"

Spinning around, Lois's attention was diverted to him, and she said in a somewhat disappointed tone, "Oh, Lex."

Looking around Luthor commented, “Things have certainly changed around here.” He released the ribbon allowing the balloon to float away.

Still in a dreamy fog Lois replied, “Have they? I hadn’t noticed.”

Taken aback Luthor said, “You hadn’t ...” He thought about it another second and asked, “Are we still on for dinner tomorrow night?”

Lois replied, “Sure. But please understand something. There’s only one man in the world for me. His name is Clark Kent. He’ll be joining us for the interview.” She smiled as she watched Clark moving up the ramp to the elevator. She sighed, “Mmmmmmm.”

Luthor turned to see what she was looking at and saw Kent. Turning back to her he said, “Interview? I thought we were having dinner. Just the two of us.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, Lex. Clark has to be with me. I can’t live without him.”

Lex frowned at this statement. “But this was to be our time together. A quiet, intimate dinner.”

“Lex, Clark is my partner as well as my all-in-all. He has to be with me. We can still have dinner, but we will finally do that interview that we were supposed to do so long ago.”

“Is Kent going to be involved in all of your activities from now on?”

“Of course! He’s my partner. My love. My other half.”

He didn’t know it, but Lois was speaking from her heart. Luthor thought, <This has to be the effect of the stuff Miranda made. If it can do this to Lois and the rest of the staff here, the possibilities are stupendous. To inexplicably make her head-over-heels in love with that bumpkin Kent! I just hope the effects aren’t permanent. Hopefully they will have worn off by Friday, and I will be able to reclaim her heart. I have other plans for Lois Lane. I need to talk to Miranda.> After a final look around Luthor walked up the ramp and pushed the button for the elevator. While he waited for the doors to open, he turned and performed a final survey of the chaos that Miranda had created with her potion. When he heard the doors open, he smiled and turned to enter the elevator.

As Luthor exited the Daily Planet building, Nigel opened the door to the limo. As he was entering he said, “Nigel, call Miranda. Ask her to come to my study tomorrow at 5:00.”

“Very good, Sir.” A second later the import of what Luthor had said sank in. “You’ll forgive me for asking, sir, but I thought you had ... cancelled her.”

After Nigel had moved around and taken his seat behind the wheel, Luthor continued. “Well, I’ve had a change of heart. It seems I was wrong about her. Apparently she has developed a formula that renders people incapable of resisting their animal urges.”

With a sinister smile Nigel asked, “And that would be of some service to you?”

With a smirk Luthor replied, “Oh, yes, yes indeed. You see, I’ve always thought of myself as an opportunist, and what we have here is definitely an ... opportunity. If you control men’s hearts, their minds will follow. For example, a politician owned by me is losing in the polls. A dashing fellow but the kind that women love only from afar. The night before elections, a little whiff through the auditorium, the theater ... the result ... a landslide. Or I wish to buy a company or two at a bargain price. A spray here, a dab there ... how could they deny me?”

“Very ingenious, sir.”

Smugly Luthor replied, “Thank you, Nigel. That’s what, as they say, I get the big bucks for.

“Now the next item. I need a distraction. Tomorrow evening Lois is supposed to be coming to dinner. She just insisted that her

partner accompany her. I need something that will call the country bumpkin away. Perhaps a fire or a robbery for him to report on so that she will come alone.”

“I could contact Duggins. He could start a fire. Or perhaps Roberts could perform a jewelry store heist.”

“Yes, Nigel. Contact Roberts and set that up. That will serve two purposes. It will distract Kent and will bring in some revenue. See to it.”

“Very good, Sir. Time?”

“Between 6 and 6:30 and make sure that it is at a distance from us.”

“Very good, Sir. I’ll arrange it. I won’t use one of our regular men. I’ll recruit someone from the outside and then call in an anonymous tip.”

After Luthor left newsroom, Clark returned from the newsstand with a pile of magazines, fashion magazines. As soon as he came out of the elevator, he headed for his desk.

As soon as he was close enough, Lois threw herself into his arms and said breathlessly, “You were gone so long, my darling.” She started kissing him.

Pulling away slightly, Clark looked around for Luthor and not seeing him asked Lois, “What did Luthor want?”

“Oh, he wanted to confirm our dinner tomorrow night.”

Clark was shocked, “Oh? What did you tell him?”

“I told him that we would be there for the interview.”

“We?”

“Of course. I wouldn’t go without you. You’re my dearest darling, my husband. I wouldn’t go anywhere without you.”

Hefting the magazines, Clark said, “Why don’t we go home. We have some research to do.”

Grabbing her coat, Lois started to smile a lascivious smile as she said, “Anything, my darling. Yes, let’s go home.”

That evening

Perry was a sight to behold. He was wearing black leather, a jacket and pants. The sleeves were pushed up, the lapels on the jacket were large and open, and he had a white scarf draped around his neck, hanging down on both sides. As he walked down the corridor of a modest apartment house, he checked the numbers on the doors. When he found the right one, he struck a pose strongly reminiscent of Elvis in concert and started singing “Burning Love” in a reasonable imitation of Elvis.

He made it through two bars when the door was suddenly pulled open. As it was the sound of crying children could be heard. Rehalia could be seen in the background and a man, obviously Rehalia’s husband confronted Perry. He was obviously very angry. To top it off, he was a mountain of a man standing at least 6 foot 3 inches and built like a linebacker.

As soon as the door opened, Perry stopped singing and simply stood there aghast. He had never seen Rehalia’s husband and seeing him was in awe and fear.

The two opponents stood thus for only about 5 seconds before Rehalia’s husband pulled back his fist and sent it into Perry’s face.

About the same time

Night had fallen, and sometime in the interim Jimmy had gone out and rented a shiny red, new Corvette. He had also stopped off at home and changed clothes, going for the Miami Vice look. A tan sport jacket over a black turtleneck shirt, white dress slacks, and loafers without socks.

He pulled up in front of the club, parked, and exited the car, flipping the keys to the parking valet as he rounded the front.

Bypassing the waiting line, he headed straight for the door. He was reaching in his pocket for some bills as he approached the door.

The bouncer looked like a Viking who had just stepped out of a Norse Legend. He wore a dark suit like it was a suit of animal skins and moved to intercept Jimmy. Jimmy went to move around him, and the bouncer said, “Members only!”

Jimmy took some bills, and stuffed the bills into the bouncer’s top pocket as he said, “No problem.”

As Jimmy went to move on by, the bouncer put his hand in Jimmy’s chest and stopped him while with the other he retrieved the bills and stuffed them into his mouth and started to chew.

Jimmy was intimidated but not deterred. Looking over his shoulder, Jimmy spotted April as she was exiting the building with several friends and said in his most debonair style, “A ... pril! I didn’t know you were a member here.”

April pulled a face and asked, “Are you?”

Jimmy tried to make light of it and said, “Me? No way. I hate these kind of places. I prefer to spend my nights by a roaring fire. A glass of wine. A beautiful woman.” He looked around in conspiratorial fashion and then continued, “Let’s stop playing games, April. Hop in and let me show you what you’ve been missing.”

April just couldn’t believe that she was hearing correctly. She stared at him, amazed at his audacity. Finally she addressed the bouncer and we learned his name, “Hans!” She inclined her head in Jimmy’s direction.

Hans started to make his move on Jimmy, but as he approached, Jimmy put up his hands and said, “Okay, big guy. I get the picture.”

Seeing this, April turned away and rejoining her friends started walking down the sidewalk while Jimmy watched forlornly. Jimmy was devastated and in his grief walked right past the Corvette, forgetting that it was what he was driving.

Thinking about what had just happened, he started crossing the street without even looking. Suddenly there was the blare of a horn, and Jimmy looked up and saw a large truck bearing down on him. Automatically he threw up his arms in a futile, defensive gesture.

Fortunately Superman was doing his nightly patrol when he heard the horn and the screech of brakes. Seconds before the truck would have hit him, out of the night sky Superman swooped in and picking him up, flew him to safety.

Once he was safe, Superman asked, “Jimmy? Are you all right?”

Jimmy seemed to snap out of his blue funk, at least temporarily and replied, “I think so. What happened?”

Superman replied, “Come on. I’d better take you home.”

Jimmy looked around and remembered, “Wait! My car. I have to return it to the lot.”

Nodding his head in understanding, Superman reversed course and returned him to his car. As he set him on his feet he asked, “Are you going to be all right to drive home?”

Shaking his head as if coming out of a daze, Jimmy replied, “Yeah, I think so. Thanks, Superman. For everything.”

Chapter 7

After rescuing Jimmy, Clark returned home. He landed on the balcony and entered through the French doors into the bedroom to find Lois dressed in her micro-leather skirt and the red leather vest that she planned to use at some time when undercover admiring herself in the mirror. The skirt definitely showed off her long luscious legs to good advantage, and the vest, well it barely contained her attributes and showed a lot of cleavage. He looked forward with dread to the day she felt that this outfit would be appropriate wear for an undercover assignment.

Seeing him over her shoulder in the mirror as he entered, Lois spun around and ran to him, throwing herself into his arms as she said, “Clark, my darling, I have missed you. Why were

you gone so long?”

“Well, Lois, It was a good thing I decided to do a patrol. Jimmy was almost hit by a truck.”

“That would have been bad, but now you’re home and we can be together again.” As she was saying this she started undoing the laces of her vest, exposing more and more of herself as she did. When she had thrown off the vest, she leaned in close and put her arms around his neck. She reached for the hidden zipper at the back of his Suit and started lowering it. When she had it at his waist, she reached for the neck and started peeling it off of him. He stepped back, and one mini-whirlwind later he was naked and so was she, and they were in bed together.

