

# Superman Go

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Summary: A new gaming fad has swept the world, and even Superman is powerless against it.

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Author's Note: This version of Lois and Clark is set in 2016. And yes, I'm messing with pretty much everything.

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"I can't believe Perry has us covering some stupid video game," Lois complained as she breezed through the bullpen, with Clark struggling to keep pace.

"Aw, come on, Lois. It could be kind of fun, to cover something different for a change," Clark offered, trying to cheer her up.

Lois spun on her heel, causing Clark to come to a sudden stop, lest he crash into her. Her face was dark with barely contained rage, like a storm cloud covering up the sun.

"Are you kidding me?!" she thundered. "There are actual, *real* issues out there that need to be covered. And Perry has us covering a children's *game!*"

"Ssh! Lois, please," Clark responded, trying to quiet her down in the wake of the stares of their coworkers.

"Do *not* 'shush' me, Kent!" she growled before starting off to her desk again.

"Look, I agree with you," Clark said as he started to walk again. "You and I *should* be out covering hard news. It's what we're best at. But that doesn't mean we can't also cover this game too, like Perry wants."

Lois appeared to mull things over in her mind. After a small eternity, she nodded.

"It won't win us a Pulitzer, but... I guess you're right. We can cover the public's reaction to this stupid game while we cover the real news," she said, defeated.

"I promise, Lois. A couple of days and this whole thing will be behind us. Now, let's call it quits for the day. It's already six. We'll grab some takeout and do a little research on this game so we're not left in the dark. What do you say? Pizza or Chinese?" He gave her his biggest grin.

Lois' lingering anger seemed to melt. "Chinese. And your place," she added, in response to his unspoken question. "I like the food from the place by you better than the one near me."

"The Lotus Blossom," Clark said with a nod. "Good choice. You want me to drive?"

Lois shook her head as she reached her desk. "No, that's okay. I don't mind." She sat down and checked her cell phone. "Almost a full charge. Give me like five minutes?" she asked.

"Absolutely. There's a couple of emails I could respond to while I wait."

Lois playfully arched an eyebrow at her friend. "I thought we

were calling it quits for the night," she reminded him.

He shrugged and smiled back. "What else am I going to do in the meantime? Besides, I'm hoping that maybe I can get some responses by the time we clock in tomorrow. With any luck, we can finalize the funeral home scandal story in the next day or two."

Lois nodded. "Good thinking."

Clark went to his desk and swiftly typed out a few emails before Lois announced that she was ready to go. He begged for another minute or two to finish the last email, then read it over and sent it, satisfied with the work he'd managed to accomplish, thanks, in part, to the surreptitious use of his super speed.

"Okay," he said as he turned the machine off, stood, and stretched. "Let's get some dinner. I'm starving."

"Me too," Lois agreed, just as her stomach gurgled. She checked the time on her phone, then stuffed the device into her purse. "I can't wait to dig into some fantail shrimp."

Clark smiled. "Whatever you want. Dinner's on me tonight."

"Dinner's been on you all week," Lois pointed out.

He shrugged. "So?"

"So, it's not really all that fair to you."

"I don't mind. Really," he said, cutting off her protest. "Tell you what," he said, as they started for the elevators and Lois' frown deepened, "you can get breakfast tomorrow morning. Okay?"

"The cheapest meal of the day?" She grinned. "Deal."

Clark laughed and pressed the call button for the elevator. "Are you sure you don't want me to drive?"

She shook her head. "If you're buying dinner, then I'm driving."

"Fair enough," he replied diplomatically.

They made small talk as they rode the elevator down to the subterranean parking garage, mostly about the stories they were currently working on. When they reached the car, Lois slipped behind the steering wheel. Clark took out his phone and pulled up his web browser.

"What are you looking at?" Lois asked curiously as she navigated out of the garage and merged onto the busy city street.

"I figured I'd read up on this game that Perry has us covering," he replied distractedly.

She nodded. "Good idea. What'd you find out about this... Pokey-blob Go?"

"*Pokémon GO*," he corrected her. "It means 'pocket monsters.'"

"Whatever," came the dismissive response. "What'd you find out?" she repeated.

"Okay, it's basically what they call an augmented reality game. From what I can see, you're supposed to walk around with the app open, and find little creatures called Pokémon. When you find one and tap on it, it shows up in your phone's camera so you can flick a little ball at it to try and capture it."

"What's the point of that?"

"Well, the goal is to collect all of these creatures, level them up, and battle other people at places called gyms. You can also find places throughout the world where you can collect free supplies, like more balls or potions to revive Pokémon that have fainted in battle."

"But what's the *point?*" Lois pressed.

Clark scratched his head. "I'm not sure what you mean. It's a game, Lois. The point is to have fun. And, I suspect, the game is trying to get people up off their couches and walking."

"I mean, why would anyone want to walk around catching imaginary characters on their phones?"

Clark shrugged. "Pokémon has been popular for a long time, Lois. Kids have grown up dreaming that they could travel the world finding and battling Pokémon, just like the characters in the cartoons. Those kids might be adults now, but, for the true fans, I

think this is the kind of game they aren't going to be able to resist playing."

They reached a red light. Lois looked over at him, arching her eyebrow. "Don't tell me. You were one of those kids, right?" The light changed and she focused on the road again.

Clark shook his head, regardless of the fact that she was no longer looking at him. "No, but my college roommate, Matthew, was obsessed with Pokémon. I mean, he used to watch the show all the time, he played all the games, collected the cards and toys, even wrote and read fanfiction for it. The whole nine yards. I was constantly exposed to it, and even watched a few times with him when I wasn't swamped with schoolwork or football practice."

"That's pretty sad," Lois said with a shake of her head. "A grown man, obsessed with a child's cartoon."

"Is it so different than people who get together for *The Walking Dead* episode viewings? Or people who discuss the intricacies of *Game of Thrones*? Or any one of the websites out there set up as Superman fansites?"

That made Lois pause, at least for a moment. "But, all of the things you just mentioned are, at least, for adults. Pokémon is for kids."

