

# Witness – Matchmaker Style

By KenJ <ken.janney@kjanney.com>

Rated PG-13

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Summary: This is the fifth in the Matchmaker Style series. In the aftermath of “All Shook Up – Matchmaker Style,” Lois gets a call with an offer for an interview with a notorious womanizer. Clark had planned to go with her, but at the last second remembered a scheduled engagement, leaving her to fend for herself.

Story Size: 24,845 words (132Kb as text)

Disclaimers: The characters in this story are property of DC, December 3<sup>rd</sup> productions and Warner Bros. No Copyright infringement is intended. I have just borrowed the characters for a short time.

My thanks go out to my betas — Artemis and Ray — for their help.

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)

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What is past is Prologue — From All Shook Up —  
Matchmaker Style

## And Chapter 1

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -34 x Gamma 255 x Tau -225

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The next morning, Lois was at the Planet bright and early thanks to Martha preparing breakfast again. Clark had to respond to an emergency so she had gone in by herself. He would be with her shortly.

Looking out the windows from the newsroom, the staff marveled at the crowd in the streets. It rivaled the crowd seen in Times Square in New York City on New Year’s Eve. There were line dances forming and all kinds of noise makers in use.

In the newsroom itself a party atmosphere prevailed. The sound of champagne corks popping happened a few times and glasses were filled.

Jimmy, with the lack of expertise of a novice popped the cork only to have part of the contents bubble out in a foamy geyser drenching his hands and the floor. He managed to get some into a glass and holding it up in salute said to his boss and mentor, “Perry, these last two days were the best days of my life. Even if it was almost the end of the world.”

Perry clapped the younger man on the shoulder and said, “You did a good job Jimmy. You hustled, you didn’t give up, you got the story. I’m proud of you, son.”

Jimmy was suddenly very subdued, “That means a lot, coming from you. I just wish I could write better.”

By way of encouragement, Perry said, “Nothing wrong with being a photo-journalist with a nose for news. You keep at it, son. You never know what’ll happen.”

Suddenly a roar went up from the crowd down in the streets that drowned out the conversations in the newsroom. Jimmy grabbed his camera and threw open the window so that he could get some pictures. He saw that everyone was looking up and some were pointing at the sky. Following their track he saw Superman so he brought up his camera and started snapping picture after picture and was very pleased when Superman made a close approach and waved to him.

As soon as Jimmy had snapped a couple more pics, Superman put on a burst of speed and disappeared from view.

Looking around in anticipation, Lois watched the door to the stairwell. She wasn’t disappointed when literally, only seconds later, her husband stepped through straightening his tie. She smiled at him as he approached. When he was close she reached out to finish straightening his tie and said, “That was a nice thing to do. I’m sure it encouraged Jimmy. Perry was just talking to him about the importance of being a photojournalist.”

Clark reached up, tapped his ear, said, “I know,” and smiled a smile which she returned.

She mumbled, “Softie.”

He and Lois moved over to the window and looked down at the crowd. It was celebratory and not riotous, being rather peaceful. Loud enough so that those nearby could hear, Clark asked, “Did I miss something?”

Lois replied, “Your buddy Superman just made a flyby, that’s all.”

Perry was exuberant and as he approached Lois and Clark he said, “A real day to remember,” then he caught himself, suddenly remembering Clark’s amnesia, “If you’ll pardon the expression.”

Lois smiled and gave Clark a hug. Without breaking it she said, over her shoulder, “Not to worry, Chief. He’s all better now, aren’t you honey?”

Perry was all smiles as both he and Jimmy approached to shake Clark’s hand.

Lois added, “I just knew that a bump on the head wouldn’t keep him down.”

Cat came over and it looked to Lois as if she was going to try to kiss Clark, but to Lois’s surprise that’s not what happened. Cat walked up and put out her hand, saying, “Welcome back, Clark. I’m glad you got your memory back. I have to say, even without your memory; you’re still the nicest guy I think I’ve ever met. I’m just sorry you chose Lois and not me.”

Noting the tear at the corner of her eye, Clark said, “Cheer up, Cat. I’m sure that the right guy for you is out there, somewhere. You just need to slow down and let him find you.”

Cat smiled and said, “Thanks, Clark. I’ll give it a try,” turned and walked away.

Lois pulled Clark aside and asked, “Honestly, truthfully, when did your memory come back?”

“I was starting to get little flashes, but when we went to bed a lot of Clark returned. I never really forgot you. It was me that was lost.” Looking around to make sure no one was listening, he added, “When you were telling me how Superman had saved you so many times, that’s when he came back. I also remembered how I dealt with the asteroid. I used that karate technique you taught me. You know, I think I should learn more about karate.”

Lois said, in a quiet tone, “I think so too. You can join me at the dojo. It’ll be nice. We can practice together. Now that your memory is back, I think it’s time we talked about Luthor. You are

not going to believe this story.”

“I think that later tonight will be soon enough. As Perry would say, ‘We have a paper to get out.’”

Lois smiled and swatted his arm before she said, “How right you are. We have to write up the ‘Superman Saves the World’ story, but that’s yesterday’s news.” Looking around to make sure she wouldn’t be heard and dropping her tone to a conspiratorial level, she said, “I think, though, that our next big story is going to be, Lex Luthor.”

Clark quirked an eyebrow and wondered what Luthor had done to put that particular bee in her bonnet. Whatever it was, he was happy he had done it. Only time would tell where this would lead.

Perry came back over to them and said, “Say, listen, you two. Clark, you’ve been through a lot the last few days and Lois you’ve had your hands full for the same reason. Why don’t the two of you take the afternoon off. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Lois turned to Perry and said, “Just as soon as we type up our story. You do want it, don’t you?”

“What story?”

“Our ‘Superman Saves the World’ story. He stopped by and gave us an interview when he came back, before we came in to work. He told us just how he did it.”

Perry was beaming and said, “Get that to me before the afternoon edition deadline and you can take the rest of today and tomorrow as well.”

Lois brightened up and said, “That works perfectly. Thanks, Chief. Come on, Clark, let’s get this written up and submitted. Then we can get out of here before he changes his mind.” Grabbing Clark’s arm she practically dragged him back toward their desks.

Together they worked on the story like a well oiled machine. They had it done in record time and sent it off. As soon as Lois hit the send key she started shutting down her machine and then, taking Clark’s arm, the two strolled to the elevator. Perry couldn’t help but notice the little bump that Lois gave Clark with her hip as they approached the elevator and the flirty way she talked to him.

Perry stood there in openmouthed wonder. Who was this person inhabiting Lois Lane’s body. She wasn’t quite a total stranger. She had her ‘Mad Dog Lane’ moments, but previously they had needed to practically blast to get her to leave work for any reason whatever. However, since she had married Clark that was no longer the case. He smiled as they entered the elevator and thought, <That boy is a miracle worker. He’s turned that hard chargin’ reporter into a woman ... a woman in love with her husband and he has done it without blunting her edge. That’s a change for the better. I wonder how it will be when they finally have children.>

As they were on the way home, Clark was thinking about his parents and their current accommodations and decided that a discussion was in order. He also thought that it would be nice to take everyone out for a fun activity to divert everyone’s minds from the recent events. As Lois drove he got an idea and asked, “Lois, how long has it been since you played golf?”

Lois looked askance at him. This was in no way the kind of question she had expected from him especially after what they had been discussing just before Perry had sent them home. Taking it at face value she simply said, “Oh, I don’t know, a while. Why?”

“I was just thinking that it might be fun if the four of us went to the driving range or a chip-n-putt as an outing. You know something fun and totally different from recent events.”

Lois started to smile as she thought about it and said, “Yeah, I kinda like that idea. It could be fun. Let’s do it.”

Clark smiled at her agreement and nodded his head.

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Martha jumped at the chance for an outing, but Jonathan demurred complaining that he was ‘a farmer, not a golfer.’ Martha finally convinced him to join them and they all headed out.

Rather than a chip-n-putt they wound up on the driving range. They were lined up as couples with Clark on one end and Jonathan on the other. Clark liked being behind Lois so that he could watch her ‘form’, something he never tired of. Even playing golf, Lois displayed grace and poise. As he watched her swing, the smooth action impressed him. When she finished her swing she remained poised with the club over her left shoulder watching her ball fly. He had his eyes on her and as a result almost missed the flight of the ball as it sailed down the range and landed near the one hundred-fifty yard marker.

Finally tearing his eyes off of his wife’s form he looked down range and saw the ball as it landed. He complimented her, “Nice one!”

Smiling, Lois said, “Thank you. This is fun. Thank you for thinking of doing this.”

“You’re welcome.” He placed a ball on the rubber tee and addressed the ball. His swing was awkward. He was hunched and trying to ‘power’ the ball rather than allowing the club to do the work. The ball barely made it to the fifty yard marker and that was on the second bounce.

Lois had stopped to watch and quipped, “Not your game, huh?”

Clark just shook his head.

Lois stepped over to him and gave him a quick kiss before saying, “That just makes this that much more special. You were thinking about me and not yourself,” picking up her bucket she said, “I’m going to go get another bucket of balls. Be right back,” she walked off.

As she walked away, Clark appreciated the sway of her hips, but then he was distracted by his parents. His mother had donned a pink jogging suit for the outing and Jonathan was in his usual jeans and flannel shirt. His mother had a wide grin on her lips as she sent a ball straight down the range. As they watched it landed and bounced to a stop between the one hundred and one hundred-fifty yard marker.

Clark said, “Way to go, Mom. That was a good one.”

Martha replied, “I never knew that golf could be so much fun.”