She crawled up on top of him and started a lovemaking session.

After a time they finished, and they moved into the living room. Clark had put on some sleep shorts while Lois had grabbed one of his old T-shirts. Dressed as she was, Clark was very distracted. Even though they had just made love, he was still captivated by the sway of her hips and the bounce and jiggle of her breasts under the shirt. He sat on the sofa and reached for a magazine as Lois sat on the sofa next to him and started to nuzzle his neck. Clark was very distracted as he flipped through the pages of the fashion magazine. He still wasn’t sure that he would find what he was looking for, but it was the best thing he could think of. Lois was becoming increasingly distracting. She continued to nuzzle his neck, and she started tracing random patters on this naked chest and whispering little endearments in his ear.

Using his super speed he managed to get through that first magazine before he bowed to the inevitable and picking Lois up flew them back to the bedroom. After another and particularly energetic lovemaking session, Lois fell asleep.

Clark returned to the living room and continued to peruse the magazines, this time at normal human speed to make sure he didn’t miss anything.

When he had finished two more, he felt hands on his chest and her breath on the back of his neck as she leaned in to kiss it. She moved to the side and took his earlobe in her teeth and nipped it slightly then whispered, “I want you so much.”

He disentangled himself from her arms and picking her up returned to the bedroom for another lovemaking session. This time Lois seemed to be sated, and she fell into a peaceful slumber sprawled naked across the bed.

Clark returned to the living room and returned to his task. Finally he stopped and stared at a full page advertisement. He reached over and picked up the picture that Jimmy had taken at the time of the fashion/perfume show and compared the woman in the picture with the one in the advertisement. The angles were different, but it had to be the same woman. There she was, the Woman who sprayed him in the Daily Planet standing behind the counter of a tiny store with hundreds of perfume bottles. The name of the shop was: Miranda’s. He checked the advertisement again, this time looking at the atomizer, and it matched one of the atomizers in the black and white photo Jimmy had taken; then he smiled and wrote down the information.

Satisfied that he was on the right track he turned off the lights and joined Lois in bed. When he joined her she unconsciously scooted over to make room for him and then snuggled up against his side, one arm across his abdomen and her head pillowed on his chest.

Several hours later Lois stirred. As she sat up she noted the fact that she was naked and also that she had a splitting headache. She could also feel that they had been ... active. Her hand went to her forehead, and she realized that it felt like she had a hangover. She nudged Clark, and he was awake in an instant. She asked, “How did we get here?”

Surprised all Clark could say was, “Huh?”
 “The last thing I remember was ... we were in the newsroom. Now I’m here, I’m naked, and we’ve obviously been ... active.”

With a cheeky grin Clark replied, “You have a gift for understatement.”

It was her turn to be without words, “Huh?”

“I’ll say we’ve been active. I was having a hard time keeping up with your demands. I’m just glad that I’m super and was able to satisfy you. I’m afraid of what you might have done if I hadn’t been.”

“That bad, huh?”

“Insatiable.”

“Insatiable? How long have I been out?”

“Oh, you weren’t out! For the last two days you were very much awake and demanding.”

“Two days?”

“Two days.”

“How many times?”

“Do you really want to know?”

“Yes, I need to know.”

“Okay, well ... eleven times the first night. I flew us to a desert island so that we wouldn’t disturb the neighbors.”

In a squeaky voice of disbelief, she said, “Eleven times?”

He nodded solemnly, but the smile on his face belied the seriousness of his statement.

“How about last night?”

“Three.”

“Why only three?”

“You finally fell asleep.”

“Oh.” She thought for a few seconds before she said, “I need to check the calendar. Depending on where I am in my cycle, all those little spermies swimming around in me could result in us starting our family.”

“Why don’t you go take a shower, and then I’ll show you what I found.”

“Sounds like a good idea. I’ll be surprised if I’m not walking bow-legged with all of this activity.”

She got out of bed and crossed to the bathroom and the shower that beckoned.

Clark went to the kitchen and put on the coffee maker.

When Lois came out of the shower, Clark went in and took a super speed shower, joining her in the living room after pouring the coffee.

Clark handed her the coffee and asked, “Are you feeling better?”

“Some. This feels like a very bad hangover. Are you sure it was eleven times?”

“It’s not like I was keeping score or anything, but yeah, eleven times.”

“I feel so humiliated. You must think I’m some nymphomaniac or something.”

Clark smirked and said, “I didn’t mind at all. In fact, I must say, I enjoyed every time. Time after time after time after ...”

She smacked his arm and said, “Don’t rub it in. At least now it’s worn off, whatever it was, and I won’t humiliate myself any more.”

Looking at her with a twinkle in his eyes, Clark said, “Lois, you can humiliate yourself with me that way any ... time ... you ... want.”

“Yeah, I’ll bet. I’m just glad we’re married.”

“So am I.” Picking up the picture and magazine, Clark changed the topic, “Here’s what I found.”

“Yeah, that looks like her.”

Pointing at an atomizer in the advertisement, he said, “There’s the atomizer that she used.”

Lois reached into her bag, pulled out a magnifier and scrutinized the ad. Nodding her head, she said, “Looks like it.”

“We know what the stuff did. It made everyone drunk on love. Now we need to find out what’s in the stuff, how and why she is using it.”

“You’ve got the address. I think we need to go there and investigate.”

Clark nodded his head in satisfaction as he thought, <She’s back.>

A little later Lois and Clark exited a cab on a street which consisted of artsy boutique shops. They found Miranda’s and had to step down to the entrance. When Clark opened the door, a quaint chime sounded alerting Miranda to the fact that she had someone entering.

Looking around interestedly, Lois and Clark saw shelves upon shelves of atomizers scattered around in the front of the shop. Aside from what seemed to be literally hundreds of atomizers, each seeming to have its own unique shape, there were also scented soaps, candles and incense.

From the back entering the shop through a beaded curtain, Miranda entered carrying her black cat which she immediately put down on the floor. From her expression it was apparent that she in fact recognized the pair. In an attempt to put them off guard, Miranda put on her best behavior. “Looking for something ... in particular?”

In the time since they had gotten married, they had developed some tactics which had made them even more formidable as investigators. So that Clark was free to utilize his unique talents, Lois would engage the subject and distract them to leave Clark free to do his thing. Lois answered Miranda’s question, “Uh, no. Not really,” as she continued to look around, drawing Miranda after her.

Miranda, desiring to look like a simple shopkeeper suggested, “A gift? Something for a friend whose love has soured? Try my ... Jungle Passion. Pure white petals, hand-picked from a flower grown only in Micronesia. I have a wide selection. I have a scent for every occasion.”

From the side Clark asked, “You make all of your perfumes?”

Miranda, with a hint of pride in her voice, replied, “Yes. I was trained as a chemist. Many perfumers are. In fact the ... goal of a fine perfumer is to cause a chemical reaction.” She couldn’t help but be attracted to Clark. He was a handsome specimen. She turned to him and asked, “Haven’t we met before?”

Clark turned on the charm, “I think we have. I’m Clark Kent. This is Lois Lane. We’re from the Daily Planet.”

This was not news to Miranda. Because of Luthor’s interest in her, Lois had been her primary target at the Planet, “Oh, yes. I was there recently, sampling the competition’s new fragrance and trying out one of my new ones as well.”

Playing along with the charade, Clark commented, “Yours had an interesting odor. Was it animal based?”

Miranda was surprised, and it came out in her comment, “You have a remarkable olfactory sense, Mr. Kent. Yes, that particular perfume is quite rare.”

Clark asked innocently, “What do you call it?”

With a smug look Miranda replied, “I call it simply ‘Revenge.’”

Just then Daru leapt up on one of the cabinets near Lois, startling her. After she caught her breath, she saw that now was her opportunity to distract Miranda so that Clark could do a search. “Can you tell us the ingredients?”

Miranda laughed and said, “Come now, Ms. Lane. Surely you don’t expect me to give away *all* my secrets?”

Lois went on the attack to make sure she had Miranda’s full attention, “Look. Let’s cut the niceties. Whatever was in that witches brew you sprayed us with made half the newsroom go looney tunes in love.”

While Miranda was distracted by Lois, Clark lowered his

glasses and surveyed the room. He spotted the atomizer he was looking for on a back shelf. At super speed he moved to it, grabbed it and put it into the pocket of his trench coat.

With her attention directed to Lois, Miranda had no idea as to what Clark was doing and in reply to Lois, Miranda simply smiled which just infuriated Lois.

In response to Miranda's attitude in an exasperated tone, Lois challenged, "It's not funny. People were hurt by what you did, humiliated ... Jimmy, a friend of mine, almost *got killed*."

With a smirk Miranda countered, "You're not suggesting I had anything to do with *that*, are you? I just sell perfume."

Lois countered, "Perfume that makes people crazy."

With apparent calm Miranda replied, "You know, Ms. Lane, animals are ruled by their sense of smell. We humans think we've evolved beyond that. I'm not so sure. Even so I have no idea what you're talking about."

By this time Clark had returned to his previous position and was now the interested bystander of the conversation. He zeroed in on Miranda's carotid artery and could see her pulse throbbing a rapid tattoo. He listened and could hear her racing heartbeat. She was excited, possibly by the challenge that Lois was presenting.

Lois pressed on, "I doubt that very much. I intend to make a full report to the police. Not planning on leaving town, are you?"

Miranda's pulse was still racing, but Clark couldn't tell if it was the excitement of Lois' challenge or the threat of the police that was causing it.

