

A Quiet Night in Metropolis

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Rated: G

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Summary: This vignette is the final story in my "Visitor" series, which follows *A Wedding in Paris*. Lois has some exciting news to tell Clark, but she wants to do it in a special way.

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A/N: This is a vignette which follows *A Wedding in Paris*. Lois has some exciting news to tell Clark, but she wants to do it in a special way. Margaret Hart, one of the shop owners on Napier Avenue is taken from a brilliant short story called *The Three Rules* by Scarlett Burns. Ms. Burns has graciously allowed me to borrow the character for this story. As always, thanks to my betas: Andreia, KenJ and Mike. Special mention goes to Bobbart who started me on this journey and was a quiet encouragement throughout the process.

Legal Disclaimer: Only one of the characters is my own creation, the rest belong to December 3rd Productions and Scarlett Burns. This story was written for fun. Not profit.

Newsroom:

Lois hung up the phone, tidied her desk, looked over to Clark and said, "Honey, it's a pretty Friday night, the newsroom is quiet, why don't we leave early and walk home rather than take the Jeep? With winter coming, who knows how long it will be before we can enjoy taking a walk like this again? Besides, there are a few things I need to pick up from our favorite shops on Napier Avenue and after sitting all day we could use the exercise."

Clark smiled to himself; didn't Bernie Klein say something similar on his wedding day when their limo failed to arrive at his apartment? The two men ended up walking to the Town Hall, enjoying the Paris' sights as they went. All in all the walk did wonders for Bernie's nerves, allowing him to be a relaxed groom. So who was he to deny this simple pleasure of walking with his wife on a quiet late autumn night?

He shrugged and said, "Why not?" In a lower tone that only Lois could hear he whispered, "It's not as if you have to walk to lose weight, your Kryptonian metabolism will take care of that."

An odd expression danced over his wife's face and then she smirked and responded likewise. "Yeah, this Kryptonian metabolism is helping in a lot of ways ... I can indulge in a Double Fudge Crunch bar whenever I want! Come on, after we finish running my errands, we can have dinner at Uncle Mike's!"

Looking concerned, Clark said, "It is Friday night. Won't Café Americana be swamped with customers? Mike is gonna have his hands full."

"Maybe, but if he is, we can always do take out and walk home from there. I have it on good authority he's made a batch of chocolate cupcakes with cream cheese vanilla icing. Talk about heaven!" The contented smile that blossomed on Lois' face showed a strong craving to have at least one of those wickedly decadent cupcakes this evening.

Her husband shook his head in amusement and without

another word, packed up his desk for the weekend.

The Metropolis Book Nook:

As they walked through the streets, the rhythm of Metropolis seemed to have slowed. It was a Friday night and people were going home to have dinner with their families and looking forward to the weekend. For that reason alone people adjusted their pace, Clark being from the Midwest and having been raised around more even tempered folk had never been one to rush. His wife on the other hand was another matter. Sometimes when Lois walked ahead to peer into a shop window, Clark would hang back to admire his wife. She was wrapped in a long, camel-colored coat which clung to her slender body in just the right places and reminded him of how beautiful she was and just how fortunate he was to have married her.

After all the unpredictable events and amazing people that had come in and out of their lives since they had met, he could honestly say to anyone that asked, life could not get any better for them.

They entered Napier Avenue; it was a special street for both of them; a bookstore, yarn shop and, most of all her Uncle's great restaurant which sat prominently on the corner of Napier and Thirty-Third Street. Located on the cusp of what was once known as Suicide Slope, the street was the heart of a neighborhood renaissance. It also helped a great deal that UltraWoman made it a point to give this particular section of Metropolis her personal attention. Within a few months of her reappearance, the crime rate in the surrounding vicinity had taken a sharp nosedive.

With the help of community action groups and several companies, chief of which was MetroCorp, the original abandoned brownstones and storefronts had been restored and quickly occupied. The only building beyond saving had been torn down and after a short battle had been raged between City Hall and the community, the small patch of land had been converted into a park ... rather than an ugly steel parking structure.

Artisans, musicians and craftspeople were flocking to the area, providing new customers for the original businesses which had weathered the bad times and were now reaping the benefits of their determination to remain open.

They reached a brownstone, its façade scantily covered with vines. On the first floor was *The Metropolis Book Nook* which sold both new and used books. The store was run by an old friend of Clark's, Margaret Hart, who was one of the few people on Earth who knew the Kent family secret.