Jonathan was holding his club like a rake or a hoe and swinging it like an axe. His balls were barely making it off the artificial turf that they were standing on. Lois was returning with her fresh bucket of balls and stopped next to Jonathan. She set the bucket down and started giving him pointers. First she corrected his grip and then his stance. Then she had him pull into his swing. As he did, she said, “Okay, keep your left arm straight. Let it pull the club through the stroke. As you hit the ball you start to push with your right arm.”

Lois placed a ball on the tee for him and said, “Give it a try.”

Trying to put Lois’s pointers into effect, Jonathan took a swing. He impacted the ball cleanly and it sailed down range for one hundred yards.

Jonathan was standing there goggling at the result and Lois gave him a hug. “There, you see, you can do it.”

Jonathan came out of his stupor and returned his daughter-in-law’s hug, “Thanks to you.”

Lois gave him a kiss on the cheek and quipped, “What are daughters for?”

Lois moved over to Clark placed a ball on his tee and said, “Same thing applies to you. Elbow straight, pull the club through the stroke and this time don’t chop at it. Follow through.”

Before starting his swing, Clark looked around surreptitiously and saw that no one was watching. He decided to play with her and used a smidgeon of superstrength. He followed her style tips

and when he followed through he was looking downrange and so was Lois. Her mouth dropped open and then she started to giggle as the ball kept gaining altitude as it soared toward outer space.

Under her breath she said, “Show off. No more tips for you.”

On the way back from the driving range they stopped for a light lunch before heading back to the apartment. They didn’t want to spoil their appetites for dinner.

When they walked in, the aroma of roasting turkey greeted their nostrils. With all that had been happening, they had missed Thanksgiving dinner in Smallville. That morning, before they had gone on their outing, Martha had put a turkey in the oven to slow cook while they were out.

Once they were inside, the first words out of Lois’s mouth were, “Oh, that heavenly aroma. It smells good enough to eat!”

Martha chuckled and said, “It will be a while yet.”

Lois replied, “I can hardly wait.” Lois put her clubs away and plopped down on the sofa next to Clark. Martha went into the kitchen to check on dinner. It would be some time yet until the side dishes would need to be put on. Sitting down in an easy chair, Jonathan picked up a copy of the Farmer’s Almanac that he had brought with him from Kansas.

Once Martha finished in the kitchen she came in and sat on the arm of the chair that Jonathan was sitting in. “Thanks for the outing. We really enjoyed it.”

Smiling, Jonathan agreed, “Yes, it was fun.”

Lois said, “Thank Clark. It was his idea.”

Jonathan said, “Actually, it was fun. Thanks to Lois’s pointers.” He was thoughtful for a few seconds and then he said, “Now that the emergency is over, we need to start thinking about heading home.”

Lois and Clark tied as they both started to say, “So soon?” and “Not yet.”

They both stopped and looked at each other and then the senior Kents. Clark said, “I think we need to discuss this.”

Martha had been chuckling. She knew that Clark and Lois both loved them and the feeling was mutual. They had only known Lois for a short time, but she was already an integral member of this small family, but this apartment was too small for four people for very long and that problem needed to be addressed. “Clark, honey, we know you would like us to stay, but the truth is ... your apartment is too small for four people. We need to get out of here so that you two won’t feel ... inhibited ... by our presence.”

Lois launched into what she had been wanting to say all morning, “That’s just what we need to discuss. Clark, something happened while you were away the other day. I think you’ll be interested in what I have to tell you.”

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## Chapter 02

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Clark turned to Lois to hear the story while Martha and Jonathan listened in with interest.

Lois prefaced her story, “You know how you’ve been telling me that we have to discuss Luthor and how I finally said that I think we need to investigate him?” At his nod she continued, “Okay, well, while you were away, something creepy happened.

“We were all looking for you and I got this call from Asabi, you know, Luthor’s valet. He said that Luthor had something to show me. I thought that perhaps he had some evidence of your return so I went to see him. Well, as you know, he didn’t have anything relating to you. Here’s what happened; when I got there Asabi took me down in an elevator. I don’t mean just down to the wine cellar or a sub-basement, I mean down, down ... five hundred meters down into this fancy bunker that he called his Ark. Reinforced walls, maybe lead lined for all I know. Anyhow, it was where he was planning to ride out the impact with a couple of hundred ‘guests.’ He was inviting me to be one of them.

Naturally, there would be a price ... my ‘companionship.’ Talk about a euphemism, he wanted me as a sex partner. Now we come to the really sick part. He opened a doorway and I was looking at my apartment. Not this one, my old one, with my furniture, my fish tank, complete with duplicates of my fish and my bedroom with clothing and lingerie.

“When I saw that I nearly freaked out. How dare he invade my privacy like that! I noted what was there and apparently he had people break in while we were in Smallville. He sent people in and they must have taken measurements and pictures so that they could duplicate everything, even the books on my bookshelf. It makes me furious to think of some sleezeball pawing through my lingerie. I haven’t been in that apartment very much since we got back, just enough to move what I’ve needed and take care of the fish. Your apartment always seemed more like home to me so this is where we settled. Anyhow, if he’d do something like that, what else has he done?”

“I reminded him of my married status and he said that you would probably die in the impact and I shouldn’t worry. Besides, I was a married woman carrying a torch for another man. That he was collecting evidence to present to you to get you to divorce me.”

With a quirked eyebrow, Clark asked, “Who does he think you’re carrying this torch for?”

Lois started to chuckle, “Would you believe, Superman? He thinks I’m carrying a torch for you, sweetie.”

Martha started to laugh, “What gave him that idea?”

Lois replied, “Probably the kiss at the airport. Oh, and the kiss before the ‘Nightfall’ mission.”

Thoughtfully, Clark said, “We’re going to have to start being more careful in public. If the tabloids got hold of something like that they could start a scandal.”

That sobered Lois up immediately, “You’re right. We don’t need Lois Lane and Superman becoming a ‘thing’ while she is married to one of his best friends, now do we?”

“I’m glad that I won’t have to work at convincing you about Luthor now.”

“Yes, we need to get moving on that investigation, I mean, if he’ll do that ... what else is he capable of?”

Clark snickered and said, “Let me count the ways.”

“Anyhow, about my old apartment. It’s still there. The lease is still active.” She looked around at Martha and Jonathan and then back to Clark, “It’s a two bedroom and if we lived there then your parents would have their own bedroom.”

Clark looked around at their apartment and weighed the pros and cons then he said, in a musing tone, “I wonder what else his people did while they were there?”

Lois was shocked, “Isn’t taking pictures and measurements and going through my ... personal things enough?”

“I’ve got a hunch, based on something Luthor did to me before. Wait right here, I’ll be right back.” He spun into the suit and flew out through the balcony doors.

A minute later there was the sound of a whirlwind in the bedroom and Clark came striding out. After sitting down next to Lois he said, “I suspected as much.”

Lois was curious, “What?”

“Remember months ago when there were jumpers on the opposite sides of town?”

Lois nodded.

“Remember when there was an anonymous tip about a bomb in a deserted building and as soon as I entered it was detonated?”

Lois nodded again.

“After that incident, I was informed that there were remote cameras installed in the building and they weren’t part of the security system. They had been added later. I know when they were added ... at the same time that the bomb was installed. They used the cameras to see me enter so that they would know when

to detonate the bomb.”

“I hadn’t told you this part before. I figured out that these were all tests and who was behind them ... Luthor. I confronted him about them. He outright threatened me that if I stuck around the tests would continue, placing innocent people’s lives in jeopardy. As far back as then, he saw me as a threat to his operations and was trying to drive me away.”

“Why that lousy ...”

“What you just told me gave me an idea for something to check out. He likes to use cameras so I decided to check your old apartment. I found six video cameras and three other microphones installed.”

Lois gasped, “I don’t know if I want you to tell me where they were located.” She was silent for several seconds as her curiosity warred with her fear of what she would hear. Finally her curiosity won, “Ooooooh, tell me.”

“Two video cameras in the living room at different angles. Two in the bedroom, one pointed at your bed. One in the kitchen.”

“That’s only five. Where was the other one?”

“Do you really want to know?”

She gasped at the implication of what he was about to say hit her, “I need to know.”

“In the shower.”

A look of pure fury occupied her visage, “Wow, I’m so glad we moved here as soon as we got back from Smallville. You’re the only one that’s going to see me naked from now on. That does it. We are going to take that scumbag down if it’s the last thing I do. Did you remove them?”

“I left them all in place. Here’s my idea. If we were planning to move back in we might just want to repaint the walls. While we were doing that we might just happen to find the bugs. What do you think?”

Lois started to laugh, “That might just work. We could find them without tipping the fact that Superman located them. And if we called in Henderson, maybe he could trace them back to the monitoring station. If we can prove that Luthor had a hand in this we would have the first step toward bringing him down. I love it.”

Clark looked at Jonathan and asked, “Do you feel like doing some painting, Dad?”

Jonathan was laughing and said, “Just try to keep me away. I want to do what I can to help.”

“Perry gave us tomorrow off, so let’s start tomorrow, as long as you guys don’t mind sleeping on the sofa bed for a few more days.”

Martha laughed and said, “Anything for a good cause.”

Lois became very serious, “All right. Tell me the rest. What do you suspect?”

“Think about what happened just a couple of weeks ago. We were getting ready to go do the interview with Luthor. Very conveniently, I should say, too conveniently, there was a robbery across town and an anonymous tip for me to go there. What kind of person would be able to set something like that up? We’ve been hearing about a mysterious ‘Boss’ of the underworld. I’m starting to think that it could be Luthor.”

“That’s kind of flimsy evidence to convict someone on.”