Finally Miranda said, "Forgive me, Ms. Lane, but the unfounded suspicions of two reporters hardly qualifies as a criminal investigation. Where I go or what I do is frankly none of your business. Now if you'll excuse me, I have work to do."

Lois was fuming as they exited Miranda's shop. As they moved down the street, Lois stated, "She was lying."

"I know. Her heart rate was over one-fifty."

"How do you know that? Oh, right, super hearing. Okay, so we know she did it, now how do we prove it?"

Clark pulled the atomizer out of his pocket and said, "While you distracted her, I found this."

Right there in the middle of the sidewalk, Lois threw her arms around his neck and gave him a very suggestive kiss. When she broke the kiss she said, "Let's go partner. We have to get that to STAR Labs." Turning she hailed a taxi.

Chapter 8

Lois and Clark took a cab from Miranda's directly to STAR Labs. After paying the fare, they entered the lobby.

Approaching the receptionist, Lois said, "I'm Lois Lane, and this is Clark Kent. We're with the Daily Planet. We need to see someone about perfume."

The receptionist gave Lois a puzzled look and asked, "Perfume? You did say, perfume?"

Lois nodded and said, "Yes, that's what I said. Perfume. I need to speak to someone about perfume."

"Look, if you want perfume," she looked Lois up and down noting the smart business outfit and that it wasn't exactly couture, "Cost-Mart carries brands that you can afford."

Clark could see that Lois was about to explode and moved in to prevent her from disemboweling the receptionist by stepping in between them. He noted the nameplate, and after shining the light of his patented multi-megawatt smile on her said, "Denise, perhaps I can clarify this. We have a sample of perfume that we would like analyzed. We believe that it may not be just perfume."

The receptionist was captivated by his smile and smiling in return said, "Oh, I see. Perhaps Doctor Ferguson could help you. I'll page him."

While she was paging Doctor Ferguson, Clark turned to Lois and with a grin said, "Sometimes you can attract more flies with

honey than you can with vinegar."

Lois slugged him in the stomach and said, "Are you saying that I have a sour disposition?"

"No! All I'm saying is that sometimes a gentle approach works better than a bull in a china shop approach. Your 'go-for-the-jugular' approach works well most of the time in an interview, but when you are asking for help, another style is needed."

Behind his back the receptionist said, "Doctor Ferguson will be right here."

Clark turned to her and smiled again as he said, "Thank you, Denise. You've been most helpful."

She smiled back and said, "Any time, Mr. Kent." Then she gave Lois a sour look.

Clark turned back to Lois and said, "See?"

Lois just gave him a grumpy expression.

A couple of minutes later Doctor Ferguson, you could tell that by the name embroidered above the breast pocket, his hands were buried deeply in the pockets of his long white lab coat when he entered the lobby, approached. Pulling out his right hand and extending it he said, "I'm Doctor Ferguson."

Clark took it and shook it as he introduced them, "I'm Clark Kent and this is Lois Lane. We work for the Daily Planet."

"Yes, that is what Denise told me. How can I help you?"

As Clark pulled the atomizer from his pocket, he said, "Doctor Ferguson, this perfume was sprayed on the staff at the Planet the other day, and the results were ... dramatic. The whole newsroom became, for want of a better term ... drunk. Drunk ... on love." He glanced at Lois and then added, "Normal inhibitions were lowered or completely removed. Somehow, I was missed, but I had to take my wife home before something ... embarrassing happened. Our editor went after the janitress. Most of the staff paired off as couples in a most unprofessional way."

"Hmmm, very interesting. You say that the perfume in that container was responsible?"

"Yes, Doctor. Could you do some kind of analysis to find out what did it?"

Taking the very innocent looking atomizer and holding it up for inspection, he mused, "Most likely an alcohol base. That can be discounted. It will be the other, most likely organic, components that will be of interest. Could be a very complex structure. Start with HPLC, maybe mass spec and NMR."

Coming out of his musings, he looked up at Lois and Clark and said, "Why don't you come with me and we can get started." He turned and led them out of the lobby and to his lab.

Once they entered the lab, Doctor Ferguson placed the atomizer in a fume hood. Turning to Lois and Clark he asked, "You did say that it was exposure to the vapor that created the situation?"

"As far as we know."

"Okay, then we would be well advised to avoid the vapor." He weighed a small vessel, recorded the weight and then carried it over and placed it next to the atomizer. Making sure that the windows of the fume hood were closed all but where he was working, he unscrewed the top from the atomizer. Next using a volumetric pipette and squeeze bulb, he sucked up a measured quantity of the liquid in the bottle, explaining as he went, "By starting with a measured quantity, we can drive off the alcohol and determine the concentration." He dispensed the liquid into a small vessel which he placed on a slightly warm hot plate. He watched as the alcohol rapidly evaporated leaving an oily residue. Once all of the alcohol had been vaporized he took the vessel and re-weighed it. After doing a calculation he said, "It looks like a very small percentage of the active ingredient. I'd estimate about one percent. If I were to speculate, I'd say that if it had the effects you describe, at a one percent solution, I'd hate to see what a ten percent, let alone a one hundred percent solution would do."

Taking the vessel back to the fume hood he added a known quantity of solvent to put it back into solution. While that was being dissolved, he turned on the HPLC and turned to explain to his audience, “This is a High Pressure Liquid Chromatograph or HPLC for short. It will help us separate the components of the liquid.” Once it was in solution, he transferred the liquid to a syringe vial and sealed it with a rubber cap. “Sealed like this we ought to be protected from the effects. He inserted a syringe needle through the rubber septum to suck up a measured amount and carrying it over he injected it into the HPLC machine.

Once he had done that, he stood back to wait. While waiting he explained the process. “The HPLC will cause the molecules to move through the column at different speeds, depending on their size. I know the solvent I used so that will be discounted. The effluent will be sent through a sensor so that we get molecular weights. The next run we will send the effluent through the MASS Spec. The MASS spectrometer is a device that produces of the masses of the atoms or molecules comprising a sample of material. The spectra are used to determine the elemental or isotopic signature of a sample, the masses of particles and of the molecules. That will give us a start on the structure. I’ll also take the sample to the NMR lab while we wait for the MASS Spec results so that they can run it as well. The NMR lab is in another part of the building. It is isolated from any nearby labs because of the strong magnetic field involved. By the time we are done, we should have a pretty good idea of what we are working with.”

Clark asked, “What was that acronym ... NMR? What does that stand for?”

Doctor Ferguson seemed to enjoy explaining science to the pair although Lois’ eyes were starting to glaze over, but Clark still appeared interested. “NMR is Nuclear Magnetic Resonance. Every molecule has a unique signature when placed in a magnetic field. The sample is placed in an NMR tube and then into a magnetic field. A radio frequency pulse is then sent through the sample solution in order to orient the magnetic moments of the nuclei in the solution. As the magnetic moments relax, they exhibit a free induction decay. The free induction decay is Fourier transformed into a NMR spectrum. The NMR spectrum displays chemical shifts for the individual nuclei, and from these chemical shifts, the structure of the compound can be determined. By the time we are done, we should have a pretty good idea of what we are working with.”

Lois asked, “How long will all of this take?” Her foot felt like it wanted to tap impatiently on its own.

With a shrug he said, “Oh, I don’t know. We have to do these runs and then send the results through a deconstruction algorithm, or Fourier Transform, and see if we can come up with a reasonable structure. If that fails then we will add some more techniques, UV, UV Fluorescence, IR, FTIR. The FT in FTIR stands for Fourier Transform. I mentioned that a minute ago. The FTIR does a Fourier Transform analysis of the IR spectra produced, and by looking at the location of the resulting peaks, we can determine what functional groups we are dealing with. They will add to the information base. Then we need to compare it to the literature and see if there is a match. It could take some time.” He pointed dramatically to a whiteboard on which really obscure line drawings of chemical structures were written. “Most of the time we allow the computers to do the work, but sometimes old fashioned brain-storming does the trick.”

Hearing this, Lois pulled out a business card and handed it to Doctor Ferguson and asked, “Could you FAX the results to the number on this card?”

He was smiling as he replied, “Sure, no problem. Thanks for bringing in an intriguing problem. It isn’t often that we get a chance to exercise a multi-disciplinary approach like this.”

After shaking hands all around, Lois and Clark departed.

When they departed STAR Labs they went to lunch and discussed their plan of attack. Shortly after lunch they arrived back at the Planet. When they stepped off of the elevator, they noticed some drastic changes in the décor. Gone were the red, white, and pink balloons and the paper hearts and the flowers. It looked like things were back to normal. The only thing off key was that almost everyone acted like they were suffering from a hangover, as Lois had earlier in the morning. Lois sighed and thanked her lucky stars that she had a super husband to take care of her. He had helped her through the ravages of her hangover feeling.

Lois said, “Looks like it has worn off here too.”

Clark saw Jimmy approaching, and he recognized the look in his eyes, “Maybe not, completely.”

Jimmy pulled Clark aside, “CK, can you lend me some money?”

“Sure, will \$20 do?”

“I need \$800.”

“What?”

“There’s this dress. I want to buy it for April.”

“Jimmy, that’s just too much. Look, I’d advise you to quit trying to impress her.”

Jimmy was looking desperate, “I can’t help it. I’m making a fool out of myself, but ... I can’t stop.”

Clark patted Jimmy on the back and said, “Don’t worry. It’ll be over soon enough.”

Jimmy handed Clark the papers he was carrying and walked off.

Lois cleared away the final vestiges of the previous couple of days from her desk and booted up her terminal. When she did, a reminder popped up about the dinner with Lex. She thought, <Uh, oh. What are we going to do about this?>

Just then Clark strolled over to his desk. He was looking through a FAX that had just come in. He had gone to check the FAX machine instead of going straight to his desk. He sat in the visitor chair next to her desk.