"I don't know, Lois. Yeah, okay, maybe the target audience is a younger crowd, but it has some good messages. And this app... I think it could be a good thing."

"How?"

"Well," he said, thinking, "for one, if it gets people up and off the couch, it has merit. And it *could* get people exploring places that they may otherwise never have gone."

"In the interest of catching virtual pets," Lois said sourly.

He opted not to respond to that, and went back to focusing his attention on his phone. An idea came to him. He went into the app store on his phone and downloaded the game.

"Now what are you doing?" Lois asked, craning her neck to get a glimpse of the screen as she stopped for another light. He suspected that she'd heard the game's music, even though it was barely audible.

"Trying out the game."

She rolled her eyes. "Really?"

"Why not?" he shrugged and turned toward her. "Look, if we want to cover the game to the best of our abilities, we should at least explore it for ourselves, so we can fully appreciate what people are talking about when we interview them. At the very least, *one* of us should."

He tapped the screen, designing his in-game avatar. The light changed and Lois drove on. He found himself presented with a choice of three Pokémon on screen. He tapped on the blue turtle-looking one. His phone's camera opened up and he found himself looking at a Squirtle, who was standing on the dashboard of Lois' Jeep. Clark felt his inner child go giddy at seeing the fictitious character "in the real world." He used his index finger to flick a Pokéball at it. The ball sucked the creature up in a red beam and safely trapped the Squirtle inside.

"Nice," he whispered to himself.

"What?" Lois asked, just before slamming her palm down on the horn as another driver cut her off.

"I caught my first Pokémon," Clark replied, his eyes glued to the screen. "Well, technically, it's *just* a starter one, to give the player a feel for the game. But... I have to admit, it was kind of thrilling." He held up the phone so she could glance at the capture screen, which showed the little squirrel-tailed turtle, and his stats.

Lois threw a lightning-fast look at it as she checked to make sure she could safely change lanes. "Cuter than I thought it would be," she admitted quietly.

Clark spent the remainder of the short car ride watching the game's map follow them in real time as they navigated Metropolis. He managed to catch a few bird- and rat-type Pokémon as they traveled, and even snagged a handful of free items as they passed

Pokéstops. By the time they reached The Lotus Blossom, he was hopelessly addicted to the game.

He caught one caterpillar-looking monster as he waited for their takeout, then they were headed to his apartment. As they ate their meals straight out of the cartoons with the provided chopsticks, Clark showed off his fledgling collection of Pokémon. To his surprise, Lois looked slightly intrigued, as soon as she saw the cute little critters. A thought occurred to Clark.

"You know what? I think Netflix has the original cartoon. At least the first season or two. You, uh... wouldn't want to check it out, would you?" he offered.

Lois hesitated, clearly at war with herself. "Am I going to regret watching?" she finally asked.

"You can be the judge of that," he said with a wry grin.

"All right," she acquiesced. "I'll give it a try. But if I don't care for the first episode..."

"Then I'll turn it off and never speak of it again. Or... well... I *would* make that promise, except with us covering the game and all, that's going to be impossible."

Lois playfully rolled her eyes and shook her head. "Go on, Kent. Put the show on."

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Three hours later, Lois yawned and stretched. "I think that's all I can watch for tonight," she said, rubbing her eyes.

"So... should I take tonight's marathon viewing to mean that you enjoyed it?" Clark asked.

Lois shrugged. "It's still a kids' cartoon, but it wasn't too bad. The little creatures are adorable. I can see why some people might like it."

Clark nodded. "I've always thought so. I've also always been drawn to anime as an art style, even if I don't really go out of my way to watch those kinds of movies and TV shows."

"I liked it too," Lois said, nodding. "It's an interesting style."

"Now, if you'll excuse me for just a moment," Clark said, jerking a thumb in the direction of his bathroom.

"By all means."

When he returned, he found Lois staring at her phone. She didn't even look up as he entered the living room.

"I picked Charmander," she said, before he could even ask. "But, um, where do I find more of these things?"

Clark couldn't help the laugh that erupted from his throat. It made perfect sense to him that Lois Lane, of all people, would chose a fire-type Pokémon to get started with. It fit her fierce, fiery personality all too well.

"What?" she asked.

"Well," he said with a shrug, "just a few hours ago, you were pretty resistant to all things Pokémon."

But deep inside, he wasn't all that surprised by Lois' desire to try out the game. He knew the challenge of "Gotta Catch'em All" — as the series' slogan so boldly stated — would appeal to her. It simply wasn't in Lois' genetic makeup to pass up any kind of challenge. Pokémon Go gave her a perfect goal to work toward.

"Yeah, well, I've changed my mind," she said, failing to make her mock annoyance sound convincing. "Now, answer the question." This time, she grinned at him.

"Okay," he said through a fresh laugh. "The point of the game is to get people up and walking. So... we have to get out and walk."

Lois looked at the clock. "It's not quite ten yet. Feel like taking a walk?"

Any time spent with Lois sounded like the world's best idea to Clark. Still, he played it casually. After all, he hadn't yet found the nerve to ask Lois out on a date.

"Sure," he said. "But maybe we should change out of our work clothes. I still have your stakeout bag."

"Right," she said, nodding in remembrance.

Clark went to the closet by the stairs and retrieved the battered

old duffel bag for Lois. She gratefully took it, then retreated to the bathroom to change. Clark headed into his bedroom and changed his own clothing at super speed, choosing a maroon t-shirt and black basketball shorts. Lois emerged just a few minutes later, as he was lacing up his sneakers. She looked stunning with her hair pulled back into a loose ponytail. She had on a white t-shirt with three large hibiscus flowers in a row across the chest and a pair of jean shorts. She, like Clark, sat down on the couch to put her sneakers on.

“Where should we go?” she wondered aloud.

Clark thought about it for a minute. “Let’s try the park. It’s probably safer than wandering around on the streets. Plus, there are fountains and art pieces and memorials there. From what I understand, those are all things the game likes to designate as Pokéstops. Even if we don’t catch any creatures, we’re bound to pick up some freebies at the stops.”