The middle-aged black woman had uncovered it completely by accident, but with a fair amount of brilliant detective work had discovered where Clark lived while he was recovering from exposure to a massive dose of Kryptonite poisoning. It was a low point in Clark's life, he and Lois were not on speaking terms so his heart and body had taken a terrible beating.

Over a cup of hot Oolong tea and warm blueberry muffins, she had gently confronted him with her knowledge and promised that the information would never be revealed to another soul. There was something about this woman who, although timid, possessed a strong sense of obligation to protect him as he had protected her on his first day in Metropolis. If he had not been there to stop a bus that had been running out of control, she would have been killed instantly.

When Clark had introduced Lois to Margaret shortly after their engagement, his fiancée had been at first cautious, but bit by bit was charmed by the older woman's friendly demeanor and motherly concern for Clark.

The store had several people milling about, Friday night was always busy, and customers browsed the shelves for old books, nervously waiting for dates or family members to show up before heading off to dinner or a movie.

Margaret was behind the counter, ringing up a sale for a

young Asian man with a serious appearance, he was purchasing books on Astronomy.

“Thank you Miss Hart, these books will help me finish up my paper for Professor Tyson. It would have taken the Metropolis library much longer to locate and send them to me.”

“So glad I could be of assistance Mr. Eng. Please let me know how your report turns out, and don’t forget to give my regards to Heather.”

A tiny smile creased the man’s face, than he said, “I shall. Goodnight.” Carefully, he put the old books into a dark green canvas messenger bag, pulled black leather gloves over his fingers and departed.

“Hello Margaret,” Clark said, “How goes the literary world’s latest star?”

Her brown eyes darted around the store, hoping that no one had heard Clark’s statement, than settled back on her latest customers. “Shh! The book isn’t out yet!”

“Yeah, but a mystery novel about a bookstore owner who does amateur sleuthing is right up your alley! Everyone should hear about it!” Lois said, giving her friend a mischievous wink.

She fluttered her hands as if to dismiss the fact that her long cherished dream of being a published author would soon become a reality. She bowed her gray head and said, quietly, “Maybe next month ... I don’t want to be too noisy about it. Let’s just see what the reading public thinks of the story and leave it at that.”

Clark shrugged, “OK Margaret, but we are still proud of you!”

“It’s always a privilege to have the Daily Planet’s hottest reporting team at my store. I just finished reading your excellent article about the name change for LexCorp. The board of directors made a good decision.”

Clark said, “Thanks. Let’s hope the name change helps MetroCorp; they employ far too many people for the corporation to suffer additional setbacks.”

The older woman smiled sagely, “Agreed, speaking of work, I found those books you wanted, *Artistic Welder* for Martha and *The Comprehensive History of the Pony Express* for Jonathan. They are in the back of the store.” Quick as a wink, Margaret passed through the door behind the counter and vanished.

“Welding? The Pony Express? Your parents are always finding something to keep them busy!”

“Well, they have been looking for these books for months in the local libraries and couldn’t find them. This will be a great surprise! Hey, I see that biography about Niklos Tesla. Be right back.”

She laid her hand on his back and gently pushed him towards the shelf housing that particular book. “Go ahead, I’ll be right here.”

No sooner had Clark turned his back than Margaret reappeared with a brown shopping bag, the name *Metropolis Book Nook* was stenciled on the front. Since she was aware that Clark could pick up anything she said, she mouthed <It’s in the bag, wrapped up.>

<Thank you.> Lois responded, also moving her lips without speaking.

Clark returned with the Tesla biography under his arm, he paid for all the books; they thanked Margaret and departed the store.

Once on the street, he turned to his wife and asked, “Okay, where to next?”

“A quick visit to Aunt Grace at *Rhapsody Knits*, Diane needs some additional yarn for an afghan she’s making. Since she’s on assignment in Central City, I told her I’d pick it up.”

A thoughtful expression crossed Clark features, “Has she spotted that new superhero, The Flash?”

“Not yet, but she’s certain her friend, Iris West, can get her a brief interview, hopefully it’ll be soon. Perry is ready to pull the

plug on that assignment. Hmm, husband, maybe we should have gone out there ourselves? You know, talk to this guy, superhero to superhero.”

“No, I think we should let the mid-west media cover this guy. As ‘The Hottest Team in Town’, Superman and UltraWoman already have *enough* to do on the east coast.”