She asked, “Whatcha got?”

“Would you believe that this is the report from STAR Labs? It says that the sample was mostly alcohol, which is to be expected. That’s usually the main solvent in these kinds of things. It says that the active ingredients are a mix of pheromones.”

Lois said, “Pheromones. Never heard of them.”

“Sure you have, Lois. Pheromone. A chemical substance secreted by animals which produces specific responses to other individuals of the same species.”

Lois looked at him and asked, “What’d you do, memorize a dictionary?”

He chuckled and said, “I’m a speed-reader”

“Okay, so let me get this straight. The male and female of each species releases pheromones to attract a mate.”

“That is essentially it.”

She leaned in very close so that she could whisper, “There’s proof, if you ever needed it that you, Clark Kent are human. My pheromones attracted you, and your pheromones definitely attracted me. Mmmmmmm. *That* makes *us* the *same* species.”

“The problem is that this stuff is so powerful that it overrides the normal inhibitions that everyone has.”

With a nod Lois said, “Luckily the stuff wears off within forty-eight hours.”

“According to this, it would depend on the person’s metabolic rate.”

Lois had been looking at the report and putting it down said, “I still don’t get it. I mean, Doctor Ferguson said this stuff shouldn’t work unless you’re already physically attracted to the person. Then it just over-rides our normal restraint. That must be

why I was so insatiable. I didn't have any restraints when it comes to you."

Clark expanded on that, "Right. There has to be some animal magnetism there to begin with. All this substance does is inhibit that part of your brain that acts as an intellectual defense mechanism, leaving the person unable to control themselves."

Lois put her hand on his arm and said quietly, "I just want to thank you for being such a wonderful, careful, gentle lover. If not for that, I'm sure I'd be sore after all of that activity."

He smiled and whispered, "I think my aura helped out with that. It helps protect whoever is within it from harm, and you were definitely within my aura."

"The spray didn't affect you. Were you just patronizing me or what?"

"Lois, believe me, I loved every minute of it. I didn't need a pheromone spray to make me attracted to you. That happened the first second I laid eyes on you."

"It took me a little longer and some advanced memories courtesy of Herb, but I'm right there with you."

"I think we need to get back to this story."

"Fine by me. What are those other papers?"

"Oh, Jimmy gave me the Bio on Miranda. Let's see," he started reading, "First in her class at M.I.T. Oh, here's the snake in the woodpile."

Lois interrupted, "Snake in the woodpile? Must be a Kansas saying."

He gave her a cheeky grin and continued, "Guess who funded her research."

"You don't even need to give me a hint. Luthor Industries."

"Bingo."

"No big surprise. He funds half of the scientists in Metropolis. He probably doesn't even know who she is. We can ask him tonight"

Clark was startled, "Tonight?"

"Yeah, we're having dinner with Luthor."

"Lois, you know I can't stand the man."

"I know, but he does find me attractive, and maybe we can use that to get information."

Clark didn't look happy and just said, "We need to talk to Perry."

Meanwhile — in the copy room

Phil, the copy machine repair tech, looking physically drained, had collapsed on top of a box of copy paper. His hair was mussed, his glasses were askew, his tie was loose, and half of his shirttails were outside of his waistband. Cat, looking more than a little disheveled, was at the copy machine. She had just fed in a sheet of paper and was awaiting the result. When the copy came out completely perfect, she looked at it in disgust. She muttered to herself, "Perfect."

Phil overheard her, and in a somewhat disappointed tone as he reached to straighten his glasses said, "Well, I guess my work here is done. I've got other service calls to make."

Cat said, "Not so fast." Spotting Phil's tool kit, she walked over to it and picked up a pair of needle nose pliers. Returning to the machine she opened the cover and reached into the inner workings with the pliers and felt around. Bumping into something she clamped down on it and with a wrench pulled it free. Smiling she held up her prize while Phil looked on in mixed horror and relief.

Perry's door was slightly open so Lois and Clark simply walked in. Clark closed the door behind them, and they moved over in front of his desk.

Perry was sitting there behind his desk with his head buried in his hands. When he looked up to see who had had the temerity to enter his office uninvited, Lois let out a gasp. Right in the

center of his face, there was a very big, very white bandage across his nose and over his cheeks.

Clark, concern in his voice, asked, "Chief, what happened?"

At the same time Lois asked, "Does it hurt?"

Answering Lois first, Perry said, "Only when I laugh, although there's very little danger of that happening in the near future."

Clark spotted what appeared to be some legal documents on Perry's desk. He used his supervision to look at them then to provide a cover he picked them up to look at them. "Sexual harassment ... Rehalia ..."

Perry offered, "That's not the worst of it. Alice threw me out. Called me a no good hound dog. Now I'm livin' in the heartbreak hotel. One hundred and fifty-nine bucks a night."

As Clark placed the papers back down on his desk, Lois spoke up, "Chief, you have a defense. A complete defense."

"We've been looking into what happened. We found out that a research chemist sprayed a pheromone compound on us." Clark added sympathetically.

Perry was puzzled, "Pherawhat?"

"Pheromone!"

Clark added, "It made all of us ..."

Lois interrupted to clarify, "Some of us ..."

Clark finished, "... fall wildly in love. Completely beyond our control."

Perry brightened up and sat up straighter in his chair. "Well, that'll take care of the lawsuit. But not Alice. She'll never have me back."

Lois advised, "Fight for her, Chief."

Clark added, "Shower *her* with presents. Write *her* poems. Put *her* on a golden pedestal. Tell *her* you *worship* her."

Perry thought about this advice, and his countenance brightened briefly, then he sagged in his seat and said, "She'll never buy it."

Clark encouraged him, "Come on, Chief. What have you got to lose by trying? Explain what happened over a candlelight dinner. After sending her some roses of course."

Lois nodded her agreement, "Yeah, that should work. Roses and a nice dinner. I like that idea. Go for it, Chief."

"I guess it's worth a try. Okay, I will."

Chapter 9

A little later

Nigel Saint John escorted Miranda to Luthor's office and entered to find him waiting for her. For a change he wasn't behind his desk but in an easy chair near a side table. As she entered, he stood and moved to greet her. He reached for her hand and taking it, brought it to his lips, and kissed the back of it.

Miranda, however, was wise to Luthor and his machinations. She remained cool and didn't allow his charm to sway her.

Straightening Luthor started the conversation, "Congratulations, Miranda. I'm the first to admit when I've made a mistake." He turned and started to pour two flutes of champagne as he finished, "I hope you've given my offer some consideration."

Miranda had decided to fight fire with fire. "I've done nothing *but* think about it." She paused to accept the flute of champagne that he offered her before she continued, "Of course there are plenty of others who'd be willing to offer me a tidy sum for my formula."

Luthor had expected as much from her. He countered with, "True, but *I'm* offering you a full partnership. Fifty-fifty."

Miranda shot right back, "Seventy-thirty."

Lex countered with, "Sixty-forty."

Miranda acquiesced, "Done."

Luthor raised his glass and said, “Good. Now come. A toast. To you. To your brilliant success. And ... to our new partnership.”

They both drained their glasses. Luthor had some hopes of sweetening the deal, but in order to do that, he needed Miranda to consume more alcohol. He collected her glass and turned to refill them.

When he turned away, Miranda pulled out a small atomizer and sprayed some on both sides of her neck and then sprayed some in the air in Luthor’s direction so that when he turned he would be in the cloud. When he turned, he walked into the mist, but his mind was on what he had planned to do to gain his advantage, so other than wincing somewhat he didn’t pay any attention to what had just happened, and he handed her the glass.

Miranda proposed a toast, “To us.”

Miranda was watching for a reaction as they drank, but she could see no change.

Luthor was still trying to mine her for information. “I’m a bit concerned about the temporary nature of the perfume. Forty-eight hours isn’t much time.”

Miranda’s reply was gratifying, “I’m only using a one percent solution. In its purest form, ‘Revenge’ would cause a total and *permanent* breakdown of all inhibitions.”

Luthor smiled in satisfaction and said, “Excellent.”

Luthor collected her glass again and turned to pour them each yet another glass.

While his back was turned, Miranda moved over and put her arms around him from behind. He turned in her arms to face her.

Miranda said, “Lex, I had hoped that this would not just be a business partnership but more ... the way it once was between us.”

She was very disappointed when he said, “I think not, Miranda. I never mix business with other people’s pleasure.”

Miranda was surprised at his response. She had expected him to be falling all over her in a passion. She asked, “But now ... don’t you ... feel anything toward me?”

Luthor thought for a second, as if taking inventory and then said, “No, I don’t.” Seeing this turn of events, Luthor chose to cut his losses and end the interview, “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have a dinner date.”

Miranda was furious, “With Lois Lane?” Luthor’s reply just made her the more angry.

“Yes. That is assuming your potion has worn off and she will leave her country bumpkin partner behind. Nigel will see you out. We’ll talk tomorrow.”

Miranda was furious; her plan had failed. For some reason the potion was having a delayed action on Luthor. When she started to say something, she felt Nigel take her arm from behind. Once again she was being thrown out. Miranda was crushed, heartbroken. Luthor moved to the phone and dialed a number. He humored her as she left. “Just think, Miranda. Soon the world will bow to our discovery.”

Miranda railed at his use of the word ‘our’. Her reply was spiteful, “Yes, soon, Lex. Soon all of Metropolis will feel the pain of love spurned.”

Brooking no further delay, Nigel pulled her out through the door. Luthor stopped for a moment, wondering about her words, but quickly forgot what she had said.