“I like the way you think,” Lois grinned, almost victoriously, as if one walk in the park would secure her every single Pokémon and the bragging rights associated with that accomplishment.

“It’s still pretty hot and humid out,” Clark said. “Let me grab a couple of waters for us.”

“That’d be great. Thanks, Clark.”

He went to the fridge and grabbed two of the closest, largest bottles of water he had. Behind the screen of the door, he carefully applied his icy breath to the plastic bottles, until the water was nearly frozen. Satisfied that they would stay colder a little longer that way, he shut the door and handed Lois one.

“Wow!” she said as her fingers touched the frigid bottle. “Your fridge does some job keeping things cold!”

“Yeah,” he agreed, uncomfortable. “Ready to go?”

“You bet,” she grinned, stuffing the water bottle into her purse and slinging the whole thing over her shoulder. “Let’s do this.”

Fifteen minutes later, they entered the park, their phones already running the game. Clark suggested that they head in the direction of the fountain, guessing — correctly, as it turned out — that it would be a Pokéstop, where they could load up on freebies.

“A Pidgey just popped,” Clark announced as they passed a strand of white birch trees.

“Go for it.”

He shook his head. “I already caught a few on the drive over to my place. You should take it. But I’ll take the monkey thing that just came on screen, if you don’t mind.”

“It’s all yours.”

“Thanks. Actually, take all three of the birds. You can use them for leveling up.”

As he spoke, he tapped his phone’s screen and proceeded to launch a ball at the Pokémon he’d selected. It was a bit higher level than he was, so it easily evaded his capture attempts before running from battle, leaving Clark a half a dozen Pokéballs poorer and with no creature to show for it.

“Did you get it?” Lois asked after a minute, finally looking up from her screen.

“No, it was too high of a level. There’ll be others though. No big deal.”

They resumed walking and the path led them out right to the fountain. Clark led the way to the benches. He checked the game again.

“I was right. We can pick up supplies here. Want to sit for a bit?”

“Sure.”

“It sure is a beautiful night out, despite the heat,” Clark said a few minutes later, after taking a long sip of his water.

“It really is. This was a really great idea, Clark.”

“Thanks. Oh, hey. A Squirtle is here. You should grab it,” he said as his phone buzzed to alert him of a new Pokémon spawning.

“Thank you.” She quickly captured the creature in question.

“Great! That leveled me up too!”

They sat in quiet, companionable silence for a couple of minutes, both of them side by side, enjoying the beauty of the park at night. It felt romantic, somehow. Coming to a sudden decision, Clark turned slightly to look at Lois.

“Hey, Lois?” he asked nervously.

“Yeah?”

“I was wondering about something. We’ve known each other for a while now. You’ve become my best friend.”

“And you’ve become mine,” Lois said with a gentle nod.

“I feel like...like maybe we can become...more.”

“More? Clark, are you...?”

“Would you go out with me? On a date?” he asked, not waiting for her to finish. He needed to get it out before he lost his nerve.

Lois’ entire expression changed. He saw a mixture of emotions pass through it — flattery, surprise, and a healthy dose of fear. But, overall, her entire expression softened.

“Clark,” she breathed. “I...I don’t know. We’re *best friends*. Won’t that...complicate things? What if we went out and it didn’t work out between us? I can’t lose you. You’re too important to me.”

He smiled softly. “That’s the beauty of our friendship, Lois. No matter what happens, you’ll *never* lose me. I’ll always be your friend. Because the truth is, I don’t think I could ever live without having you in my life. So...what do you say? Give me a chance? I want so much to make you happy, Lois.”

Lois appeared to blink back tears. Clark could only hope they were good tears and that he’d somehow managed to touch her heart. She gave him a tremulous smile.

“How can I say no to that?” she asked, laughing a little in nervousness. “Okay. I’ll go out with you.”

Clark felt his soul lighten as his fears slipped away. The hardest part was over. He’d asked her out and she’d accepted.

“I promise. You won’t regret it.” He paused for a moment, just soaking up the wonderful feelings swirling inside him like a storm. “So...shall we say...tomorrow night? I can call around in the morning and see if I can get us a dinner reservation somewhere. Maybe Rino’s?”

The casual Italian restaurant was one of Lois’ favorites, he knew. And he enjoyed the food there as well. It was as close to authentic Italian as it got. It even surpassed some of the places he’d eaten at while *in* Italy.

“I love Rino’s,” Lois said, smiling. Her entire body language was much more relaxed and confident, now that she’d committed herself to this date.

“What else would you like to do?” he asked. “We’ve got the day off, after all.”

Lois thought for a moment. “How about the art museum? They just opened up that enormous extension to the ancient Egyptian wing.”

“I’d love that,” Clark said, meaning every word. He’d always loved looking at art from bygone civilizations. His phone buzzed again. “Two fish. I’ll grab the one on the right.”

As they were catching their digital monsters, a young black man in his early twenties approached. He pointed to the edge of the bench.

“Anyone sitting here?” he asked politely.

“No. Please, sit,” Lois said.

“You guys playing that new Pokémon game?” the newcomer asked, peering over at first them, then their phones.

“Actually...yes,” Clark admitted sheepishly.

But the young man smiled. “Cool, me too. Name’s Lamar, nice to meet you.”

“Clark and this is Lois,” Clark said by way of introduction.

“I’m about to pop a lure here to see what I can attract. You want in?”

Clark nodded. “Sure. Thank you.”

“No problem.”

For the next hour, the three sat there, making idle, but pleasant, conversation as they caught the little creatures that spawned at the fountain. First Lamar used his lure, then Clark purchased one in the in-app store. Every five minutes or so, one of them would announce when the free items were ready to be picked up. At the end of the hour, Clark stood and stretched, desperately needing to move. Lamar’s phone rang and he answered, speaking quietly into the receiver.

“I gotta run,” he said after he hung up. “It was nice getting to play with you guys.”

“It was nice. Thanks for the lure,” Clark said, extending a hand to the young man.

“No problem. Thanks for popping that second one.”

“My pleasure.” Clark smiled.