“Here’s another piece of the puzzle. Remember the Toasters? Toni Taylor?”

Lois had a sour expression as she replied, “I remember you kissing Toni Taylor.”

“Oh, come on, Lois. I only did that so that you could get out without her seeing you.”

“She sure looked like she was enjoying it. I know how she felt. I’ve been on the receiving end of those kisses of yours for a while now.”

“Lois, I didn’t kiss her because I wanted to and truthfully

your kisses are much better.”

“They’d better be, buster. You’re treading on very thin ice with this one.”

“The point is that there was a piece of evidence I found that I never said anything about. I went to that warehouse you spent the night in and found Toni all tied up as the police were on their way.”

“What was this evidence?”

“Apparently someone had been there presumably to threaten Toni into silence. I found a silk handkerchief on a stool next to her. One I recognized as belonging to Lex Luthor. I believe that he was behind the Toasters and allowed Toni to use them, as long as what they were doing fit with his purposes. When they went rogue he decided to cut his losses and throw the blame on Toni.”

“Plausible.”

“Remember the Messenger investigation, Antoinette Banes?”

Lois nodded, “Why do you keep bringing up all of these investigations where there were blonds trying to jump your bones?”

“That’s not it. Remember how she tried to kill us?”

Lois nodded.

Remember she was killed when her chopper blew up?”

Another nod.

“It all led up to the Prometheus sabotage. Tell me, who would have benefited from the failure of the Prometheus Project?”

“I don’t know.”

“Remember how Luthor announced his plans for Space Station — Luthor? If Prometheus failed he would put up his station and reap the untold billions from patents resulting from the zero ‘G’ environment. I also suspect that he would have had weapons packages installed so that eventually he could have blackmailed the world. The man is an amoral sociopath with delusions of grandeur.”

Jonathan and Martha had been listening, along with Lois as Clark had been laying this all out.

Martha asked, “If that’s the case, won’t it be dangerous to investigate him?”

Lois looked at Martha and chuckled, “Sometimes I think danger is my middle name.”

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Then next day, Lois and Clark, Jonathan and Martha all showed up at Lois’s old apartment with paint, brushes, drop cloths and ladders.

It wasn’t very long until the bugs were ‘found’ and Lois placed a call to the MPD, “MPD, Bill Henderson”

“Hi, Bill, Lois Lane.”

“Oh, no, I thought I would have some peace now that you and Kent are married.”

Lois laughed and said, “No rest for the wicked, Bill. Look, Bill, we’re at my old apartment. We were starting to repaint so that we could move back in and we found something very interesting.”

“What happened, did they move your first floor apartment to the fifth floor suddenly?”

“No, nothing like that, but we did find that someone has bugged my apartment. Could you come down and take a look?”

“I’ll grab a forensics squad and come over. Any idea as to who would do it?”

“We’ll talk to you when you get here.”

“Okay. Don’t touch anything until we get there.”

“We know all that, Bill. What do you think we are ... rookies?”

“No, I think you’re a royal pain in my tookis, but I put up with you.”

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Within half an hour Bill and the forensics team were there. They pointed out the bugs that they had found and the forensics

team went to work. They found that wires ran from the video cameras to the basement. In the basement they were tied into the telephone patch panel. A trace was placed on the signal and they followed it to a warehouse across town. There was evidence of equipment having been set up, but by the time they got there almost everything had been removed.

Once she was given the address, Lois called Jimmy, “Jimmy, I need you to find out for me who owns the warehouse at 1530 Bessolo Blvd. Give me a call when you have something.”

“You got it. I’ll call you back.”

Five minutes later, Jimmy called back, “Hey, Lois, I got the information. That warehouse belongs to Farbin Industries, Inc.”

“Never heard of them.”

Jimmy was chuckling as he said, “How about the rest of the name, a subsidiary of Luthor Enterprises?”

Lois smiled, “Just what I thought. Thanks, Jimmy. Good work.”

Turning to Bill, Lois said, “Okay, it was Lex Luthor. The first charges are home invasion, invasion of my privacy, illegal monitoring and illegal wiretap. Of course those are chump change and with the kind of lawyers he has available, he could get out of them. We need something heavy duty and enough proof to make it stick.”

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### Chapter 03

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The next day Martha and Jonathan moved to Lois’s old apartment so that they could continue the repainting and Lois and Clark could have some alone time.

For the next week Lois and Clark were busy doing follow-ups on the aftermath of ‘Nightfall.’

Meanwhile at Lois’s old apartment, Jonathan was busily occupied working on repainting while Martha was adding some other touches. After getting Lois’s permission she had worked on replacing drapes and some other accessories so that they would coordinate with the new color scheme. The work on the apartment took the rest of the week and Jonathan and Martha lived there while they did the work. Lois and Clark were with them on a nightly basis visiting and eating together. In due time, Jonathan and Martha finished the work on the apartment and MPD had removed all of the bugs.

Jonathan had started worrying about the farm so the decision was made for them to return. During the day, Jonathan and Martha packed their bags. That evening, Lois and Clark moved their clothing to Lois old apartment as the first step of their move and after dinner, leaving Lois and Martha together, Superman gave Jonathan a lift to Wichita to pick up his truck.

After dropping Jonathan off, Superman returned to Metropolis and picked up Jonathan and Martha’s bags and took them to Smallville and then gave Martha a lift to the farm. After seeing to it that there were no problems and feeling that Martha would be safe, Superman left.

Returning to Metropolis, he landed in an alley and spun back into Clark. At a leisurely pace he walked to Lois’s old apartment which would now be their apartment and opened the door to find his wife waiting for him, posed enticingly on the couch in a negligee.

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The next morning, Lois decided to wear something a little provocative to tease her husband. They had enjoyed their time together the previous night and Lois had it in mind to have a repeat performance and a little visual foreplay was just what the doctor ordered. She was very careful with picking her wardrobe and selected a business suit which had a skirt and jacket that were almost the color of Superman’s cape. The jacket had a yoke neckline which dipped down and actually allowed the very top of her lacy black bra to peek out when she moved. The skirt was one

of her shortest. It was so short that thigh highs were out of the question, it had to be pantyhose or nothing. She decided on the pantyhose. Even with that she would have to be careful when she sat down. Her pumps had enough heel to give her legs definition. As she was looking at herself in the mirror she was thinking, <Lois Lane, what has gotten into you? You’ve turned into such a tease.> She smiled at her image and thought, <But Clark loves it.>

Clark had been working on breakfast while she had been dressing and when she stepped around the corner and Clark could see her he stopped what he was doing and stared. A low whistle escaped his lips and he said, “Wow!”

Lois did a slow pirouette and asked, “You like?”

His brain was stuck and all he could manage was another, “Wow!”

She stepped over to him and put her palm on the side of his face gently and said, “I like to dress for my husband. I like him to like what he sees. Do you?”

“Wow!”

Lois laughed and said, “I’ll take that as a yes. What’s for breakfast?”

“Uh, legs and, uh that is eggs ... eggs and bacon, toast with honey ...”

In a husky tone, Lois teased, “I think I’ll have my honey tonight. I’ll use jelly this morning.”

The implications of her words and the tone of her voice served to send his blood rushing south and she smiled at the effect she was having on him.

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On one of the city streets an older woman approached a newsstand. She was wearing a long coat with a silk scarf around her neck. She had a brown clutch purse under her left arm and she was looking around as if looking for something or someone. She checked her watch and then stepping to a magazine rack pulled out a copy of ‘TEMPO’ which had her picture on the cover. The title of the article on the cover was “Can She Save the Rain Forrest?”

As she was contemplating it a voice interrupted her, “Nice picture.”

She looked up as she slid the magazine back into its rack and, looking up at the man that had spoken said, “You’re late.”

He replied, “Power’s made you very impatient. You should try to relax.”

Her expression was one of exasperation at his ‘joke’ as she replied, “I’ll relax when Winninger’s no longer a problem.” She clutched her coat closer, not necessarily from the cold, “He called me. He’s threatening to talk to the media.”

“Let ‘im. Who’s gonna believe that bag of wind?”

“He has proof. I need you to get it back for me.” She stepped away a few paces so that they wouldn’t be overheard, “And I need you to see to it that he’s in no condition to talk to anybody about anything.”

“You were lovers. Are you sure?”

She gave a sardonic laugh and said, “That was a long time ago, Sebastian. He’s nothing but a memory now. Getting dimmer every day.”

“Hmmm, this can’t be worth it, can it?”

“He can stop me from taking over the consortium. If he does that ... we lose our business opportunities. We’re talking about billions of dollars here, Sebastian. Erase him.”

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When they got to the Planet, as they were riding up in the elevator, Lois threw her arms around Clark’s neck and started a kiss. As she did she hooked her right leg around the back of his legs and pulled him in close. The contact was almost too much for him to bear. Since seeing her first thing he had been in a constant state of arousal and he knew she was doing it

purposefully. He was looking forward to the evening when they would be able to relieve the frustration.

Seconds before the door opened, Lois straightened up and pulled her skirt back down. As they exited the elevator they were each sipping from their travel mugs and Clark had a sheen of perspiration on his forehead.

They made their way to their desks and Lois made sure that Clark was looking at her when she sat and slowly crossed her legs, in an exaggerated way so as to hike the hem of her skirt just that much farther before sliding under her desk. She smiled as she did because of the look on Clark's face. He was almost drooling with desire. Lois felt soooooo terrifically sexy. It was a real boost to a girl's ego to have someone like her husband want her so much. It helped that she wanted him just as much. Her thoughts drifted back to the pheromone incident and she wondered if she could pull a Cat and take Clark into the copy room. She started smiling a wicked smile in anticipation of that as her phone rang, <rats!> Picking up the phone she said, "Daily Planet, Lois Lane."