That evening

As they were about to leave for the dinner, Clark stopped and canted his head to the side in that gesture that Lois had become so accustomed to. “What is it?”

“Silent alarm. That means a bank or a jewelry store.” He did a spin change into the Suit.

Just then the phone rang. Clark answered, “Kent residence.”

It was Perry on the other end, “Clark, we just had a tip. Harrad’s Jewlers is going to be robbed tonight. For some reason the tipster mentioned you by name.”

“I’m on it, Chief.” He hung the phone up.

Lois quirked an eyebrow.

“An anonymous tip was called in about a robbery.”

“Awfully convenient, if you ask me.” As he was leaving, Lois said, “I’ll call and cancel.”

Clark paused on his way to the balcony and said, “No, go ahead. Let’s not disappoint Luthor. Let him think his little ploy worked. I’ll join you as quickly as I can. Go get the interview.”

After Clark left, Lois climbed into her Jeep and drove to Lex Tower. After parking she entered the lobby and saw Nigel waiting for her. He escorted her around the corner to the private elevators. The door to one stood open waiting for them. They entered, and Nigel pressed the button for the top floor. After several minutes the doors opened to reveal Luthor’s penthouse.

“Ah, good evening, my dear.” Looking around making it look as if he had no idea as to the cause, he said, “I thought that Mr. Kent was going to accompany you.”

“He had to go report on a story at the last second. As soon as he is finished, he will be joining us.”

He held out his hand in invitation directing Lois to move to the balcony. After she had passed him, he moved next to Nigel and said, “Go back down. If Kent shows up, prevent him from coming up. Do whatever is necessary.”

Nigel patted his left side just under his arm pit as he replied, “I understand, sir.” He nodded and turned back to the elevator. As the doors closed behind him, Luthor turned and moved to the balcony to join Lois.

Lois was standing on the balcony of Lex’s penthouse, looking out over the city, the lights twinkling below. She sighed and said, “It’s lovely up here Lex.” Meanwhile she was thinking, <Almost as pretty as when Clark takes me flying, but then there’s nothing that can compare with that.>

Lex escorted her to a table and seated her as he said, “I never was much for crowded restaurants. I prefer to eat alone ... present company excepted.”

Lois noted that there were actually three places set. “Clark said not to wait for him. He’ll be here as soon as he can be.”

Lifting her fork, Lois delicately took some salad. She noticed that Luthor was staring at her rather than eating his own salad.

As she was lifting her hand, she noticed that he was staring at her in a way which he had never stared at her before, and it made her uncomfortable. Lois was wishing that Clark would arrive. She asked, “Lex, are you feeling okay?”

His reply didn’t really answer her question. “Of course. I am *never* sick. I just ... don’t think I ever noticed your eyes before. How rich, how deep, like dark pools of light. A man could drown in those pools.”

Lois was concerned; this was not like Lex. His attempts at being romantic ... ‘dark pools of light’ indeed. He was definitely coming on to her. Clark had definitely been right. <I need to keep mentioning Clark. Maybe he’ll get the hint.> “Uh, thank you. Clark likes my eyes too.”

At the mention of Clark, Luthor released her hand and tried to shake the feelings of jealousy that came over him. He prided himself on his control. His control was what enabled him to manipulate people so successfully, and he could feel that control slipping. He picked up his fork, sampled the salad, and then finding it insufficient distraction, reached for and poured some wine.

As a way to move the conversation away from the direction it had started to take and provide an opening to ask about Miranda, Lois was gesturing with her hands as she said, “Things have been utterly crazy at the Planet. You wouldn’t believe ...”

As she started to speak, Lex stopped pouring the wine and set the bottle back in its bucket.

She was becoming concerned about his sanity as he started staring at her, almost *through* her. This time he picked up her right hand and looked closely at it. Lois found herself wishing that it had been her left hand so that her wedding ring would have been there to discourage him.

As if mesmerized, Luthor said, "Your hands."

Taken aback, Lois asked, "What's wrong with my hands?"

Luthor replied, "They're so graceful. So delicate. Like fine porcelain." He got a faraway look in his eyes as he started to quote, "'Imprison her soft hand and let her rave ... and feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes ...'"

Taking her hand back, Lois said, "You're acting very strange tonight, Lex." With a slight chuckle she added, "How many glasses of wine did you have before I came?" <I wonder what is wrong with him. He didn't act like this before. I don't know whether to feel flattered or frightened. If I didn't know better ... his next statement gave her pause.> Lois had a nagging feeling that she should know what was happening.

Defensively Luthor replied, "None. I never drink alone. And I am never drunk. I am always in control. Complete ..." He moved his chair closer before he continued, "You ... are ... the ... most beautiful creature I have ever seen."

Pulling back from him trying to give herself some distance, Lois said, "I'm happy to say that I think that Clark would agree with you. I wonder what's holding him up. He should have been here by now. I wanted to start the interview." <I need to get this on more of a business footing, less personal.>

"Forget about that bumpkin. I'm here, you're here. Let's not waste any more time." He reached for her hand again.

Lois snatched her hand away as he reached for it and jumped out of her chair. Luthor stood and followed her as she backed away. After only a couple of steps, Lois backed into the banister around the balcony which halted her retreat. When she found that her retreat was cut off, she said almost under her breath, "Clark, where are you? I need you, Clark! Hurry up, will you?"

Seeing his prey stymied by the banister, he made a clumsy lunge for her.

Lois sidestepped and Luthor crashed into the banister. Turning his head he saw her standing a few feet away.

She had assumed a karate fighting stance and was prepared to do battle if necessary until Clark arrived, either as Clark or as Superman.

Suddenly Lois heard the doors of the elevator opening.

Clark had arrived on scene just as the robber was trying to make his getaway.

Seeing Superman, the robber pulled out his gun and started to shoot. Superman's hands became blurs as they went into motion, snagging slugs out of the air. There were too many bystanders to allow the bullets to bounce off of his chest. Someone could be hurt by the ricochet. When his ammo was expended the thief dropped his gun and put his hands up.

Picking him up by the scruff of the neck, Superman turned him over to the MPD Officers that had just driven up in a patrol car.

While one of the officers read the perp his rights, the other put the cuffs on him.

Once he was in the back of the car, one of the officers took Superman's statement.

Once this was recorded and Superman had signed he flew off.

Nigel had been waiting for Kent. He knew that he should have some time because the location of the heist was all the way across town. <Mr. Luthor should have all of the time he needs.> He was surprised when suddenly through the glass window he

saw Kent looking in and waving. <How did he manage to get here so quickly? Mr. Luthor is not going to like this. Oh well. He will need to be delayed.> He frowned and watched as Kent then turned and strode through the doors into the lobby.

As he approached, Nigel said, "Ms. Lane stated that you would be delayed. We were not expecting you this soon."

"I ran into Superman at the robbery, and he offered to give me a lift."

With a quick movement that would rival a slight-of-hand expert, Nigel produced a small caliber automatic. He said, "That is most unfortunate, for you. Mr. Luthor does not wish to be disturbed. I've been directed to take you back to the Planet because your presence it not wanted. I'm sorry, but I cannot take no for an answer."

Unfortunately for Nigel, Clark was close. With a swift movement Clark pushed against the barrel and slide of Nigel's weapon, knocking it out of alignment relative to the hammer called being 'out of battery' and making the weapon unable to fire. Wrapping his hand around the slide and receiver group, he kept the weapon inoperative and twisting his hand he removed the weapon from Nigel's grip. As he was doing this, he planted his right fist under Nigel's chin, lifting him a couple of inches into the air. A second later Nigel fell in a heap to the floor unconscious.

Clark jacked back the slide to eject the round from the breech, locked it open, and ejected the magazine. After removing the rounds from the magazine, he tossed them into a far corner. They sounded like pebbles being thrown across a road as the skittered across the floor. Then he removed a wooden #2 pencil from his pocket, and after jamming it into the breach, he broke it off, leaving the end in the breech. Then he put the empty magazine back in the butt, allowed the slide to slam forward, and then dropped the useless weapon on Nigel's ample stomach. To outward appearances the weapon was just as it had been, however until the pencil stub was removed, it wouldn't chamber a round. Clark said to the unconscious form, "Sorry, but I'm going up whether you or Lex like it or not."

Clark turned to the bank of elevators. He pushed a button, but there was no response. He puzzled about this briefly, then sliding his glasses down his nose, examined the plate closely. He noticed a card slot.

Nodding his understanding, he turned to Nigel and X-rayed him. Seeing a card in an inner jacket pocket, he reached in and lifted it out.

As he straightened up, he heard Lois, faintly, "Clark, where are you? I need you, Clark! Hurry up, will you?"

After sliding the card into the slot, he hit the button, and the doors slid open. Pulling out the card, he entered the car, and seeing another slot in the panel, he slid it in and pushed the button for the top floor.

His anxiety increased because of the speed of the elevator. It was an express, but it was still too slow for his liking.

Chapter 10

Lex didn't hear the elevator and lunged for her again. Lois avoided his grasp by jumping to the side and giving him a snap kick to the knee as he passed. She shouted, "Lex! Have you lost your mind? I'm a married woman!"

Lex howled in pain from the kick. He stumbled and twisted in an attempt to capture her. He was clumsy because of his knee injury, and she was able to side-step again. As she did, she brought her left fist around and caught him on the right cheek, gouging a track in it with her wedding ring. Lex reached up and touched his cheek; his fingers came away covered with blood. Between that pain and her statement, he was shocked to a semblance of sobriety. He stumbled to a halt, groped for a chair

for its support because of the kick she had delivered to the side of his knee, and said bewildered, “Married?”