“Goodnight, Lamar,” Lois said as the man shook her hand. “It was a pleasure meeting you.”

Lamar inclined his head in acknowledgement before heading off in the direction he’d come from. Lois looked to Clark.

“What a nice guy,” she commented.

“He really was,” Clark agreed. “Did you want to keep walking, or did you want to go back to either your place or mine?” Lois checked her watch. “Let’s keep walking.”

“Okay.”

By the end of the night, they each had caught a fair number of Pokémon, and were looking with greater anticipation to their date the next day than ever before.

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The next day was mercifully cooler than the previous one. Clark appeared on Lois’ doorstep at ten o’clock sharp. He knocked on the door and Lois immediately answered, as though she’d been waiting right by it.

“Morning, Lois,” Clark said cheerfully as she let him into her apartment.

“Morning, Clark.”

“Sleep well?”

“Like a log. All that walking last night really knocked me out,” she said with a smile.

Clark blushed. “Sorry,” he mumbled.

The truth was, it was Lois herself who had kept insisting that they continue their search for the elusive pocket monsters. Clark hadn’t minded or complained. He loved every minute spent with her. So they had walked until nearly two in the morning, stopping once at an all-night diner for coffee, cake, and the restroom. In the end, Clark had feigned tiredness, knowing Lois would have had to be close to exhausted. As he’d walked her from the car to her apartment, they’d both managed to capture a Pikachu.

“Don’t you apologize,” Lois admonished. “It was completely my fault that we were out so late. Still, I wouldn’t have changed a thing about last night. I had a great time.” She smiled shyly.

“Me too. In fact, I brought you a little something to commemorate the occasion,” Clark said, pulling his right hand from behind his back. “These are for you.”

“Oh, Clark! They’re beautiful,” Lois said as she saw the bouquet of red and pink roses he’d brought her.

“And him,” Clark added, pulling his left hand from behind his back.

He held the stuffed Pikachu out to her. The little yellow electric mouse was sitting down, a huge smile on his face, and his arms outstretched as though anticipating a hug. Lois smiled again as she took the stuffed animal.

“He’s adorable!” she proclaimed as she hugged the doll close. “Thank you, Clark. I love him.”

“In honor of the night you agreed to date me,” he said, giving her a wolfish smile, making her laugh.

“Yeah, well, the day’s still young, Kent. And our date hasn’t yet begun,” she playfully teased him.

“Sure it has,” he tossed back as he stepped into the kitchen. With practiced ease, he opened the cabinet where she kept a handful of vases, selected a tall, slender crystal vase, and filled it with water.

“How do you figure?”

“I’m here, picking you up to go out. Where I’m from, that means the date has started,” he said with a grin. He took the roses, cut the stems under running water, poured the packet of flower food into the vase, and stuck the roses in. “There,” he declared. “Perfect.” He moved them to the small table that was tucked into the corner of the kitchen.

“Well...maybe,” Lois conceded, giving him a wink. “Thanks for doing that, by the way,” she said, gesturing to the roses.

“You’re welcome. Are you ready to head out?”

“Just let me grab my purse.” She breezed to the couch, picked up her bag, and placed Pikachu in the newly vacated space. “Let’s go.”

They spent a wonderful morning and afternoon at the museum, eating their lunch right in the museum’s cafeteria. Since the weather was much cooler and less humid than the day before, they ate outside in the courtyard just outside of the Japanese wing. When they were done, they headed back inside to check out the rest of the exhibits. They were having so much fun that they were nearly late for their dinner reservation.

“I love this place,” Lois said a few minutes after they were seated.

“Me too,” Clark replied, throwing a cursory glance around at the comfortable, low-key restaurant.

Neither one of them opened their menus. Rino’s was one of the places where they each ordered the same meal every time they visited — chicken franchise, a side of ziti, and cannolis for dessert. When the waiter arrived, Clark also ordered an expensive bottle of wine, wanting to give Lois only the best on their date.

“This is nice,” Lois observed, once the waiter went to put their order in.

Clark nodded as he grabbed a piece of bread from the basket. He buttered it and handed it to Lois.

“I had a great time at the museum,” he offered. “I’m glad you suggested it. I’ve been meaning to get over there to check it out.”

“I had a great time too,” Lois replied with a dreamy smile, apparently thinking back on the day. “You know, I was terrified that things wouldn’t go well. I feel stupid now, in retrospect, for feeling like that. But...” She shrugged. “I’m glad you showed me there was no reason for that worry.”

“Why were you were nervous?” Clark asked as he buttered some bread for himself. “We’re good together, you and I.”

“I know. But it’s just that...well...most of my relationships...no, scratch that...all of them...have been nothing short of federal disasters. I...I was afraid that with us being best friends and all, that us dating would be weird or uncomfortable. But today? Today it felt like the most natural thing in all the world, to be on an actual, real live date with you.” She started without making eye contact, but, by the end, she was smiling at him.

“I don’t have a lot of dating experience,” Clark admitted, taking her hands in his own from across the table. “Just Lana in high school and Kimberly for half a semester in college. Like your previous relationships, they didn’t go well, to put it mildly. They never really progressed out of that uncomfortable, first date feeling and the breakups were awkward. But being with you? For the first time in my life, I feel like I know what a date is *supposed* to feel like.”

“I guess we’ve both been pleasantly surprised today,” Lois grinned.

Clark chuckled. “I guess so. I...I’m really glad you decided to give me a chance.”

“So am I.”

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“That was delicious,” Lois said at the end of the meal, as she drank the last sip of her coffee. “Thanks for a lovely meal, Clark.”  
 “Thanks for sharing it with me.”

They had talked all throughout dinner, about everything and anything. Mostly, they’d talked about their families, their childhoods, and how they’d come to choose journalism for their careers. Clark had found himself telling Lois things he’d never told anyone before, and felt as if Lois was letting him into her heart in a way she’d never had before. It had been the best dinner Clark had ever enjoyed.

Lois sighed contentedly. “It’s going to take me a week on the treadmill to make up for this,” she joked.

“The night’s not over yet,” Clark offered. “We could take a walk, if you’d like. It’s a perfect night.”