“True, but it sure would be fun to watch somebody *else* take down the bad guys!” Lois said softly.

As they continued to walk, Lois took in a lungful of chilly night air and puffed out, “I love this neighborhood!” She said, “It’s the perfect haven for the creative people of Metropolis to mingle and encourage one another with their different talents.”

“Mike certainly ‘mingled’ with Grace Chen of *Rhapsody Knits*. I can’t believe those two got engaged after an eight month courtship and then decided to get married in Italy without telling anyone except their children!”

Lois’ mouth quirked in annoyance; thinking back to the childish behavior of her cousins and Grace’s daughters when they revealed their parents’ plan after the couple had departed. “I’m glad they are finally coming to terms with the marriage. It’s been nearly a year. Uncle Mike and Aunt Grace are happy with their decision. They aren’t teen-agers and didn’t want a lot of fuss. It was their decision to elope. I should think the small reception we held for them at our Townhouse was more than enough to make their children happy.”

Clark gave his wife’s hand a squeeze, “Ah, as I recall, *you* were none too pleased.”

She sighed, remembering how childishly *she* reacted after hearing the news. “Yeah, but that’s because since getting married to a certain journalist, weddings are fun! Getting news like that should be told in a certain way, not from a sterile transatlantic phone call.” She grew thoughtful for a moment as they walked, and then said, “I want to always give happy news in a *special* way.”

Rhapsody Knits:

Clark held open the knitting shop’s door for Lois, the tiny bell over the door heralding their arrival. A petite, Asian woman dressed in a hand knitted burgundy wool tunic and brown pants greeted them.

“Bon jour! I haven’t seen either of you since departing for Paris. How was the wedding? Abrihet must have been a lovely bride! Was Bernie nervous?”

It took no prompting to get Lois into full babble mode, “Oh, it was so beautiful! You should have seen the wedding gown, yards of delicious white fabrics with gold trim; I’ve never seen a dress like it before. Bernie was so calm at the reception he even danced! As soon as my pictures come back, I’ll stop by to show them to you. In the meantime, I need yarn for Diane Pallister; she’s almost finished with that heirloom afghan.” She fished a piece of memo paper out of her briefcase.

Grace took the paper, nodded and started checking the wall of blue and cream shelves that held the yarn. While she looked, Lois and Clark wandered around the store, marveling at the various types of yarn. Lois picked up a skein of light gray yarn that was composed of seventy-five percent wool and twenty-five percent silk, the feel against her skin was rich and soothing.

“Hmmm this feels scrumptious, I wonder what it would be like to knit with this yarn?” she mused.

Shortly, Grace returned holding four skeins of rich blue yarn. “This is what your friend is looking for in the worsted weight and dye lot she wanted. I’m looking forward to seeing the finished product, this particular yarn feels smooth and each stitch will have great definition.” Grace looked at the yarn Lois held in her hand. “Are you interested in that? When paired with the medium gray yarn as the trim it makes a beautiful shawl, perfect for this time of year and in the summer.”

“Summer?” Clark said in surprise.

“Why yes, in some office buildings the air conditioning is rather high. Imagine draping a warm triangular or rectangular scarf over your shoulders. I will keep that unpleasant chill away while sitting in a boring corporate meeting.” Grace said.

Her niece shook her head, somewhat dubiously. “I don’t know Grace, hearing the different terms regarding yarn weight, colors and knit gauge is so confusing!” Lois looked at the fabric again and held it against her face. “It feels so good! How hard can it be to knit this pattern?”

A knowing smile appeared on Grace’s face. “Does this mean you’ll *finally* come in for knitting lessons? If your busy friends Abrihet and Diane can knit, so can you.”

Lois couldn’t help but notice Clark snickering. Never one to walk away from a challenge she said, “Ok, starting next Monday around three o’clock I’ll come in for my first lesson. What do I need to bring?”

“Not a thing. This first lesson and the materials are my treat.” Her aunt said, slightly taken aback.

“Great! Martha will be so impressed!”

Taking the yarn over to the register, Grace said, “Is this everything?”

“Yes, we just left the *Book Nook*, now we’re headed to Mike’s for dinner.”

An odd expression passed over her aunt’s face, then she said, “Ah, well in any case this yarn has to be rewound. Why don’t I bring it over after I close for the evening?”

“Perfect Aunt Grace, we’ll see you in a little while!” Clark said.

Moments later, the two found themselves back on Napier Avenue.