Lois held up her left hand to display her blood-covered wedding ring and said, “Yes, married! I’m married to Clark Kent!” She thought, <I hope it leaves a scar.> She dropped back quickly into a defensive stance.

Just then Clark exited the private elevator and strode across the floor to stand between Lois and Lex. Looking back and forth between them, he saw that Luthor had been the one on the receiving end. <That’s my girl!> He said in a menacing tone, “I don’t *appreciate* men making *passes* at *my wife*. I’m *warning* you, Luthor, *leave ... my ... wife ... alone!* If you don’t, I just might not be there to rescue you the next time.” He snickered.

The look in Kent’s eyes was fierce. Lex had never seen the mild mannered reporter so angry, and he quailed inside at his baleful expression. He didn’t know who to fear more, Kent or Lois. Lex was so stunned and even scared that his knees went weak, and he collapsed into the chair he had been holding onto for support.

Clark held out his hand to Lois and in a softer tone said, “Come on Lois, we’re leaving. Goodnight, *Mr.* Luthor.”

Luthor watched in despair as hand-in-hand Lois and Clark walked to the elevator and left. Once the doors had closed behind them, Luthor reached for the bottle of wine and poured a glass. After quaffing it in two swallows, he poured more. He didn’t stop until he had finished the bottle, breaking his rule of never drinking alone.

An hour later the elevator doors opened once again. This time Nigel came stumbling out, rubbing his jaw ruefully.

As soon as Lex spotted him, he challenged, “I thought I told you to keep Kent away.”

“Begging you pardon, sir, but I tried. I had my gun on him, but unfortunately I fell prey to an old trick.”

“What trick was that?”

“He jammed the slide back taking the gun out of battery. It wouldn’t fire. Then he ... he clipped me. He is stronger than he appears. Must be all of those years growing up on a farm. He knocked me out.”

Hearing this, Lex turned back to what he had been doing which was flying \$1000 bills into a fire on the hearth.

Nigel concerned at Lex’s melancholy attitude asked, “Sir, is everything all right?”

Lex continued flipping bills into the fire as he replied, “No. Nigel. Something terrible has happened. Something catastrophic.”

Nigel offered, “The collapse of the world market?”

Disconsolately Lex replied, “No, Nigel. Worse. Far ... far worse.” Lex turned from his contemplation of the burning bills and dropped the remaining handful of \$1000 bills on a table. Because of his damaged knee, he limped over to the balcony, and Nigel followed.

Luthor stood contemplating the cityscape for a few brief moments before he continued, “Not like you or any other average person perhaps, but in my own strange and perverted sort of way, I’ve ... succumbed. I’m in love. Hopelessly, eternally. I’m in love with Lois Lane.”

“Lois Lane, sir? She could be trouble. Are you sure?”

With a rueful shake of his head, Luthor replied, “Yes, I’m sure.”

Nigel tried to mitigate the situation, “It’s the perfume, sir. Your mind is clouded.”

Luthor limped over to a chair and with a wince of pain collapsed onto it, “No, Nigel. I’m *really* in love. I’m in love with a married woman.”

“Married, sir?”

Shaking his head in mortification, Lex replied, “Yes, Nigel, married. Married to that country bumpkin, Kent.”

“Begging your pardon, sir, when has that ever been a problem in the past?”

As Luthor contemplated Nigel’s question, he started to smile, and it wasn’t a pretty smile.

Miranda had not been happy with the results of her latest encounter with Lex. Her plan to use ‘Revenge’ on him had been a miserable failure. She kept going over it in her mind, trying to determine just what had gone wrong. She had seen him walk right into the cloud of mist from the atomizer. He had even actually reacted to the scent slightly. Was it possible that he was just so driven to be in total control that he was able to overcome the effects? Perhaps she should try again using a higher concentration. Surely he couldn’t resist a ten percent solution.

Perhaps it wasn’t his rigid control that had defeated her potion. Perhaps it was his metabolic rate. Maybe the effects had simply been delayed. If that were the case then if she had been able to remain with him longer, she might have realized her goal, but how long would have been long enough? Minutes ... hours?

Then the thought hit her. What if it had been hours, and it had kicked in while *she* was there with him? He would be even more infatuated with her than he had been previously. “Grrrrrrr.” She growled at that thought in imitation of Drau. Something would need to be done about this and soon, before she lost her last chance with Lex.

Drau had heard her when she growled and approaching her started rubbing against her legs in affection. Miranda bent down and picked Drau up and absent-mindedly started stroking her silky fur. The comfort of her cat was a poor substitute for Lex, and the more she thought about it the more jealous and angry she became.

She came to the conclusion that she would have her revenge on Luthor, but she would have it on the rest of the people of Metropolis as well and especially Lois Lane. She was now determined; the only problem was how.

A copy of the Planet lay open on her counter. She realized that it was the same one she had taken from Luthor’s office the other day. An article by her arch enemy caught her eye. The headline said, “Fruit Fly Spraying to Continue.”

Miranda read the entire article, and a plan started to form in her mind. Putting Drau down and taking a pair of scissors from a drawer, she cut out the article and tacked it up over her workbench. As the full plan started to crystallize, she began to smile.

After arranging some carboys on her workbench, she went over to a locked cabinet which she opened by taking the key from a chain around her neck and started removing bottles. Each was labeled — Revenge — 100% solution. She lined the bottles up on her workbench near the carboy. Once she had all of the bottles placed on the bench, she started opening them one at a time and pouring the contents into the carboy using a funnel.

A few drops spilled down the side of one of the bottles and Drau, displaying a cat’s normal curiosity, sauntered over and licked it up.

Attracted by Drau’s meow, Miranda picked up the cat and said, “Not now, Drau. That’s not for you.”

Miranda carried Drau over and placed her into a pet carrier. Turning back to her task, she was shocked when she heard Drau literally scream and then heard a rending crash and the snap of metal breaking. Turning around, Miranda saw that the front door of metal bars of the animal carrier has been opened as if by an explosion inside, and Drau was nowhere to be seen.

Suddenly there was another rending crash as one of the back windows was shattered, and then Miranda heard Drau’s mating howl. Looking down and seeing what Drau had been licking at,

she realized what it was and knew just what had happened. She spoke to herself, “That should do nicely!” A few seconds later she was singing “Love is in the air”.

Finished with her task, Miranda turned to the article, and as if it were her adversary, she picked up the scissors and stabbed it right through the “Lois Lane” byline.

The next morning things and people were back to normal in the newsroom. Even Jimmy seemed to have recovered from the exposure; at least he wasn’t trying to borrow money to buy presents for April any longer.

Perry called for the morning staff meeting, and everyone was filing in, Lois and Clark near the rear of the pack. Everyone had a cup of coffee in hand, and some were still acting hung-over.

Over her shoulder Lois said sotto voce, “I still can’t believe that Lex acted that way. It was almost like he had been exposed to that stuff Miranda was spraying around.”

“That would only make sense if there was more to their relationship than Lexcorp funding her research. She would have had to be there with him.”

Jimmy interrupted their discussion by entering and handing Lois a note. “This was just delivered for you.”

“Thanks, Jimmy,” she said automatically. Then she asked, “Hey, how are you doing?”

With a self-conscious smile, he replied, “Back to normal. Just plain old Jimmy.”

Lois opened the note and read it. She showed it to Clark. It read, “Dear Lois, if you want to know everything about ‘Revenge’, I will speak to you alone woman to woman. Meet me at Metropolis airport.” Clark looked up at her with a question in his eyes.

Lois shrugged and said, “Something must have happened.”

“I wonder why the airport. Could she be planning to leave?”

Just then Perry entered and sat at the head of the table. As he sat, he was shuffling through a sheaf of papers that he had carried in.

Rehalia entered to empty the trash. Seeing her enter a hush fell over the room. All eyes were on Perry and Rehalia. When she entered, not a word was exchanged, but they did exchange polite nods as she went about her business.

Clark leaned over to Perry and said, “I assume that everything is ...”

“She dropped the lawsuit.”

“And Alice?”

Perry replied, “Let me back in. On a trial basis.” Looking around hoping that Lois wasn’t listening in he continued, “Son, don’t ever beg a woman to take you back. Chances are, they will.”

Clark chuckled and said, “I don’t plan to do anything that would make Lois kick me out.”

Feeling that he needed to reestablish his ascendancy, he looked around at all of the coffee drinking, donut eating staffers and said, “What is this, the Betty Crocker bake off? Let’s get started. Lois, thanks for the fruit fly re-write. Now you and Clark are working on that pheromone thing, right?”

Jimmy was moving to a seat when he heard the elevator arrive. He looked up to see April exit and head for Cat’s desk. Sighing to himself and feeling like a condemned man heading to his doom, he stood back up and moved toward the door.

Perry stopped him and asked, “Where in Sam Hill do you think you’re going?”

Jimmy shrugged and inclining his head in April’s direction said, “I gotta go, Chief. I gotta talk to her.”

Perry was irate, but Jimmy completely ignored him when he said, “Not on my time you don’t.”

As Jimmy exited, Perry exploded, “Jimmy! Blast that kid.”

The marriage to Clark was still new, and Lois still resented

all of those times that Cat had tried to hit on Clark. He had reassured her over and over that nothing had happened between them, but Lois could still be a little catty where it came to Catherine Grant. Trying to mask it as research for the article they were working on, she turned to her favorite adversary and asked, “How much of that stuff did you get sprayed with? You became pretty insatiable even for, well, *you*.”

Cat’s expression was one of total mystification as she replied, “I don’t know what you’re talking about. I *never* got sprayed.” She looked around to see if she could achieve enlightenment, but getting none said, “But, I know a good excuse when I hear one.”