“That would be wonderful,” Lois said, nodding and smiling. “I...I was kind of hoping we could spend some more time together.” She blushed as she admitted it. “I’m not ready for tonight to be over. Maybe this sounds stupid but...I feel like, if I go home, some kind of magic spell will be broken and I’ll discover that none of tonight was real.”

“It’s real,” Clark assured her.

Lois nodded once. “Either way, I’m having a great time and I...I’m not ready to say goodnight just yet.”

“Me too. But, you know...it doesn’t have to be a walk,” Clark told her. “If you prefer a movie or dancing or something else, I’m fine with that. Whatever you want to do.”

Lois shook her head. “I’d like to take a walk. We can keep talking and...” She blushed again. “Maybe...maybe catch a few new Pokémon.”

Clark laughed. “You’re on.”

The waiter returned with Clark’s credit card. He quickly signed the accompanying slip of paper, leaving a generous tip. He and Lois parted ways only long enough to wash up in the restrooms, then they were out to wander the streets in search of digital monsters and an even closer relationship.

It was a good night. They caught several Pokémon apiece, giving them enough of the low level birds, rodents, and bugs to evolve their strongest ones to the next form. They both gained a level up for their efforts. And as they walked, they continued to talk, each of them continuing to lower the walls they’d built around themselves, letting the other see the innermost places of their hearts. Except for Clark. He still kept the Superman side of himself carefully locked away where no one could go.

Oh, he wanted to tell her. He wanted to just get it out in the open, now that he knew she was choosing Clark over the superhero fantasy. But he was afraid. This was only their first date. How would Lois react? Would she push him away? Would she hate him for lying for so long? Or would she stay with him, because he was the superhero she’d lusted after, ever since that first, historical rescue? He had to know she was choosing him for *him*, and that Superman didn’t factor into things in the least bit. So, as usual, he shied away from giving himself over fully to her, so that she could see the complete picture that was Clark Kent, lone alien survivor from an extinct planet.

By the time it was time to say goodnight to each other, they’d covered quite a few miles, caught some interesting new Pokémon, leveled up a couple of times, and chosen teams for their avatar to fight in in gym battles. Clark wasn’t surprised when Lois chose the one called Team Instinct, but he himself liked the sound of Team Valor. They laughed it off — they’d each picked their team while the other wasn’t in the vicinity, at stops to pick up coffee or use a restroom.

They had such a great time, that, like the previous night, they completely lost track of time until Lois finally noticed the time on her phone as she went to capture a Psyduck — a little yellow duck that spawned as they were passing in front of a firehouse, which also doubled as a Pokéstop. Grudgingly, they each acknowledged

that it was getting far too late and that they needed to go back to their respective apartments. After all, the next day was a work day, and they needed to be fresh, rested, and ready for it. Besides, Clark felt guilty that he’d gone for so long without tending to his Superman duties. He brought Lois home, right to her apartment doorstep.

“I had a great time tonight, Clark. Actually, I had a great *entire day* with you. You really *do* know how to show a girl a good time.”

Clark smiled. “I’m glad you had fun. The truth is, I hadn’t had such a great time in...” He shook his head, thinking. “I don’t think I’ve *ever* had so much fun. Certainly not on a date. So, thanks for that.”

“Same here,” Lois admitted. “I’m really glad you asked me out. You were right. We can date and still be best friends.”

“Did...did *Lois Lane* just admit that I was right?” he teased, grinning wolfishly.

Lois laughed and poked a finger into the center of his chest. “Don’t get used to it, Farm Boy.”

Clark mock bowed. “Of course,” he said, as though swearing a sacred oath. “Seriously though, I’m really glad you said yes to this. You don’t know how long I’ve wanted to ask you out.”

“Since Day One at the Planet?” Lois guessed. Then, “Don’t look so shocked. You are *terrible* at hiding things.”

Clark blushed. “Yeah...well...” He shrugged, letting the statement hang there, unfinished. “So...can I ask for a second date?”

Lois smiled a bit shyly, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear as she did so. “I’d like that.”

“There’s that carnival they’re having down by the docks this weekend. Would you be interested in going?”

“I’d love to.”

“Then it’s set. Our second date.” He smiled brightly. “Thank you for a wonderful day, Lois.”

“Thank *you* for the best date of my life. Goodnight, Clark.”

“Night, Lois.”

He leaned in a little, testing the waters. When Lois didn’t flinch or give him any signs that he should back off, he seized his opportunity. Her eyes closed. His followed suit. Lips puckered. Flesh met flesh. Fireworks shot off behind closed eyelids. Liquid fire raced through veins. Hearts pounded harder than ever before. Souls took flight. Somehow — and he was never quite sure how — Clark’s feet stayed firmly planted on the floor. Time stopped. The world around them vanished. There was only the two of them. Only the here and now. Past and future ceased to matter. The present was everything.

Clark’s arms gently came up to encircle Lois, pulling her closer, holding her securely, telling her how much he cherished her. Lois’ hands roamed over his back, tracing random patterns that ignited electricity in their wake. One of Clark’s hands migrated to the back of her head, cradling it as he poured out his love and soul to her through the simple act of his kiss. Her hand followed his lead, moving to his head and trailing through his dark locks. He felt her pull him in even closer, to deepen the kiss.

When they finally, reluctantly, ended the kiss and pulled slightly away from one another, Clark’s head was spinning. Had that really just happened? Had that moment of complete perfection actually taken place? Had it only been the fevered musings of his overactive imagination? He rested his forehead against Lois’ while he attempted to catch his breath. Lois gently cupped his cheek with her hand.

“That was incredible,” she murmured to him as they stood there, each trying to calm their racing hearts.

“That was the most amazing moment of my life,” he agreed in a near whisper.

Under normal circumstances, that confession would have scared him to make so early on in this new, still-unexplored area

of their relationship. But after a kiss like that, he was willing to open up his heart to her. Still, he felt himself tense as he waited to see what she would say.

“For a farm boy, you really know how to kiss,” she said with a grin as she pulled slightly back to study his face.