"Ms. Lane, my name is Vincent Winninger. I assume that you've heard of me."

Lois was immediately all business, "Of course, Dr. Winninger, who hasn't? How can I help you?"

"Well, Ms. Lane, something has come up and it makes it important that I speak to the press. I am aware of your reputation and felt that you and the Daily Planet would be the paper to talk to as opposed to the Star. They are too sensationalist and this is a serious topic."

"Dr. Winninger, I appreciate the confidence you have in me and the Planet. When would you like to meet?"

"Could you join me in half an hour?"

"Let me check with my partner."

"I'd prefer if you would come alone."

"Well, my partner happens to be my husband. He prefers if I don't conduct interviews with men alone."

She could hear the disappointment in his tone as he said, "Oh, I see."

She called over to Clark, "Clark, Vincent Winninger, he wants me to interview him, half an hour from now, you free?"

He nodded.

Returning to the phone, Lois said, "Okay, Dr. Winninger. We'll be there in half an hour." He gave her the address and she wrote it down.

Jimmy overheard and said, "Vincent Winninger, the mad scientist?"

Lois replied, defensively, "He's not 'mad.' He's eccentric."

Cat had just arrived. She was in the process of removing a full length leopard print coat as Lois was speaking and when she heard the name 'Winninger' stopped and asked, "You're going to interview Vincent Winninger?" Cat had on a formfitting floor length gown in black with a slit up both sides in the front to allow both legs to be seen as she walked.

Lois was smug as she replied, "Yes."

Cat was talking to herself as she said, "That explains the attempt to look sexy."

Lois overheard Cat and replied, "I'll have you know that Clark finds me very sexy. She stood and did a slow turn, "I wore this for him. I have a husband to please and I try to do just that."

Jimmy had been drinking a bottle of orange juice and still had it in his hand and gestured as he cautioned, "Watch out, Lois. Vincent Winninger is notorious."

Cat interrupted, "Wolf. A womanizer. Maybe I should go with you or do you want me to take your place?"

In a matter of fact tone, Lois said, "Clark is going with me."

Cat looked at Clark with a raised eyebrow and said, "I could still take your place."

Clark looked at Cat and said, "No way," then he reconsidered her apparel and asked, "Wait a minute. Are you planning to

exploit your femininity?"

Lois challenged, "To get the story of one of the strangest and most reclusive scientists of our time? You bet."

Clark said, "I'm just glad I'll be there with you."

Lois grabbed her pad and pencil, stuffed them into her camel colored bag and standing up said, "Let's go partner."

Standing, Clark approached and placing his hand at the small of her back in a very possessive gesture escorted her to the elevator.

For a change, Lois was good as they rode the elevator down concentrating on the questions she wanted to ask. They grabbed a cab and headed for Winninger's apartment.

As the cab was pulling to the curb, Clark remembered an appointment. After Clark paid the cab he turned to Lois and said, "Look, I just remembered, Superman is supposed to be speaking at Career Day at an elementary school in," he checked his watch, "Five minutes."

She said only one word, "Go."

"But what about Winninger?"

"I can handle him. I'm a brown belt, remember?"

"Okay." He turned and looked for a convenient alley.

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After Clark left, Lois made her way to Winninger's apartment. When he opened the door he gave her a very close appraisal noting the short skirt and décolletage allowing the top of her bra to be seen. His eyebrows rose at the sight. He looked around. She had told him that her husband would be with her, but he didn't see him. If he in fact wasn't there, he might have a clear field. Stepping back from the doorway, he said, "Please come in. I thought you said that your husband would be with you."

Lois sized him up. He was a tall, slim, energetic man, not young, once handsome, still long-haired and charming. She could tell by the way he was looking at her that Cat's warning had been right on the mark. The first word that came to mind was 'Wolf' with a capitol 'W.' "I did and he was until the last second, but he was called away."

His insincerity was obvious as he said, "That's too bad. Shall I take your jacket?"

Lois knew what he was trying to do. The jacket wasn't really a jacket, it was the top of the suit and was the only thing covering her bra. She said, "No thanks, I prefer to keep it on."

Disappointment apparent in his voice, he said, "My materials are in my den. This way, please." He led the way to another room and offered her a seat which she declined. She was looking interestedly at a number of pictures on the walls.

Seeing her interest, he joined her to explain what she was looking at. He stood behind her, close behind her and his attention was split between the pictures and what he could manage to see of her chest over her shoulder.

Even before he said anything, Lois recognized a number of ex-Presidents, movie personalities and some ex-astronauts.

Winninger pointed at one particular picture. In it, Winninger was with Marilyn Monroe. The picture was taken at such an angle that it was abundantly obvious that he was staring directly at her cleavage. He said, "Did you know that Marilyn never wore undergarments? She was braless in that picture and that soft fabric ... you could tell the state of her libido ... easily. You probably didn't know that she didn't like zippers did you? When filming, she liked to be sewn up in her dresses." As he finished saying all of this he took another opportunity to try to look down Lois's bodice.

Lois quickly brought up her hand and placed it over her cleavage, blocking his view.

They moved on to other photographs. There was a group shot and he said, "Scientists, philosophers, historians, hippies ... That was the Elimont Center. The 'intellectual' commune. Named after ... I don't remember who we named it after, do you? Whoever he

was, you can bet he was obscure.”

There were a number of photos of the Elimont Center group both at work and at play. There were pictures from a conference, a dance and, interestingly, some theater productions. “We performed ‘A Streetcar Named Desire,’ ‘Look Back in Anger,’ ‘Marat/Sade’ and others.”

There was another group photo and Lois asked about it.

“That was the commune’s theater group.”

Lois peered closely at a particular photo and asked, “Is that ...”

He supplied, “Frank Sinatra? Uh, no. That’s Sebastian Finn. We called him, Mr. Make-up. He could make himself look like just about anyone.” He stopped for a second to think before finishing, “His Bette Davis was ... remarkable.”

Curious, Lois asked, “What happened to him?”

He replied, “I really don’t know, he sort of ... disappeared.” He stopped as if considering what to say and then decided on, “His make-up was a whole lot better than his acting.”

Lois pointed to one of the women in the picture and asked, “Isn’t that ...”

Vincent nodded, “Yes, Barbara Trevino. She’s come a long way. From radical hippie to ...”

Lois finished for him, “To chairperson of the Rain Forest Consortium.”

Suddenly serious, Vincent replied, “Well, not until Tuesday. But we’re going to change all that.”

Lois’s curiosity was aroused, “We?”

Still seriously, he replied, “Yes, you and me. That’s why you’re here, Ms. Lane.” He gave that a few seconds to sink in before he apparently changed the topic, “Did you know that I spent several years living with an Amazonian tribe?”

“I have had a chance to glance over your bio.”

Vincent beckoned her to the sofa. On the coffee table was a box.

Lois sat, carefully and crossed her legs demurely, managing to keep her skirt from riding up too high as she did.

Vincent opened the box and took out some journals and notebooks. As he did, he narrated, “The Life and Times of Vincent Winninger. In this play, Barbara Trevino has a leading role. She’s the femme fatale.”

Lois slid forward slightly to see better. When she did her skirt rode up slightly revealing more of her legs.

Vincent Winninger was a very observant man and saw what was happening. Giving her legs a leer he reached down and put his hand on her knee and she gave him a startled look as her mouth dropped open to say something, he interrupted her and said, “You’re a very good looking woman.”

Feeling that it wouldn’t hurt to remind him of her married status, Lois grabbed his hand and removed it from her knee as she replied, “Thank you. My husband would agree with you.”

Apparently out of left field he suddenly asked, “How do you feel about increased male potency?”

Lois was flabbergasted and blurted out, “What? My husband is very potent. He’s the next best thing to Superman.” She energetically tugged her skirt back down before she continued, “Look, Dr. Winninger. I know your reputation with women is only exceeded by your scientific one, but I think it’s best if we keep this meeting purely professional.”

He nodded and replied, “I’m sure every woman feels that way about their husband, but what if I told you that was precisely the point?”

Lois was getting quite confused, “What am I missing here?”

The light of fanaticism came into his eyes as he said, “Barbara Trevino is going to sell all of us and the Ozone Layer straight down the river, and destroy our chances for increased male potency.”

Lois thought about what he was saying and finally she said,

“I guess the sixties were pretty good to you.”

Feeling insulted, Vincent said, “Hear me out. It will all become clear.” Picking one of the notebooks he handed it to Lois.

After she accepted it she looked at it in puzzlement. She was distracted when he asked, “Would you like some iced tea?”

She didn’t answer and he took her non-answer as acceptance, since it suited his ends. Both of her hands were occupied holding the notebook and it was a surprise to her when Winninger grabbed a glass and pitcher of iced tea and started pouring. It was hard for Lois to tell if it was an accident or deliberate, but as he poured the tea he managed to spill a quantity on her skirt. Thinking back on it, Lois decided that it had to be deliberate because he had needed to move the glass away from the table and over her lap in order for it to happen.

He said, “Oh, I’m so sorry,” and immediately grabbed a napkin to start wiping it up by putting his hands on her thigh. “I’m sorry.”

She jumped up and away from him and said, “Uh huh, that’s okay. I’ll get it.” She still had the notebook in her hand as she headed for the powder room that adjoined the den.

She was half way to the powder room when she heard a knock on the door. Looking back over her shoulder she saw Winninger rise to answer the knock.

Before Winninger was able to answer the knock, Lois was in the powder room with the door partially closed.