Perry wanted to start the meeting but just couldn’t help launching into an Elvis anecdote, “You know, this whole experience reminds me when Elvis first laid eyes on Priscilla. She was only a girl, but ...” Seeing Jimmy out of the corner of his eye he was distracted and said, “Whoa Nellie...”

Jimmy was approaching April rather diffidently. As he approached, he said, “April, I wanted to explain ...”

April retorted, “No explanation necessary. I meet creeps like you every day.”

Jimmy interrupted her with a gesture and said, “But that’s the point. I’m not a creep. I’m Jimmy Olsen, would-be famous photojournalist. All around nice guy. All around ... nobody. I’m sorry I came on to you like that. I wasn’t ... myself.”

Jimmy was taken aback by her response as she started to smile at him. She said, “You know, it’s too bad.”

“What?”

April stood and approached Jimmy as she said, “Well, for a nobody, you’re kinda cute.”

The staff meeting had been interrupted by what was happening, and the staff had poured out of the conference room to watch. April saw them over Jimmy’s shoulder. Making up her mind, she grabbed the front of Jimmy’s shirt with both hands and pulled him toward herself. She planted her lips on his in a slow sensual kiss, lingering just a bit to make sure that the crowd would see. When she released him, Jimmy was in an altered state of consciousness and just stood there with a dreamy expression on his face. April looked over at Cat and said, “Later,” picked up her bag and headed for the elevator.

When Jimmy finally came to, he had a dumbfounded grin on his face, and when he turned, the staff erupted into applause and cheers.

They all returned to the interrupted meeting with Perry clapping Jimmy on the back as he passed him.

Chapter 11

Lex, after conferring with Nigel about the Lois Lane situation, had passed out in his easy chair. The combination of the alcohol, the perfume, and the shock of learning that Lois was married, to of all people, Kent, had been too much. He awoke when Nigel approached. “Good morning, sir. We thought it best not to wake you when you dozed off.” Nigel indicated a large basin and pitcher of water for Luthor to use to freshen up.

Surprised Luthor queried, “I slept here all night?”

“Yes, sir. Was I wrong to ...”

“No. That’s quite all right.”

“I must admit, I’m a little foggy about last night. Something about ... Lois.”

Getting up and approaching the bowl, Luthor held out his hands while Nigel poured out the water. After splashing some water on his face, he realized that his right cheek stung rather fiercely. He probed it with his fingers and felt the gash. A dim memory of the altercation came back to him, and he waited for Nigel to hand him a towel.

As he splashed more water on his face, a memory returned. He vaguely remembered hearing an atomizer behind him when

Miranda had been there. Then her cryptic words, “All of Metropolis will know the pain of love.

Suddenly her intent crystallized in his mind, and he knew what he had to do. “Send for my valet. I need to dress and leave immediately.”

“To the boardroom, Sir?”

“No. To the Daily Planet. I have to find him.”

Nigel was in a quandary, “Who?”

Luthor almost spat the name, “Superman.” Luthor left in haste.

A short time later the staff meeting was over, and Lois and Clark were at their desks. Clark said, “I think I should go with you.”

“No, I’ll be okay. It would probably spook her if you were there with me. What can she do to me? I have my brown belt remember?”

“I still don’t like it. I could hover out of sight.”

“I’ll be okay. We are expecting more from Doctor Ferguson on that analysis. You should be here when that comes in.” She leaned in and gave him a quick kiss, “Besides, if I need you all I have to do is shout.”

A short time later Lois pulled the Jeep to a halt outside a hanger on the back side of the airport in the civil aviation section.

On the apron outside the hanger, a bi-wing crop duster sat waiting. Scattered around were barrels labeled ‘Malathion’, evidence that this aircraft was to be used for the fruit fly spray which had been scheduled.

Turning off the engine, Lois exited her vehicle and started looking for Miranda. Raising her voice, she called, “Miranda? I’m here!”

Miranda suddenly appeared out of the shadows. It was almost as if she had materialized from thin air because she was wearing a black jumpsuit, leather jacket, and helmet complete with goggles. The only things breaking the color scheme were her slightly flushed complexion, her blond hair, and the white aviator’s scarf that hung around her neck. She looked like a female Baron von Richthofen.

Miranda smiled an enigmatic smile and said, “Lois. Good of you to come. I have everything all ready for you.”

Lois was mystified, “Ready?”

Miranda replied in a matter-of-fact tone, “Yes. Of course it was rather difficult replacing the ‘Malathion’ with my formula.”

Still mystified Lois said, “I don’t understand.”

Miranda was starting to drop the veneer of civility as she replied, “No, dear, you don’t. But soon you will. Then you’ll die slowly, painfully.” Miranda glanced to the side and drew Lois’s eyes in that direction. As Lois looked away, Miranda sprayed her with a concoction in an atomizer and said, “Love hurts.”

Miranda drawing Lois’s attention to the workmen had been a ploy to distract her so that she could use her spray. When Lois looked to the side, she saw several workmen and a pilot lying unconscious on the ground. She turned back to Miranda, who had taken out a different atomizer from her pocket and sprayed Lois, who started to cough.

Choking Lois asked, “Why me?”

Lois felt weak, too weak to even shout for Clark, and fell to the floor. As Lois was losing consciousness, Miranda knelt next to her and said, “Just jealous, I guess. If I can’t have Lex, nobody can.”

Lois didn’t have enough consciousness left to tell Miranda that she didn’t want Lex. It would probably have been irrelevant anyhow. Miranda had seen that Lex wanted Lois, and that was enough.

Miranda used a handy rope to tie Lois’s hands together at the wrists. As she was tying Lois’s hands, she spotted her wedding

ring. Miranda thought, <Now he’s going after married women. Cad.> Then she grabbed a control for a chain hoist used in removing engines from aircraft when maintenance was being performed. She lowered the hook and slipped it through the ropes which bound Lois. Miranda pressing the up button caused the hoist to lift Lois into the air. Next she dollied the hoist over a large vat of toxic chemicals. She set the control for a slow descent and dropped the control. As she did she sprinted for the crop duster. Starting the engine, she taxied away from the apron and radioed the tower for take-off permission, citing the Malathion spray and requesting priority.

Luthor hastened into the Daily Planet building as soon as the door of the limo was opened. He fretted at the speed of the antiquated elevator, worried that he would not be in time. After an interminable time the doors finally opened, and he flung himself out. He was looking for Lois because he knew that she was the one closest to the superhero. He scanned the bullpen to no avail. He decided that the best he could do was leave her a note. He descended the ramp and headed for her desk.

As Luthor approached, Clark intercepted him.

In a challenging tone Luthor asked, “Where’s Lois?”

Clark noted the bandage on Luthor’s cheek and smiled at Lois’s handiwork. “It’s not really any of your business, Luthor.”

Luthor’s tone changed. He still didn’t remember everything from the previous night with any clarity. “I wanted to apologize for my behavior last night.”

Clark’s curiosity was piqued, “What behavior was that?”

Agitated Luthor continued, “That’s not important now. The important thing is ... Miranda.”

“Ah, you *do* know her.”

“Yes. She was working under my auspices. Last night she sprayed me with her pheromone compound to make me fall in love with her, but it backfired. It didn’t take effect right away and somehow when Lois came in ...”

Lois hadn’t given Clark any detail, shrugging it off as nothing of any consequence. Clark was anxious to hear Luthor’s side of it. “What exactly went on last night?”

Luthor was becoming desperate, “Again, that’s *not* important*. The important thing is we have to get to Superman.”

Hearing this, Clark became very anxious. In order for Luthor to ask for Superman, it had to be something really serious. Incredulously Clark blurted out, “Superman?”

“Yes. He’s the only one who can stop her. The entire city is in danger. Yesterday Miranda made a threat. I believe she’s planning on releasing her ‘Revenge’ all over Metropolis. Can you imagine ... an entire city in love?”

Clark was somewhat nonchalant as he replied, “At least it wears off in forty-eight hours.”

Luthor restrained himself from grabbing Kent’s lapels and shaking him as he said, “Not if she uses the 100% percent solution. That’s permanent.”

Having seen first-hand the results of this potion even in its weakened form, Clark was appalled at the possible consequences of what could be happening. “Emotions run wild. Love turns to despair, depression, hatred ...”

Luthor added, “Sodom and Gomorrah, a city without restraint.”

Clark finished for him, “Without morality.” He thought for a second and said, “I’ll fax the police, give them Miranda’s description, then get to Superman ... somehow.”

Luthor continued to stand there as Clark ran off to another section of the newsroom and out of sight.

While he stood there, not knowing what else to do, Jimmy came by, and pointing at his watch said, “Almost four. Make sure to get those pets inside.”

In a distracted way Lex said, “What?”

Jimmy replied, “The fruit fly spraying. Starts at four. It’ll be all over the city.”

Luthor nodded in acknowledgement, and then suddenly he knew. He was sure that he knew what Miranda had planned. Turning he raced for the elevator.

Superman was over the city desperately searching for Miranda. He was apprehensive because Lois was supposed to be meeting her. In his anxiety he had forgotten the note, but finally he remembered the airport and headed in that direction.

Lois slowly came back to consciousness and found herself hanging by her wrists. She was still somewhat disoriented and looked around. She perceived that she was slowly dropping down and looking down saw that her feet were nearing the surface of what looked like a brown liquid in a large vat. There was a sign on the wall which read, “Bye Lois. Have a nice, *slow* death. Love, Miranda.” There were noxious vapors emanating from the surface looking for all the world like steam. All she could think to do was scream, “*SUPERMAN!!!!!!*”

Clark had been nearing the airport when he heard Lois’ scream. He put on a burst of speed and followed her voice.