Clark’s tension bled out as he laughed. “Well...thanks.”

Lois laughed along with him. “See you in the morning?”

“Yeah,” he said with a nod. “I’ll swing by and we can head into work together.”

“You want to get breakfast on the way in?”

“I’ll bring something with me,” he promised, thinking of the bagel shop in New York that he would fly to before heading to her apartment. “Goodnight, Lois.”

“Night, Clark.”

He watched as she gracefully let herself into her apartment. For a long minute after the door closed, he stayed rooted to the spot, unwilling to leave. He almost felt like his departure would be the *actual* end of the date, and he was loath for that to happen. He heard Lois set the multiple locks on her door before she sat down on her couch.

“Oh, Pikachu,” he could hear her saying aloud. “What a wonderful date! I never knew dating a friend could be so...so perfect.” There was a pause and a soft sigh. “Come on. Let’s get some sleep. Tomorrow is going to be a very busy day.”

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The days flew by. Before Lois and Clark knew it, a month had passed since their first date. Each day, they seemed to grow closer both as friends and as a couple. They had even, blushing, admitted their mutual love for one another. And, every day, they made time to catch at least a handful of Pokémon.

The game itself continued to grow in popularity. Lois and Clark were kept constantly busy writing about it and all of the things that happened because of it — both the good and the bad.

Two weeks after the game’s release, a Metropolis “Pokéwalk” was organized in Centennial Park. The attendees spent the day walking around the park, catching Pokémon, meeting new people, resting at Pokéstops, battling at the one gym located in the kids’ play area, and having a good time in general. Most of those walking had found people to make monetary pledges for each mile walked, and/or donated money themselves. By the end of the day, a quarter of a million dollars had been raised for the Metropolis Children’s Hospital. Other Pokéwalks around the world raised funds for other worthy causes, and even resulted in some people cleaning up trash in local parks as they hunted down the little critters.

Animal shelters around the country began to see increased numbers of people willing to volunteer to walk dogs while catching the digital creatures. Many, many dogs went out for a walk with a volunteer and came back as the newest member of that volunteer’s family. Lost children and animals were discovered, safe and sound, as more and more people began to take to the outdoors in search of an elusive Pikachu or Charizard. Everywhere Lois and Clark went, people reported that they’d shed pounds, gotten healthier, even improved conditions like diabetes, simply because the game made them want to get outside and walking. A few called the game a “wonderful antidepressant.” Everyone said they’d wound up discovering places they never knew existed, all because it was a gym or Pokéstop.

It was a beautiful thing, Clark thought, to see such large groups of people of all races, religions, and backgrounds, coming together to accomplish such wonderful things. More than one person they interviewed even admitted to finding their significant other at some Pokémon-based event or another.

Of course, as Clark knew all too well from his duties as Superman, there is always another side to any coin. Some truly regrettable things happened, amid all of the amazing and wonderful things that the game had had a hand in causing.

There were those who used the game to lure unsuspecting victims in to specific areas to rob or rape them. Superman was able to prevent only a small percentage of those terrible acts, a fact that hurt Clark’s heart. More than one dead body was discovered as people wandered their neighborhoods. And forget about the accidents! Superman and local authorities were kept busy tending to car accidents as people tried to play the game while traveling, or walked out into traffic with their attention glued to their phones. Others wandered into other bad situations — falling off cliffs, falling out of boats, even a few who accidentally fell off the roof of their apartment buildings — because they simply weren’t paying attention to their surroundings.

Some of the people Lois and Clark interviewed about the game related tales of woe. A few had been fired from their jobs because they weren’t allowed to use cameras at their places of employment, or they got caught up in the game and forgot to return after their lunch breaks. Some had lost their significant other to the game — either they themselves or their partner played the game too much and the relationship crumbled. Others had gone into debt, making microtransaction after microtransaction within the game — buying more Pokéballs or lures or incense to attract more Pokémon.

It was, simply put, a blow to Clark’s heart, to see something so fun turn into something with such a negative side to it. He dutifully wrote articles on both the good and the bad that came to be associated with the game, but he chose to keep the good ones in his heart. And he continued to find the fun in the game.

Of course, with his powers, he could chase the little monsters all across the globe. It was too tempting not to. So, wherever he was, if he could spare a minute or two to shed the identity of Superman and blend into the crowd as Clark Kent, he did so. Then he would open up the app and catch whatever creatures happened to be in the immediate area, even though most of the Pokémon were the same in all corners of the Earth. A select few, however, were region specific, and Clark had fun attempting to find them. After a while it became second nature for him to attend to some situation as Superman, find a place to change into his civilian clothing, catch a Pokémon or two, and then be on his way. It didn’t take long for him to completely forget that he was building his collection all over the world.

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Another month passed. The game remained popular, even if the frenzy was less than what it had been. Lois and Clark still played, though they no longer played every single day.

“Why don’t you pick a movie?” Clark said as he cleaned up after their pizza dinner one night.

They were at her apartment and their plan to take an after-dinner Pokéwalk had been dashed by an unexpected mishap. They’d been running late for an interview that afternoon when Lois had missed a step going down a flight of stairs. She hadn’t fallen, but she’d landed the wrong way on her ankle, twisting it just enough to cause her pain for the rest of the day. To her credit, however, she’d done her best not to let it slow her down, even though Clark had begged her to take the rest of the day to tend to the injured ankle.

“I’m sorry about all this,” Lois said as he returned to collect their empty glasses. She gestured to her ankle, which was propped up on a pillow and had an ice pack on it. “I really did want to get out for a walk tonight.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Clark said, waving off her concerns. “I don’t know about you, but after all that pizza, I don’t think I could do much walking,” he easily fibbed as he disappeared into the kitchen and placed everything in the sink.

Lois rubbed her stomach in thought. “You might be right,” she admitted after a couple of seconds. “Still, I was hoping to work some of those calories off tonight on our walk. I guess I’ll have to make it up at the gym once my ankle is healed.”

Clark shook his head as he started to wash the dishes. It never ceased to baffle him that Lois thought she needed the gym or to work out in any way, shape, or form. He thought she was perfect, just the way she was, and he'd voiced that same opinion often enough.