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#### Chapter 04

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Lois had set the notebook down on the cover of the commode seat and was starting to blot up the tea from her skirt as she heard Winninger answer the door. She heard him say, “You’re back early.” There was a few seconds pause and then she heard him say, “No.”

If there was a reply, she didn’t hear it. There was though a short pause before she heard Winninger again, in a loud, scared voice shout, “No!”

Immediately following Winninger’s shout there was a sound like a light cough. Instinctively, Lois knew what it must be ... the sound of a gun with a silencer being fired. At the sound of Winninger’s shout, Lois had frozen in mid-action. Now she was galvanized into action. She stepped back to be sure that no one looking from the den would see her in the powder room. Seeing a crack at the door frame she peeked through.

Initially, there was nothing in her field of view, but then she saw Winninger’s hand come down and slap the floor, hard. So hard that if he had been alive and conscious he would have cried out in pain, however, there was no sound. Lois clamped her hand over her mouth to stifle any possible outcry which would reveal her presence.

As she watched through the crack she could watch Winninger’s apparently lifeless hand. Suddenly another hand reached into her field of view and felt for a pulse. Finding none the killer placed the silenced gun into the small duffle bag he was carrying. By shifting her position slightly she was able to get a look at the killer. He was on the small side, plain looking, perhaps even pleasant looking. He was a non-descript middle-aged balding man with a fringe of graying hair wearing a shirt with a bow tie. As she watched he stood up.

When he stood up he moved out of her field of view, but she realized that he was headed in her direction. The door had only been open a crack and Lois eased it closed the final way, slowly so as not to attract attention. Once that was done she backed against the wall, behind the door. When she did, she saw the notebook lying where she had left it, but before she could retrieve it the doorknob was turned and the door opened. Lois had started to reach for the notebook, but when the door started to open she retreated behind the door.

As the door opened, Lois tried to make herself as inconspicuous as she could hiding behind the door. The killer entered, placed the duffel on a chair in the powder room and opening it took out a bar of soap. He unwrapped a fresh bar of soap and tossed the wrapper into the trashcan, placing the bar on the sink. Lois was afraid that when he looked into the mirror he would see her, but he didn't. He was concentrating on his personal appearance. He leaned down and soaping his hands began to wash his face. Seeing her chance, Lois silently crept out, retrieved the notebook and returned to her hiding place.

Lois realized that the likelihood of her remaining hidden and unharmed were very slim. That word stuck in Lois's mind and she was very thankful for her slim build. If she were to carry the few extra pounds that made Cat Grant so much more voluptuous it could have made a big difference. That was another reason to thank her lucky stars that she was so different from Cat.

She examined her position and knew that if the killer closed the door she would be exposed and she prayed silently that he didn't think he needed privacy, believing the apartment was empty. She believed her prayer was being answered when he left the door open as he started to wash up. She thought, <Shooting him at that close range, he probably was splattered with blood.> Lois hardly dared to breathe as he continued to watch for what seemed to drag on for an eternity. He had been washing his face and when he finished turned and eyes closed, groped for a towel. The towel hung on a bar next to Lois and she realized that only half a foot separated her from security and discovery.

Lois reached for the towel and moved it closer to his groping hands so that they would contact it and not her. Taking the towel he held it to his face to dry it. When he finished he rolled the towel up and placed it into the duffel and turned back around and headed out the door.

Lois breather a little easier, but no louder, but she didn't dare move. She whispered to herself, "Oh, Clark, where are you when I need you? How long do you have to talk to those kids? It isn't like they can have a career as a super hero or anything."

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At the front of a sixth grade classroom there were several chairs arranged in a line across the front. In the chairs were a construction worker, complete with hard hat, a Fire Fighter/EMT in uniform with a badge, a police officer in full uniform, a nurse in her white uniform and cap and finally, Superman. Superman was standing and answering questions while the rest of the visitors frankly looked bored, having nothing to do but listen.

Superman had just been asked a question and was answering, "... I don't know. It's like I can sense when someone is in trouble. It goes beyond my super powers, it's almost psychic. Especially if it's someone I know well or I'm close to."

Apparently this particular power wasn't quite working as advertised at that precise moment or he would have realized Lois's danger.

As he finished speaking there were a jumble of questions shouted out, "How did you train for your job? What did you major in? Weren't the teachers afraid of you? What's your costume made of," and several others.

The teacher interrupted the flood and tried to regain control, "One at a time, please." She pointed to a boy in the second row. He asked, "How far can you see, really?"

He replied, "I can see pretty far, but then so can you. When you look up into the sky, on a starry night, the closest star that you could look at is 4.3 light years away. I'd say that you are looking pretty far. The difference with me is that sometimes, I can see trouble coming."

The boy sitting next to the one that asked the question quipped, "Maybe you should make a deal with nine-one-one."

The other boy offered, "Or you could have a signal in the sky that they shine when you're needed."

The second boy said, "That's really stupid."

The teacher put a stop to the argument by asking, "Don't you have any questions for our other guests?"

A girl in the middle of the class raised her hand and the teacher called on her.

"Superman, do you have a girlfriend?"

Superman phrased his answer quite carefully, "No, I don't and I can never have a girlfriend." He silently said to himself, <Lois would never allow it. I hope this doesn't go much longer. I need to get back to her.>

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Lois watched from behind the door as the killer removed his shirt. Once it was off he took a fresh one out of his duffel and placed the soiled one into it. Once he had the fresh shirt on and the bow tie retied he put on a vest and tweed jacket. Then he turned and picked up the notebooks from the coffee table where Winner had left them. He placed them in the duffel along with the other items and prepared to leave. Lois was starting to feel relieved when suddenly he stopped and turned in her direction.

She was instantly keyed up again as he started to move in her direction. She dared not even breathe for fear that it would give her away. He came in through the door, crossed to the waste can and picked out the soap wrapper. Fortunately, when he turned around it was away from her and he took the wrapper with him and placed it into the duffel. A few seconds later she heard the door close as he left.

Lois waited five more long seconds before she allowed herself to breathe again. Still wary she slowly peeked out from around the door into the den. Assured that the room was empty except for the corpse of Winner she crossed to the phone and dialed MPD.

When the phone was answered she said, "This is Lois Lane. I need to speak with Henderson, now!"

A few seconds later she heard, "Henderson."

"Bill, I want to report a murder."

A couple of minutes later, Clark showed up. When he stepped in the door he saw Winner and Lois. He was surprised and asked, "What happened?"

Lois ran to him and threw herself into his arms. When she did he could feel her shaking, whether from fear or simply reaction he couldn't tell, but he did know that she had feared for her life while he had been away from her. "It's a long story. I wish you had been here." She flung her arm out in the direction of Winner's body. "If you had been, this wouldn't have happened."

He was thinking to himself, <I really can't let her out of my sight. I'm lucky she wasn't killed too. I'm going to have to change some things.>

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Bill had arrived about five minutes after Clark and interviewed Lois. She neglected to inform Bill about the notebook and took it back to the Planet with her when they returned.

Lois had been clingy all the time that Bill had been interviewing her and also in the cab ride to the Planet. He had wrapped her up in his arms during the elevator ride and finally, the contact and the familiar surroundings worked to soothe her nerves. When the doors opened onto the newsroom she was ready to get back to work.

After rushing down the ramp to her desk she booted up her computer and banged out the story of what Winner had told her and what had happened to him.

While she had been working, Perry had quizzed Clark. He had seen them leave together, but only Lois was working on the story. "What happened, Clark? You were there, weren't you?"

Clark stuttered, "Uh, well, no, you see, uh, I, uh, I had to meet a source. It was a last minute thing so Lois went alone."

Everything was done by the time I got there.”

“Don’t you think that was some poor judgment, leaving Lois alone like that? You could have met with that source later.”

“You’re right, Chief. It won’t happen again. Believe me, it won’t happen again.”

“It better not, son. I’m counting on you to take care of her.”

“Trust me, if there’d been any hint of trouble, wild horses couldn’t have dragged me away. Lois was sure she could handle Winninger. It was the killer that showed up that we knew nothing about that was the problem.”

As Clark finished speaking, Lois sat back from her keyboard and stretched. She reached for her phone and dialed a number as Perry, Clark, Jimmy and Cat all gathered round and read what was on her computer screen.

While they read she listened to the phone.

Perry read aloud, “‘Only minutes before his death, Dr. Winninger produced diaries which, he claimed, contained evidence that would abort the impending induction of Barbara Trevino into the Rain Forest Consortium.’”

As Perry finished reading, Lois spoke into her phone, “I see. Okay, I’ll try to reach her when she arrives. Where did you say she was staying? Oh, I thought you did ...”

Perry touched her screen, indicating a particular passage and said to the rest, “She doesn’t want to write this.”

Lois finished her phone conversation, “Well, thank you for your help,” and hung the phone up and turned to her keyboard. To those standing around she said, “Barbara Trevino is en route to Metropolis now. Has a meeting at the Trade Center tomorrow.”

Jimmy was confused and asked, “Why doesn’t she want to write it, Chief?”

“Because I can’t print it.”

Jimmy was surprised, “You can’t?”

Perry was matter-of-fact, “No. She doesn’t have the diaries.”

Lois was in an argumentative mood, “I may not have the diaries, but he told me what was in the diaries. And I do have the one notebook.” As she finished speaking she pulled it out of her desk drawer and offered it to Clark, “But it’s Greek to me.”

Clark looked at some of the pages and with a smile said, “That’s because it is Greek.”

Jimmy was curious, “Could I see that?”

Closing it, Clark said, “Sure,” and handed it to him.

Perry addressed Lois’s statement, “Now, look Lois, a verbal statement ain’t worth the paper it’s printed on, which there is none. You get my drift? Without those diaries, we got nothin’ for you to check out.”