“Wow, Lois Lane, Investigative reporter is really going to learn to knit? What brought this on?”

Again, his wife slipped into a meditative mood as they walked across the street towards *Café Americana*. “Something Grace said about being busy. Honey, besides running investigations, writing stories and my ‘other job’, I don’t have any hobbies. If Abrihet with her hectic schedule can find time to knit garments for herself and Bernie, learning to knit should be easy for me.”

Clark nodded, their lives — now that Lex was gone and the threat from Zod was ended — had finally settled down. He was looking forward to catching up on reading and building model airplanes. Life wasn’t all about investigations and Superman rescues. But there was one other topic that popped into his mind.

“Metal X.” He said aloud.

“What about it?” Lois responded.

“Will the Kleins continue their research into its unique properties?”

“The subject didn’t come up very much while we were in Paris, especially since Kuma was around. But Abrihet assures me that will be at the top of their list of work items when they return from their honeymoon.”

It was Clark’s turn to be silent. “Maybe it’s time we told my father about Metal X.”

“Why tell Jonathan ... oh, Jor-El! But if the New Kryptonians gained possession of Metal X. If any of them are secret followers of Zod ... “She left the rest unsaid, the thought was almost too awful to contemplate.

He continued speaking, “We should consider it, the research facilities on New Krypton are better than anything Bernie and Abrihet have on Earth. There should be a chunk of the stuff there anyway, just in case of emergencies. Let’s talk about it with them after they come home.”

“OK. It can wait until then. We do need to know as much as we can about that metal.” She changed the subject and said, “When are those two coming back to Metropolis?”

“The Kleins are having a great time in Italy. They wanted to stay another week. Apparently, they didn’t get to see everything they wanted.”

“Oh, why is that?” Lois queried.

Clark took his wife’s hand, squeezed it and said, “Remember our honeymoon?”

Lois snickered and she stopped them in the middle of the sidewalk to give her husband a long, sweet kiss on the lips. For a brief moment they were no longer in Metropolis in November. Both were thinking about the sensual wedding night they spent in his old apartment and then the thrilling week in Hawaii where tropical breezes blew over their sun-kissed bodies.

Café Americana:

As they walked towards *Café Americana*, Lois could not help but observe mothers strolling along the sidewalks with small children clutching their hands. She also noticed a fashionably dressed young woman pushing a baby carriage and with her super hearing listened to the soft lullaby the woman was tenderly singing. Her heart gave the tiniest lurch of excitement, but it wouldn’t do for Clark to sense her feelings, not just yet.

It was good that these maternal sights made her smile, but soon *he* would be smiling or rather beaming with joy. Their lives were full and happy, yet this one thing had managed to elude them. But thanks to God, it would avoid them no longer. She followed Clark as he pushed open the door to the restaurant and was greeted with a happy murmur of patrons talking and comforting smells of good home cooking.

There was no place in Metropolis like *Café Americana* on a Friday night.

An excited voice arched over the others and Uncle Mike walked briskly over to greet them personally with a group hug. “There’s my favorite niece and her hubby! Welcome! Lois, I knew you couldn’t resist sampling the chocolate cupcakes! I reserved some for you and Clark.”

“Thanks Mike! It’s not too busy this evening? What’s on the menu? We’re pretty hungry.” Clark said.

“Nyahh! Don’t worry; your table is still available.” Mike picked up two menus and guided them to their favorite table. It was next to a large window, which looked onto Napier Avenue. People were still milling around on the well lighted sidewalks, busily hurrying to their various destinations.

“Since it’s getting a bit colder outside, let me suggest the Potato Leek Soup and a house salad. It comes with a loaf of hot, crusty parmesan and garlic bread.”

“Baked on the premises?” Lois and Clark said together. They looked at each other and laughed.

Mike gave his niece and her husband a funny look and said, “Say, you two are beginning to know my restaurant better than me! Nunzio’s Aunt Kathleen does all the bread baking now. Wait until you taste it! Let me leave you so you can decide what you want.”

Clark looked at Lois and said, “Soup sound good to you?”

“Yes please! Oh and Mike, Grace is coming over right after she finishes closing. She has some yarn for me.”

“Who is this yarn for, *you* or Martha?” He said, not quite believing his ears.

Lois groaned and waved her hand in defeat. “Actually, it’s for a friend of mine, at work.” Mike decided to stop teasing her and headed for the kitchen.