"Did you need a new ice pack?" he called as he finished rinsing the last plate, turned off the water, and dried his hands on the dishtowel.

"Yeah, that's probably a good idea," Lois replied. She took the old one off her ankle, twisted her body, and tossed the now lukewarm pack at Clark.

He deftly caught the pack and brought it to the freezer. He took out the spare he'd bought on the way to her place and frowned. It hadn't had enough time to fully chill down. He threw a glance over his shoulder to make sure Lois wasn't looking and then hit it with a careful blast of his icy breath. When it was cold enough to satisfy him, he brought it to Lois and gently draped it over her ankle.

"How's that?" he asked.

Lois nodded. "It feels great. Thanks, Clark."

He smiled tenderly. "Any time. So, find anything good to watch?"

"*The Princess Bride*?" she asked.

Clark nodded. "One of my favorites." He sat down and gently placed her ankle in his lap. Carefully, he began to massage it through the ice pack. "Is that okay?"

"It feels fantastic," Lois said, nodding again.

They sat like that for several long minutes until there was a knock at the door. Clark placed her ankle back on the pillow and went to see who it was.

"Hi, Clark," Oscar, one of Lois' neighbors, said when Clark opened the door. "I *thought* I saw you in the hallway earlier."

"Hey, Oscar. What's up?" Clark asked.

"I was wondering if I could borrow you for a few minutes. Frances and I bought some furniture for the baby's room and I was kind of hoping..." His voice trailed off as though he was embarrassed to be asking for help.

"Absolutely," Clark said, nodding. "I'd love to give you a hand. Lois?" He looked to her to make sure she was okay with him leaving for a while.

"Go," she said with a smile. "I'll be fine."

"I promise, I won't keep him too long," Oscar said, comically crossing his heart for good measure.

"Don't worry about it. Your little girl needs furniture more than I need to watch a movie," Lois said with a sincere smile. "I'd come and help as well, but..." She gestured to her leg. "Sprained ankle. Tell Frannie I said hi though, would you?"

"Of course," Oscar said with a dip of his head. "Tell you what. I'm supposed to be picking up ice cream for Frannie after I get the furniture in. I'll get you some too. My humble payment for borrowing Clark here."

"Payment accepted." Lois laughed. "Now go, both of you." She waved them off.

Clark took one last, lingering look to make sure she was really okay, then followed Oscar's lead.

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Lois settled herself deeper into the couch cushions and idly watched the movie as she waited for Clark to return. But her mind kept wandering away from Westley and Buttercup's adventures. She smiled as she thought about Clark helping move baby furniture. Would he one day be moving baby furniture into *their* place?

The thought caught her by surprise. She'd never before thought of herself as a wife and mother. But with Clark, the thought seemed so right. So natural. So...necessary. As if she wouldn't be able to go on if there wasn't a future and a family with Clark.

*Am I crazy?* she wondered. *We've only been dating two months. I've had longer relationships with some of the food in my freezer. But...somehow...I know this is what I want. I want him. I want a life with him. A house and matching wedding bands and joint tax returns. I want to wake him up in the middle of the night to tell him it's his turn to feed and change the baby. I want to see his name next to mine everywhere, not just on the byline. I want to see it on our Pulitzer and our credit card bills and our magazine subscriptions. I want to see him with our newborn in his arms and to sit next to him at every graduation and honors ceremony. I want to grow old with him. I want to one day be buried with him in a joint cemetery plot somewhere, our names engraved in stone together.*

She smiled to herself. Yes, Clark was someone special. Someone she needed in her life, for now and always. The only man she could ever picture making a life with. It seemed ridiculous, looking back, that she'd ever been nervous about dating him, when he'd first asked her out. The fact that they'd gone into the dating world as best friends had only helped them, not hindered their relationship, the way she'd been afraid that it would.

And yet...she suspected that Clark was holding back. There was something he was hiding. She just had no idea what it could be. It wasn't his affections, that was for sure. He told her numerous times a day how much he loved her. Often, he said it with his words. But more often, whether he knew it or not, he proved it with his actions. A perfectly prepared cup of coffee before she could ask for one. A Double Fudge Crunch bar left on her desk on a particularly rough day. Flowers, for no reason at all. Home cooked meals. The gentle way he held her close. The passionate way he kissed her. The way he looked at her — like she was the center of the universe.

But...there was something.

How many times now had he ducked away with a terrible, limp excuse? How many times had he not even bothered with an excuse at all? How many dates had he "unexpectedly run late" to? How many times had she caught him with his attention anywhere other than where she was? Not that she had to be the center of attention all the time, she told herself. But, it was like a punch to the gut and her self-esteem every time she was trying to tell him something important or opening up her heart to him, only to find him not paying the least bit of attention to her. She knew that it wasn't a matter of her not meaning anything to him. It was just... what else could be so important that he flat out ignored her?

Still...Clark was good to her. He was the perfect gentleman in every way, even when he was good-naturedly teasing her. For the first time in her life, Lois knew that the relationship she was in *couldn't* end in disaster.

It was amazing, how considerate Clark could be. The Superman stories he handed her on a silver platter. The amazing takeout he never failed to find for her. The way she'd find herself tucked into bed if she happened to fall asleep at one of their apartments, even if it meant that Clark had to sleep on the couch. The stock of chocolate ice cream and cream soda he kept at his place, anticipating her every desire.

And, sometimes, there were Pokémon that mysteriously appeared in her collection if she left her phone unattended for any length of time — including more than one rare spawn.

Pokémon.

She shook her head. It still amazed her that she'd gotten so caught up in the craze. Oh, she didn't regret it at all. It was addicting and fun, plus it gave Clark and her a legitimate excuse to drag their dates out into the late hours of the night. She'd even discovered places in Metropolis that she'd never known about — even though she was a born and bred resident of the city.

Pokémon.

Theysure were cute, she had to admit. The Pikachu doll that

Clark had given her was a permanent fixture on her bed. Not a night went by that he didn't keep her company while she slept.