Turning back to her computer, Lois started deleting lines of text from her story.

Clark leaned over her shoulder, pointed to another section and said, “I hope one of the parts you trim back is this ...” He actually committed a great offense by touching her screen and leaving a fingerprint, “here ... where it says the killer took the diaries.”

Looking back over her shoulder at him she said, “But he did take them!”

“Lois, think! If you put that in there, you’re telling him that you were there.”

“But I was there!”

“The killer doesn’t know that ... unless you tell him, that is.”

Lois tried to wheedle, “I’m not telling him. Not exactly.”

Perry leaned in and committed the same breach by touching her screen and said, “Change ‘minutes before his death’ to ‘earlier that day.’ Just to be safe.”

Lois grumbled as she made the suggested change. “How about the part that says the man is dead? Can I leave that? Is that okay?” After receiving a nod from Perry she typed a few more lines and then sent it to the printer. That finished, Lois stood.

Perry was quick to ask, “Where are you going?”

She allowed her annoyance to show as she pulled open a drawer and pulled out a bottle of glass cleaner. She sprayed her screen and then used a soft cloth to remove the fingerprints that they had been depositing on her screen. When she had finished this chore she said, “Come on, Clark. We’re going back to Winninger’s apartment. It looks like if I stay here any longer I won’t have any story left.”

As they were riding down in the elevator, Lois said, “You know, I spent the last five hours with the police and they didn’t say anything about a bodyguard. Just the same, I’m glad to have you with me.”

When she exited the building, Lois was still on her rant and said, “Much as I hate to admit it the killer will probably tumble to the fact that I was there. Perry’s also right, until I get that notebook translated, I don’t have a story.”

They were at the corner, waiting for the light to change so that they could cross when a skateboarder hit a bump in the sidewalk and fell off his board. When he did he tumbled into Lois and knocked her into the street, with an, “Ooof.” A truck was approaching from the left and Clark watched as she tumbled into the street right in front of it. He quickly, just shy of superspeed, ran out, grabbed the back of her coat. When he did, she let out another scream, “Ooooooo.” He pulled her back into his chest, falling backward so that she landed on him and not the sidewalk. The truck’s horn blared as it passed by.

Clark quickly stood and pulled Lois to her feet. He grabbed the skateboarder and in a threatening tone he challenged, “All right, who sent you?”

The skateboarder replied, “Chill, dude.”

Picking him up he held him in the air and repeated his question, “Who sent you?”

The kid replied, “Sent me to do what?”

Lois interceded, “Clark, let him go. How could anybody have sent him? My story isn’t even out there yet.”

The kid said, “Yeah, her story isn’t even out yet.” He thought about it for a second and then asked, “What story?”

Clark dropped him back on his feet.

The kid said, “Later, dude. Lay off the amino acids.” He picked up his skateboard and left.

Lois looked at him and smiled. She reached for his arm and hooked hers around it and said, “Come on.”

Clark just shook his head. When it had happened, he had just reacted. He had been thinking about his failure to protect her earlier and now he found that he was overreacting.

The light changed and they crossed, arm-in-arm. Once across, Lois said, in a thoughtful tone, “I can tell, you’re really worried about me.”

“Well, yeah. After what happened this morning ... I should have been there with you.”

“Everything was fine, until the killer showed up. Fortunately I was in another room at the time and he didn’t know I was there. Those were not normal circumstances. Under normal circumstances I would have been just fine. Look, you can’t be there for me one hundred percent of the time. You need to give me a chance to take care of myself, like I did with Luthor.”

“Okay, but I hope you don’t mind if those times are few and far between.”

She smiled up at him and said, “I would expect no less out of you.” She gave him a little bump with her hip as they walked.

“I meant what I said, I should have been there with you.”

“What was that activity you had to go to?”

“It was nothing that important, not nearly as important as your safety.”

“I know, but what was it?”

“Sixth grade career day. It isn’t like those kids can aspire to the career of a superhero. I really don’t know why I was invited.”

“How did it go?”

“I actually feel sorry for the others that were invited. The kids didn’t have any questions for them at all. There were representatives of the fire department, police, a nurse and a construction worker, all of them are realistic careers that those kids could follow, but all the questions were directed at me.”

“Ask me why I’m not surprised.”

“The ironic thing is, I told them that most of the time I can sense when you are in danger and here you were and I didn’t. Go figure.”

“You can really sense that?”

A teasing tone entered his voice as he answered, “Most of the time, of course since most of the time you are in trouble, how can I go wrong.”

“I am not!”

“Are too.”

“Not as much anymore.”

“I’ll give you that. Not as much anymore.”

“So, what were some of the other questions?”

“The last question was from a young lady that I think had an ulterior motive for asking her question.”

Lois’s curiosity was piqued and she asked, “Oh, what was her question?”

“She asked if I had a girlfriend.”

“What did you tell her?”

“That my wife wouldn’t allow it.”

Lois gasped, “You told them that Superman was married?”

“Well, not exactly. I told them I couldn’t have a girlfriend, which is true. I just didn’t explain the why.”

Now that they were on the other side of the street when they hailed a cab, they were headed in the right direction.

A short time later they were dropped off and they headed in. When they got there Henderson was still there heading up the investigation. There were several other more junior detectives as well as the forensics team.

Henderson didn’t notice them immediately and Lois took Clark over to show him some of the pictures of the Elimont Center. She had taken a picture off the wall for a closer look. By happenstance she had chosen the one with Winner and ‘Frank Sinatra.’ She asked, “Would you believe that this isn’t really Frank Sinatra?”

Clark took a close look and used his enhanced vision, “Hmmm, I can see faint traces of the edges of moulage pieces. Make-up.”

“Winner called this guy, Sebastian Finn, Mr. Make-up. Sure looks real, doesn’t he?”

Just then, Henderson spotted them and asked, “Did I mention that you’re not to touch anything, Lois?”

Quickly turning around and deftly hiding the picture behind her back as she did, Lois in a very innocent tone said, “Moi?”

One of the other detectives approached Henderson and called him to the door. Once his back was turned, Lois returned the photo to its place on the wall. Once that was done, she and Clark turned to follow Henderson. When they caught up with him, Henderson was speaking with a man who was slight of build, balding with a fringe of graying hair, glasses and wearing a bow tie. Lois immediately recognized him as the murderer and shouted out, “That’s him!”

Startled by her outburst, Clark asked, “Who? What?”

Not to be deterred, Lois strode to the door and in a very agitated tone said, “This is the killer, Inspector! Don’t let him go!”

The balding individual was startled and said, “What?”

Lois reiterated, “The man that killed Winner!” Her tone became smug as she said, “I saw you! I was in the powder room.”

Henderson interrupted Lois’s tirade, “Lois, this is Dr. Hubert, Dr. Winner’s associate.”

Lois stood her ground, strong in her conviction, “I don’t care

who he is. I saw him kill Dr. Winner this morning.”

Dr. Hubert replied, “I was in Washington, D. C. this morning.”

Henderson asked the obvious question, “Did anybody see you there? Any witnesses?”

It was Dr. Hubert’s turn to be smug as he said, “The thirty or forty men and women who attended the National Science Council meeting ... and heard my presentation. Including the Vice President of the United States.”

Henderson turned and asked, “I’d call that an alibi, wouldn’t you, Lois?”

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## Chapter 05

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There was a non-descript individual in a darkened room, lit only by the lights surrounding a large make-up mirror. A pair of hands removed a wig which gave the appearance of a balding individual with a fringe of graying hair. After removing the rest of the makeup he started preparing another disguise. Eventually, his hands were applying spirit gum to a false nose. Seconds later the hands picked up a wig of unkempt sandy blond hair. Eventually they picked up a brush and used it to apply a powder base and then color.

Once the various steps had been completed the face staring out of the mirror looked nothing like Dr. Hubert.

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That evening, as Lois and Clark, both of them wearing workout gear, were returning to the apartment from a karate class as they were discussing the day’s events. “You know, you are picking karate up pretty quickly.”

“I think that’s because of how fast my super brain works. I see the moves like in slow motion and that makes it easy to copy. My eidetic memory keeps everything in order.”

Lois was still lamenting over the mistake with Dr. Hubert, “I don’t have an eidetic memory, but I know what I saw in Winner’s apartment. How could I have made such a mistake? I could swear on a stack of Bibles that it was him that I saw. I mean, it isn’t like he’s Mr. Common Man or Joe SixPack. He doesn’t look like just anybody and it would be impossible to mistake someone else for him.”

Clark was trying to mollify her when he said, “So, you made a mistake. It happens.”

Lois was adamant, “Look, I didn’t make a mistake. He looked just like him.” After a second, she said, “I gave Jimmy a call afterward and asked him to track down Dr. Hubert. When I checked back with him he told me that Hubert had disappeared, without a trace. That smells fishy to me.”

Knowing that Lois frequently made these leaps of logic that often resulted in solving problems, Clark said, “Okay, let’s start back at the beginning. First, motive. Why would someone want to kill Winner?”

“Winner said he wanted, no needed, to stop Barbara Trevino from becoming the head of the Rain Forest Consortium. That could be motive.”

“Okay, then why did he go into the bathroom to clean up? Most killers would be more worried about getting away.”

Lois thought for a second, “Who knows? Maybe he wanted to wash the blood off, or maybe he was just compulsive about germs, like Howard Hughes.”

As they casually strolled down the street talking, a motorized wheelchair passed them and pulled to a halt a short distance away.