A long pleasant time later when they had reached the dessert stage of their meal, Aunt Grace came over with a brown paper bag stenciled with the *Rhapsody Knits* logo.

“Here you are! The yarn will be perfect for all the projects you described.” Grace said while putting the bag next to Lois. “I need to be going; Mike wants to have dinner together at home. Nunzio will be closing up tonight.”

“Oh,” Clark said a little disappointed. “I thought you both were going to sit with us awhile?”

Grace shook her head and said softly, “Oh, we will be seeing you both very soon. Have a good evening.”

With that she departed and headed for the kitchen.

Clark looked after her. “Now that’s a surprise!”

Lois bowed her head and answered with a mischievous grin, “Not really, I told Grace we wanted some alone time.” Lois proceeded to tell her husband about the spells of nausea and discomfort she had experienced when catching the helicopter and riding the elevator to rescue Aykira.

A deep shadow of worry passed over Clark’s face. He took her hands in his and whispered, “Honey, this transfer of my power to you is still so new. It’s a little scary to me. Maybe you should visit Bernie after he gets back from Italy.”

“Oh, that won’t be necessary! The physical examination has already taken place. Just before we went to Paris.”

“Oh? But you never mentioned anything about it.”

With infinite care, Lois reached into the two bags, one from each of the stores they just visited. Then handed over two packages he had never seen. “Go ahead, open them.”

Clark reached into the Book Nook bag and removed a large oblong blue covered paperback entitled, *Knits for Newborns*.

Flipping through the pages, each one populated with pictures of brightly colored blankets, hats and sweet little rompers in tiny sizes. He pulled his eyes away from the book and looked at a beaming Lois, who held the other bag in her hands. Without saying a word he opened the second package and pulled out its contents.

Three balls of green yarn, soft as a kiss and substantial as a hug — baby yarn, courtesy of *Rhapsody Knits*.

“Lois, honey, what ... what does this mean?” His voice was shaking from hope and expectation.

Taking both of his large, powerful hands in her smaller ones, she said in a voice as soft as the yarn he had just held. “We are going to have a baby.”

A pair of dark brown eyes opened wide in surprise and disbelief. “Pregnant? Are you sure? How?”

She nodded, a shy smile slowly spread across her face. “Uh huh, in the usual way, silly. Bernie says I’m about five months along.”

Glancing quickly down at Lois’ trim waist and then back to her radiant face he said, “But you’re not showing?”

“No, apparently my Terran/Kryptonian biology will make this pregnancy a bit of a challenge. As usual, we are in uncharted waters here. It is a good possibility I *might* be pregnant for eleven months.”

“Eleven months?” He blurted out.

“Yup! I thought having Margaret and Grace help out making the announcement so it would be a surprise. Martha and Jonathan already know, as does Josca and Jor-El. I had to talk with the geneticist on New Krypton for an additional check-up. You are not to worry Clark; our baby is in the best of hands.”

“Are you kidding? I’m going to worry about our child no matter how old he or she gets!”

Lois patted his hand and said, “Spoken like a true Dad.”

His voice became soft as he bent down to speak in her ear. “Lois Lane-Kent, you are going to be a beautiful mother.” He moved his head and tenderly kissed her lips.

A myriad of thoughts ran through his mind as he held Lois’ body in a hug. Chiefly he reflected about what a strange, yet perfect year it had been.

Who in their wildest imaginings could have considered that everything had began with a kryptonite bullet striking him down at Abrihet’s lecture?

He was reunited with his biological father and in the process had gained not only an extended family, but a greater

understanding of the Kryptonian culture. All those terrible blank spaces he had wondered about as a child had been neatly, yes lovingly filled, giving him a larger knowledge of who he was.

Superman’s greatest enemy was no longer a threat; vanquished from planet Earth to New Krypton, to live out the rest of his days as a provisional member of that society. Knowing his father, if Lex did anything to endanger the people of New Krypton, the action would have grave consequences for him.

One of his closest friends had married a talented woman scientist, one who was up to the task of being Bernie Klein’s wife. Standing with Bernie as he exchanged vows with Abrihet made him extremely happy and content; it was so good to have such friends and family, ones to share life’s joys.

Now the final piece to an intricate puzzle had fallen into place. Lois was carrying his child. As usual, she was right, these *were* uncharted waters, but together as husband and wife, best friends and lovers they could face this challenge together.

He smiled in anticipation for the adventure to begin.

THE END