A light *blip!* from Clark's phone caught her attention.

*I wonder,* she thought as she instinctively reached for the phone.

She swiped her finger across the screen, ignoring the text from Jimmy that had caused the phone to make noise, and clicked on the Pokémon app. For a moment, she thought the servers were down again as it stalled on the loading screen, but after a few seconds it went through and she found his avatar on the map. As she'd hoped, there were a few Pokémon around, including two Eevees — adorable fox-like creatures she knew Clark was collecting, in an effort to get all three evolved forms. She deftly caught them, imagining how surprised he would be. She was pretty sure he only needed two more to trade in for the “candy” that was needed for the Eevee's transformation. She also caught a Charmander — a little fire dragon — for him and a Growlithe — a fire dog with the markings of a tiger.

When she was done catching the imaginary monsters, she decided to look through his collection in full, just to have something to do. But halfway through, she stopped, her eyes wide.

“A Mew?” she asked her empty apartment. “He never said anything about getting a Mew.”

Her stomach churned. Something wasn't right. Clark would have *definitely* mentioned a rare spawn to her. And yet, he hadn't. The question was — why? Why hadn't he told her about it? What was he hiding? She knew it wasn't a slip of his mind. They always compared notes on what they'd caught, each morning on the way to work as they stopped to purchase coffee and breakfast from one of the street vendors.

She clicked on the creature's photo. It looked like a little purple cat with a long tail.

It was an impressive creature. The combat points on it were respectfully high. But that wasn't what Lois was after. She wanted to see where and when he'd caught it. The date said he'd captured it just two nights before. And he'd been...

“*What?!*” Lois said as she read the location.

It couldn't be right. There just wasn't any way it could be correct.

“Bangladesh?” she said, shaking her head, as though it would erase the location and make a new one appear that made more sense. “How the hell...?”

“Lois?” came Clark's voice as the door to the apartment started to open. “Is everything okay? Oscar and I worked as fast as we could.” He stepped around the couch and sat on the end, careful not to jostle Lois' ankle. “I hope you weren't bored while I was gone,” he joked.

Lois shook her head to buy herself a second to gather her composure. “No, no. I was fine. I caught you a couple of Pokémon while you were gone.”

Clark's face broke into a grin. “Thank you! Catch anything good?”

“Not as good as what *you* 've been catching lately, apparently,” she replied, holding up his phone. “A Mew, Clark? That you caught in *Bangladesh?*”

She watched as his body stiffened and his face went white.

“I...I...I can explain,” he stammered.

“You'd *better*,” she said, her tone hard.

“The thing is...Well...I, uh...”

“Just tell me the truth, Clark,” she said, letting him know by her tone that she wasn't up for entertaining the usual lame excuses and — as she now suspected — lies.

He took a deep breath and hung his head. For a long minute he stayed like that, as if thinking things over. Lois could see just enough of his face to see that he was scared.

*No, not scared,* her inner voice said. *Terrified.*

With that realization, her own raw fear burst into existence.

Clark always exuded confidence. The few times she'd seen him scared, the situation had truly been dire. What could be so terrible now, that Clark was the most fearful she'd every seen him?

“Just tell me,” she encouraged again, this time softer and more inviting, her harsh edge gone. She almost reached for him, but pulled back at the last second, unsure if her touch would comfort him or spook him further.

Clark closed his eyes and exhaled through his nose, his brow furrowing in the process. A second later, he looked up and met her gaze. Fear still danced in those familiar chocolate orbs, but determination had also settled in them.

“Okay,” he finally said. “I owe you the truth. The full, unvarnished truth. Just...know that I never meant to lie. I never meant to hurt you. Believe me, Lois. I hate that I've had to keep this from you. But...I had to know if you and I could be together. That you'd want *me*. Without...” he gulped hard, “without what I have to tell you factoring into our relationship.”

“Clark, you're starting to scare me a little.”

He sighed. “What I'm trying to say is...even Superman plays *Pokémon GO*.”

“You mean...he took your phone and caught you some Pokémon?” Lois asked, more confused than ever.

“Not quite. Sometimes...after a rescue...I check the surrounding area for interesting Pokémon.”

“You mean, you go with Superman? Like a police ride-along?” The idea stung her heart. Superman had never offered *her* a chance to tag along on his rescues around the globe.

“No,” Clark said, shaking his head, the fear returning to his features. “I mean...Superman? He's nothing more than me in a garish suit that my mom created, so I could help people without everyone knowing that Clark Kent isn't a normal guy.”

“You...what?!” Lois asked as his words registered in her mind. A sense of vertigo crashed over her. She felt lightheaded and nauseous.

“I'm Superman,” Clark repeated in a flat whisper, hanging his head again. “I know that destroys your image of the hero. And I know it probably shatters all the trust you put into me. But...it's the truth. I've wanted to tell you for a long time now. At first, I was afraid you'd print the story in your quest for the Pulitzer. But pretty soon, I knew I could trust you not to run to Perry with Superman's true identity.”

“But you still lied,” Lois pointed out, matter-of-factly.

He nodded. “Yeah. By then, you and I had forged a friendship unlike any I've ever experienced before. And I knew I wanted more. I wanted to give us a chance at being a couple. But I was afraid. I knew you had a crush on Superman. I needed to know that you were choosing the *real* man behind the cape. Not the powers. Not all the things I could do for you *with* those powers. I know now that you *did* choose me — Clark. The problem was...I was afraid that I'd drive you away because I'd lied to you, even though I knew the lie would have to come to light sooner or later. It was a no-win situation for me...and...and I'm not sure I handled it right. So, I'm sorry.”

Lois crossed her arms over her chest and studied him for a moment. “You know that you have a *lot* more explaining to do, don't you?”

He bobbed his head once in a nod. “Of course. But can I say one thing before I get into my whole life story?”

Lois gave him a “go ahead” gesture. “Of course.”

He smiled shyly. “I'm really glad that you know now. I just wish I'd had the guts to tell you in person, instead of you finding out because of a stupid game.”

Lois laughed. “Yeah, me too.”

THE END