They had reached the steps to the apartment house. Lois stopped Clark and pulled him around to face her. “That was sweet of you this afternoon. I mean, you really thought that clumsy kid was trying to kill me and you saved me from the truck. Thank you. Do you still think that my life could be in danger?”

Clark was thoughtful before he replied, “Now more than ever. From what you just said, what if the killer grabbed Hubert and now knows that you were there and saw him. He won’t want to take a chance that you saw something and can identify him.”

Out in the street a poorly maintained motorcycle drove past and as it did it emitted quantities of smoke and a couple of loud backfires.

The noise hurt Clark’s ears and he turned his head to see what was causing the noise. As he did, he caught movement out of the corner of his eye. The hands of the man in the wheelchair were coming out from under the blanket that covered his lap. Clark caught the glint of metal. He shouted, “Lois, get down,” and dove for her. He pushed her down on the steps and then turned to face the gunman just as he started blasting away. He got off a few shots before Clark managed to come up with a means of stopping him. His hands were invisible, they were moving so fast, snagging the slugs out of the air that he wasn’t too worried about that being seen. He used his superbreath to make the wheelchair spin. It would simply appear as though the wheelchair had gone out of control and started moving of its own accord. As soon as the wheelchair started to spin, Clark gave his attention to Lois.

He pulled her into his arms and asked, “Lois, are you okay?”

She was shaken up by the rough handling and finally said, “Yeah, what was that all about?”

Clark looked over his shoulder at the still spinning wheelchair, but the former occupant was now missing. He looked up and down the street, but he was nowhere to be seen. “Someone just tried to kill you.”

“Oh, come on, Clark. That was a motorcycle backfiring.”

He brought his hands up and opened them to display the slugs he had caught.

Lois was shocked, “Oh, my. Someone really did try to kill me. I’m glad my husband was there to protect me. Thank you. Who was it?”

“The guy in the wheelchair.”

“But he didn’t look anything like Dr. Hubert.”

“Come on, let’s get off the street and into the apartment. You’re too exposed out here.”

Once they were in the apartment, Clark said, “Well, it sure looks like they know that you were there and can possibly identify the killer, why else would they now be trying to kill you?”

“But I barely got a glimpse of him and I obviously don’t know his real appearance. The man I thought did it, didn’t. I thought it was Dr. Hubert.”

“Obviously the killer doesn’t know that.”

“It sure looks like you saved my life twice today. First from an accident and now from a killer.”

After putting away their things and changing into casual clothes they started preparing dinner. Clark was starting to teach Lois how to cook. They had started this while they were in his old apartment and were continuing it here in Lois’s kitchen which was larger than his. He was starting her off with the easy items. Tonight she was preparing a chopped salad while he prepared a main course of lamb chops with button mushrooms and a side dish of sweet corn. He was braising the chops in a white wine sauce while they talked. Clark appreciated how Lois was dressed. Lois had her hair pulled back in a pony tail and she was wearing one of Clark’s shirts which showed off her long, lovely legs.

“You know, I bet that in the old days, before we were married, you would have made sure you were with me and you would have saved me the same way, but you would still be hiding your secret. You’d be hovering around in the dark keeping a watch over me.” She walked over and put her arms around him and said, “I like it this way much better. You don’t have to hide from me or keep watch from the dark.” She gave him a wicked little grin as she finished, “Now you can protect me in the

comfort of our bed.”

“I don’t know about this. The guy I saw didn’t look like Dr. Hubert at all. I got a good look at him. He wasn’t balding and he wasn’t wearing glasses. It’s pretty obvious that the wheelchair was just a prop because he was able to escape without it. I don’t think he had planned to shoot just then. That motorcycle backfiring forced his hand. He figured that the noise it was making would cover his shots. It threw off his timing and caused me to spot his movement.”

“I’m just glad you did. If I’d been by myself, I’d probably be pushing up daisies about now.”

“I just can’t understand why there are so many killers out there suddenly. It’s like there’s a gang involved. You spotted one and now another is trying to kill you.”

“But the one I saw looked just like Dr. Hubert. What are the chances of that?”

“I’d say that the chances aren’t that good. This guy looked like Joe Sixpack.”

Lois finished cutting up the salad and started tossing the lettuce with the other vegetables as they spoke. “How does all of this relate to enhanced sexual potency in the male? That’s what Doctor Winninger was talking about and Barbara Trevino. What’s the connection?”

“Got me.”

“Wait a minute. He looked like a friend of Doctor Winninger, could that be so that he could get close to him? This guy looked like Joe Sixpack in a wheelchair, so that he could get close without raising suspicion.”

Clark was finishing up on the dinner and Lois was setting the table. “What do you have on for tonight?”

“After dinner I have to attend a neighborhood watch meeting, but I’m thinking about cancelling. I don’t feel comfortable leaving you here alone.”

“Look, he’s already tried and failed tonight. I’ll keep the door locked and only open it for you. I’ll be okay.”

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After dinner, Clark, dressed in his working clothes headed for the door. “You’re going to lock up when I leave, aren’t you?”

Lois smiled at his concern and said, “I promise.”

As he was unlocking the door he said, “Okay. I’ll keep this as short as I can.”

As she was closing the door she reassured him, “Really, I’ll be fine until you get back.”

He stood in the hallway and listened until he heard the final lock click into place and then he strode down the hall and out of the building. In a nearby alley he spun into Superman and took off to fly to the meeting.

While Clark was away, Lois spent some time lazing in bed watching an old ‘B’ movie. She had considered catching up on “The Ivory Tower,” but since her marriage, her interest in that show had waned. Eventually she dozed off.

She was startled awake by hands on her shoulder. Her eyes snapped open and she started to scream, but the feel of lips placing a gentle kiss on her forehead stopped her. She stretched and reached for her husband who willingly closed the distance and planted a kiss on her waiting lips.

Reaching for the remote control, she turned off the TV. She looked at herself and realized that she wasn’t exactly dressed in a way to attract her husband, in fact she was surprised that he wasn’t running from the room screaming. She had changed into a pair of loose shorts and one of his old T-shirts before lying down to watch TV. Lois said, “Not very alluring,” she asked, “Would you prefer something a little . . . sexier?”

He gave her a leer and said, “No matter what you wear, you are always sexy to me.”

Sitting up, Lois grasped the hem of the shirt and with a swift move pulled it off over her head. She asked, “Is that better?”

Clark closed the distance and started kissing her. He started at her lips and then moved to her jaw, trailing kisses down the side of her neck. She tilted her head to the other side to allow him better access. He was murmuring endearments between kisses. His lips moved across her shoulder and down her chest to her breast. Leaning back she arched her chest up to him and he followed her down.

He continued to pleasure her breasts while she wiggled out of her shorts and panties. Once she was nude she pulled his lips from her breast to her own lips and after a brief kiss she asked, “Don’t you think you’re over dressed?”

Seconds later he was undressed and lying next to her. With a growl of desire she climbed on top of him and started rubbing her breasts over his chest. She said, “They say that time away from each other increases desire. You’ve been gone a couple of hours and I’m this horny. Just imagine if you were gone all day.” As her breathing became more and more labored and his came quicker she began to pant and gasp his name. Her pace quickened as she felt her back muscles tighten.

She was groaning and her head was shaking from side to side as she gasped, “Close. So close. Just a little more.”

Lois’s body was almost rigid as she shuddered with the effects and then suddenly she went limp and collapsed onto his chest. He wrapped his arms around her and held her tight. Her head was on his shoulder and she started kissing his neck where it joined his shoulder.

After a time he rolled them to the side. They lay there, arms and legs entwined. Clark pulled the covers up and they fell asleep in each other’s arms.

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In the building, there was an early riser. This individual had on a news station. The announcement of a high-rise fire in Chicago. Clark slipped out of bed without disturbing Lois and dressed in sweats and sneakers. After leaving a note for Lois, he hastened out of the building, making sure to lock the locks as he exited. He left the building at a jog simply looking like someone going out for an early morning run. He ducked into an alley and seconds later a red and blue streak was on its way to Chicago.

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A short time after Clark left, Perry arrived at the Planet. As he stepped out of the elevator onto the newsroom floor, he realized that it was very early and the day staff had yet to arrive so things were relatively quiet. As he was crossing to his office he saw Jimmy headed in his direction. Addressing him he said, “Well, you’re in awfully early.”

Jimmy smiled and said, “Twenty-four hours, ‘round the clock, at your service, chief.”

Perry gave him a wry expression and said, “Jimmy?”

“What. Chief?”

“Don’t suck up, son. I don’t like it.” He gave that a second to sink in and then said, “Now, why are you here?”

Jimmy pulled out Winner’s notebook and said, “Winner’s notebook. It contains some kind of scientific formula. STAR Labs has broken it down, but they don’t know yet what its purpose is.”

Perry nodded and asked, “Anything else?”

“Yeah, there’s a map, which appears to be a large section of the Brazilian rain forest.”

Perry voiced his puzzlement, “Well, what in the Sam Hill does some formula have to do with Barbara Trevino?”

“I don’t know.”

Perry came to a decision, “Okay, well, pass the info on to Lois and tell her that I said to get right on it.”

Jimmy took the notebook and said, “Right.”

Perry turned and took a step toward his office before he turned and said, “There’s nothing wrong with a little sucking up, son.”

It took Jimmy a second for this to register and then he replied, “Right ... Chief”

Perry smiled, said, “Better,” and turned toward his office.

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Lois awoke and found Clark’s side of the bed empty. She muttered in an angry tone, “This had better be for a good reason. He promised to try and get back before I woke up in the morning.” She pulled on the panties and shorts she had had on the previous night and then grabbed the T-shirt. She pulled that on as she walked into the bathroom to brush her teeth and start getting ready for the day.