Clark surveyed the situation as he landed. Stepping over to the vat he pushed it out from under Lois then he floated up until he could hold her. He lifted her up, taking the strain off of her arms. Using one hand he unhooked the hoist and then floated them back to the floor. Her arms, still bound at the wrists, automatically found their way around his neck. After landing he brought her hands down and snapped the rope, freeing her hands which immediately went back around his neck. Superman asked, “Are you all right?”

“I am now, but ... the plane! She’s going to spray the city!”

Just then Lex pulled up in his limo with a police escort ahead and behind.

Nodding to Lois, Superman leaped into the air. Lois moved out of the hanger; she had her hand up, shading her eyes from the sun’s glare as she joined Lex and the police as they looked skyward.

As chases go, this one was a disappointment. The crop-duster had a maximum speed of around a hundred miles an hour while Superman can travel at many times the speed of sound. Within seconds Superman was beside the plane and grabbing the wing so that he could guide it back to the runway. He was being careful because of the fragile nature of the aircraft.

Miranda felt the controls twitch as he grabbed the plane and looked to her right. When she saw Superman her face contorted in anger, and she reached for the spray release lever and yanked it open.

Seeing the plume of spray start to come out of the spray nozzles, Superman reacted by bending each one, crimping it so that it was blocked. He then dropped back to the area that the plane had already covered and inhaled, swallowing the vapor that had already been released.

Miranda’s anger at being foiled in her plan was evident as she yanked at the controls trying to get away from Superman.

In order to make Miranda more amenable to direction, Superman blew a brief burst of the vapor he had inhaled in Miranda’s face. As soon as he did this, her countenance changed drastically. Yanking off her goggles, she asked in a dreamy tone, “Superman, where are you going?”

Superman replied, “Why don’t you follow me?”

She sighed and said, “Anywhere.”

Superman led her back to the runway, and true to her word, she followed him. She taxied her plane all the way to the apron in front of the hanger where the police were waiting for her.

What Clark hadn’t counted on was the fact that some of the ‘Revenge’ cloud that he had inhaled had gotten on his Suit. Lois

and Luthor were both standing down-wind of him when he landed, and the material was carried in their direction. They had both been sensitized by the previous exposures.

Lois rushed over to him, and when she was near, she said, “Superman... it’s lucky that stuff doesn’t have any effect on you ... or does it?” She snaked her arms up around his neck.

Clark could see the same expression in her eyes and face that he had seen when she was under the influence of the spray and realized that he had it on his Suit. Seeing how his cape was flapping, he realized that she had been downwind of him; therefore she must have received another dose of the stuff, and now she was even closer. He also realized that she couldn’t distinguish between Clark and Superman when under the influence of the spray, so he took her hands in his and said, “Lois, I know that we are friends, but you *are* married now to another friend of mine, Clark Kent. Tell you what, I’ll find Clark and bring him to you.”

She was looking at him with a dreamy expression, and he was afraid that she would say something to give him away. He had to get out of there so that Clark could show up.

Luthor was standing there watching. He couldn’t believe what he was seeing. Superman was holding the woman he loved, and there was nothing he could do about it. He muttered, “Oh, no. Lois, don’t ...”

Lois was now firmly under the influence of the spray and said, “Oh, Superman. Must you go? I love you.”

Luthor looked on thoroughly disgusted.

Speaking more to himself than anyone nearby, Luthor said, “I may throw up.”

As the police were leading her away, Miranda called out, “Don’t let them take me! I love you, Superman. No, wait, I love *you* Lex. Will you wait for me?”

Luthor actually looked like he was considering her request for a second before he said, “No.”

As the police were putting Miranda into a squad car, Luthor addressed Superman, “Will Miranda be permanently ...?”

Turning to Luthor, Superman said, “No, I diluted it. It’ll wear off ... soon. Now if you’ll excuse me, I have things to do. Lois, I will get Clark, and he will be here shortly.”

As the police drove off, Superman took to the air.

Seeing a clear field, Luthor moved over to Lois. “Lois, my love. Come away with me. I’ll take you anywhere you want. We can start in Reno so that you can get a divorce from Kent.”

Just then Clark came running up rounding the corner of the hanger.

Spotting him, Luthor thrust Lois behind him and reaching into his jacket pulled out a wicked looking chrome-plated automatic. He shouted, “Kent, you are in my way!”

As he drew a bead on Clark’s chest, Lois raised her hands above her head and lacing her fingers together brought her combined fists down on Luthor’s forearm.

Luthor howled in pain and dropped the weapon. Clark closed with him and delivered an uppercut which put him out.

A squad car pulled up just then. It was part of the forensics team, and they were coming to collect evidence. They caught the tail end of the action. Jumping out of their car, they were about to arrest Clark for assault when Lois stopped them. She pointed out Luthor’s gun and said, “Luthor threatened Clark. Clark was acting in self-defense.”

Clark added, “I’m sure the tapes from the security cameras will back up my story.” He pointed out the camera mounted high on the front of the hanger. “Please tell Bill Henderson that I will be pressing charges of Assault, Assault With Intent to Kill and Assault With a Deadly Weapon. I’ll be in to sign the papers as soon as I see my wife safely home.”

They put cuffs on Luthor to Clark’s unparalleled delight and called for another car.

Lois was hanging on Clark's arm and nipping at his earlobe as he led her back to the Jeep. They got in, and Clark drove away.

When they got back to the apartment, Clark called the Planet. "Perry White," came the gruff voice of the editor over the phone.

"Chief, it's Lois and Clark. We have the story on the spray. I'll be typing it up and sending it to you shortly. I think Lois and I need to take some time off."

Suspiciously Perry asked, "What's going on?"

"Well, Chief, you see it's this way. Miranda was going to spray the entire city."

Thinking about how he had personally been affected by the spray, Perry said in a musing tone, "Incredible. Love without boundaries, without insecurities or hang-ups or reasoning. You could be swept off your feet by just about... anybody. Why would she be planning to do that?"

"I think it is reflected in the name she gave her potion... 'Revenge'. Apparently she knew Luthor, perhaps intimately, and he had now rejected her. She wanted to get back at him and was willing to take revenge on the entire city to get him."

"Wow, what a twisted mind."

"You know what they say, Chief."

"Right, 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned'."

"Now that you mention it, I don't want to suffer Lois' wrath. Lois has been exposed to that spray again. I think I need to get her away until it wears off. It should only be a few days, but I've been thinking, maybe it's time we took our honeymoon."

"Well, if that's all it is. Once you file the story, take a week."

"Oh, and Chief. Luthor's in jail."

"What?!?!?!? What for?"

"He pulled a gun on me. I'm leaving now to go fill out the complaint. I want him in jail. He acted under the influence of Miranda's spray, so his lawyers will be able to get him off with a slap on the wrist, but I think he'll be in jail overnight at least."

"What is it with you and people pulling guns on you?"

Chuckling Clark said, "I don't know, but it looks like a trend. It was Lois that disarmed him. I think I need her to start teaching me some karate."

He could hear the smile in Perry's voice as he said, "That's my girl. Sure sounds like you need her watching your back. This makes two times."

Clark smiled, thinking about all of the times that Lois had saved him and not just from gunmen. She had saved him when he had thought about quitting being Superman when she had pointed out that whatever he could do had to be enough, and he should stop beating himself up over the fact that he couldn't save everyone every time. "Yeah, Chief. That makes two, but who's counting. Bye, Chief. See you in a week."

"Bye, Clark. Take care of our girl."

"I will, Chief. I will."

Clark turned to Lois and said, "Honey, why don't you pack for our trip. I have to go see Bill Henderson. As soon as I'm back, we'll leave."

Lois put her arms around his neck and kissed him. "Hurry back, I miss you already."

"I'll get back just as quickly as I can."

He turned her in the direction of the bedroom and said, "Just concentrate on packing and you won't miss me so much. Just think about our trip."

Clark landed in an alley near the Twelfth Precinct and spun into his Clark clothes. He walked into the precinct and saw Bill Henderson talking with the desk sergeant. Walking up he said, "Hi, Bill."

Bill looked at him and glared. "Do you realize what you've done to me? Luthor is threatening legal action for false imprisonment and false arrest. He also said something about

charging *you* with assault."

With a mollifying gesture Clark said, "Pull the security tape. That will prove what happened. It was just as we described it to the police at the scene. Please, Bill, do this as a favor to me. His lawyers will be able to get him off because he was under the influence of Miranda's spray, but they won't be able to mount that defense immediately. In the mean time I want him in jail." Clark looked around and seeing others nearby pulled Bill away to a more secluded area. "Confidentially I think there's more to Lex Luthor than billionaire philanthropist. I think he's a very crafty crook."

In his usual sardonic tone Bill replied, "I really don't see how anyone in big business can avoid participating in at least some criminal activity."

"I intend to investigate Luthor and expose him for what he truly is. A couple of days in jail will give him a taste of what's in his future."

"You're serious about those charges?"

"Very. If Lois hadn't been there, he would have shot me."

"Okay, it's your funeral."

After signing the complaints, Clark left and minutes later joined Lois in the apartment. He picked up the phone and called Smallville. When his mother answered, he said, "Hi, Mom. Got room at the table for a couple of guests for a day or two?"

"Clark, honey, you know that you and Lois are always welcome. We're having pot roast for dinner. I'll set two extra places."

As he hung up, Clark was thinking, <Maybe we could take a day or two and enjoy the luxury of the honeymoon suite at the Lexor. Perhaps after the spray has worn off, we can come back and check in there.>

THE END