She squeezed out some toothpaste on her brush and started brushing her teeth. When she took her brush out of her mouth and attempted to rinse it, she turned on the faucet and nothing came out. She muttered, “Oh, no.” She tried the hot side only to have nothing come out there either. She exited the bathroom and headed into the kitchen. When she pushed the lever nothing came out. In frustration she operated the lever a few times. Then she had an idea. She crossed to the refrigerator and pulled out a bottle of water. She took off the cap, took a swig, swished her mouth and spit into the sink. Then she rinsed her toothbrush with that water before recapping it and putting it away.

She crossed to her phone and punched in a number. She waited for the phone to be answered. When it was she recognized the voice on the other end, “Hello, Mrs. Tracewski, this is Lois Lane in 105.” She listened for a second and then said, “Oh, you know about it already. Any idea when that might be? She listened again. “Oh, that long...”

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Clark had just returned from Chicago. He had landed in the alley and changed into his sweats. He had exited and started jogging toward the brownstone when he encountered Mr. Tracewski. Mr. Tracewski was a pleasant looking man of European extraction and he had an accent. He was wearing jeans and a work shirt. He was carrying a piece of pipe and muttering to himself until he spotted Clark. He recognized him as the new tenant in 105 and stopped. When Clark approached he addressed him, “Mr. Kent, welcome to the building. I see you jog early, I’m sorry. The water. It no work.” He held up the pipe. It had what looked like a valve in the middle. “I tell them, ‘Hey, go for it,’ they don’t listen, they buy cheap. And what? Here it is. Costs two times as much more. I on way to get replacement part. It be a while till I fix, okay?”

Clark got the gist of what he was saying and said, “That’s okay Mr. Tracewski, I think we can make do until it is fixed. Thanks for letting me know.” Clark watched as Mr. Tracewski walked away before he turned to go to the apartment.

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Lois had no sooner hung up the phone from Mrs. Tracewski then there was a knock at the door. Lois crossed to it and looked out the peep hole. She thought that she recognized the individual standing there and started opening the locks. She opened the door to the limit of the chain that she had put on and peeked out. Sure enough, it was Mr. Tracewski. She said, “Just a second, Mr. Tracewski.” She closed the door and removed the chain. As he entered, she said, “That was fast. I just hung up from your wife.” She turned her back to him as they both entered the apartment. She said, “Your wife said it would be a couple of hours,”

Mr. Tracewski was wearing a workman’s coverall and carrying a toolbox as he entered the apartment.

Lois was continuing to speak, “Not that I’m complaining as you can see.”

Behind her Mr. Tracewski closed the door. The look on his face was one of malevolence as he dropped the tool box. When it fell with a clatter, it attracted Lois’s attention. She spun around and seeing the look on Mr. Tracewski’s face she started to back away from him. She asked, “Mr. Tracewski, are you all right?”

Mr. Tracewski lunged at Lois and his hands went around her neck.

Finally realizing that she was being attacked, Lois cried out, “No!” and threw up her arms. It looked like she was surrendering, however, she was not. Twisting to the left she brought her right arm down on his arms, brushing them away from her throat. She continued her spin until she was facing him again. When she was, he was straightening up and preparing to lunge at her again. Lois unleashed a snap kick which caught him high on the chest knocking him backward. Her target had been his chin and she had missed.

Seeing her attacker start to fall back and unaware that she had missed her target she turned and started for the phone, but he recovered quickly and grabbed her from behind.

Forgetting that she was barefoot, she stamped down on his instep. He had on heavy work boots so she hurt herself more than him and as a result he was able to get a reverse choke hold on her.

Because of the choke hold she was unable to shout any more, however, Clark had heard her already. Just as she went limp, he came in through the door. Taking in the situation, he shouted, “Let her go!”

Mr. Tracewski took a backward step, dragging the limp form of Lois with him.

Using his Superman voice, Clark commanded, “Let my wife go, NOW!”

The voice had the desired effect. Mr. Tracewski pushed Lois’s limp form at Clark as he backed away.

Clark’s caught Lois and all of his attention was on his wife. As Mr. Tracewski backed away, Clark held her with one arm behind her back and felt for a pulse. Seeing this Mr. Tracewski grabbed his tool box and fled.

Lois wasn’t breathing, but Clark could hear and feel her heart beating, faintly. He lowered her to the floor, opened her airway and breathed into her lungs.

When he pulled back, she coughed and started to come around.

“Oh, Clark ... Clark ...”

“It’s all right, you’re gonna be okay.”

Still gasping for breath, Lois said, “I couldn’t breathe. It was ... that nice Mr. Tracewski.”

Clark cradled her in his arms as he said, “No, it wasn’t, Lois. It must have been someone else. I saw the real Mr. Tracewski out in the street. He was explaining the problem with the water.”

Lois said, “He tried to kill me.”

Clark started to leave, “I’ll find him.”

As he started to stand, Lois clung to him with increased fervor, “No! Please ... Don’t leave me.”

He stooped to hold her better and pulled her into a hug, “Okay, I won’t. I’m right here,” he kissed her forehead.

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## Chapter 06

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Clark called Perry to let him know they were going to be late and why. Perry was very understanding.

After some time, Lois had recovered a measure of her spunk and finally started getting dressed. Clark sat on the bed and watched as she paced to and fro, pulling out undergarments and work clothes and fumed while dressing. “I just can’t believe that I fell for that disguise,” Lois berated herself. “I should’a known. It was just too soon! I had just hung up from talking to his wife. I mean, she had just told me that it would be a couple of hours. It was the whole building for heaven’s sake, not just our apartment! Why would he need to work in our apartment? He should have been in the basement. And you, you just had to be away! You promised that you would be back before I woke up! I hope it was worth it,” she challenged.

“No, I promised that I would try to get back before you woke

up. Was it worth it? Actually, I think it was.”

“Oh, what was so rewarding that you had to leave your wife at the mercy of a murderer?”

Clark cocked his head and looked at Lois, trying to be reasonable. “When you stop to think about it, I left my wife sleeping peacefully, in bed.”

“Well, yeah, I guess you did. What took so long?”

“I would have been here earlier, but the real Mr. Tracewski stopped me on the street to tell me about the water problem and apologize for the inconvenience.”

She stopped and looked at him noting his jogging suit. “What’s with the outfit?”

“It was the only thing I could think of to cover my departure. It isn’t like we are on the fifth floor and I could just go out a window. Down here on the first floor, I’d have to pass a number of windows into other apartments on my way up. We really hadn’t taken that into consideration when we decided to move to this building. We may want to consider another move.”

Lois didn’t want to deal with that idea right now, so she changed the subject. “What was the emergency?”

“There was this high rise fire in Chicago. I had pulled out eleven, six adults and five children. Suddenly one of the mothers started yelling for Carrie.”

“I went up to her and she said, ‘Superman, my daughter is still missing.’”

“What’s her name?”

“Carrie, Carrie Harris. Please Superman, please find her,” she said.

“I’ll do what I can to find her,” I told her.

“I went back in and found her on the top floor. There were flames all around, but the room was not fully engulfed. I found her hiding in a closet crying and calling, ‘Mommy! Mommy!’”

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As he was relating the incident, Lois could tell that he was reliving it.

“The fire cast an eerie red/orange glow over everything. I opened the door of the closet and Carrie cowered back into a corner, like she was afraid of me.”

“I knelt down and said, ‘Hi Carrie. I’m going to take you away from here.’”

“Carrie cried, ‘My Mommy told me never to go anywhere with strangers!’”

“I was stumped for a second as to how to handle this. I said, ‘Your Mommy is very wise, but what did she tell you about the police?’”

“Carrie thought for a second and then said, ‘The police are good and they help people.’”

“Realizing I was on the right track, I said, ‘Just think of me as a policeman and I’ll take you to your Mommy.’”

“Carrie still hesitated for a second, processing this thought before she said, ‘Okay. What about Scrapy?’”

“Who is Scrapy?”

“With a don’t-you-know-anything kind of tone she said, ‘My dog, silly.’”

“That was the first that I noticed that there was a dog curled up on the floor. He had been behind Carrie so he was out of view until I picked her up. I said, ‘Oh, okay. There he is.’”

“I picked her up and she clung to my neck with all of her might. She buried her head in my shoulder and closed her eyes tightly. With my other hand I picked up Scrapy. I wrapped my cape around both of them and flew them out.”

“When we landed I removed my cape from her, but she still clung to me with her eyes closed. I put Scrapy down and the dog stayed as close as he could to Carrie as she was carried to her mom. Scrapy was barking happily as he followed his little mistress. I carried Carrie over to her mommy and it still took a few seconds for her to realize just who it was and let go.”

“I finally got a good look at my passenger. She was about six with brown hair and big, beautiful brown eyes. She looked like what I imagine you looked like at that age.” After a second’s reflection, he said, “She looked like she could be our child.”

“Scrappy had been bounding along as I carried Carrie to her mother. When I stopped Scrappy started sniffing at my legs.”

“Once Carrie was in her mother’s arms she first looked down at her dog and made a downward gesture with her hand and the dog immediately quieted down and sat watching his little mistress attentively then she pointed at me and said, ‘The nice man brought me to you. I know you said not to go with strangers, but he said he was like a policeman so I trusted him. He promised to bring me to you and he did.’”

“Her mother asked, ‘Carrie, do you know who the nice man is?’”

“No.”

“Carrie, the nice man’s name is Superman. He isn’t a policeman, but he helps people just like the police do. It was good that you trusted him.”

“I said, ‘Carrie, it was good that you trusted me, but you still need to be careful who you trust. Listen to your mommy. She is very wise. She loves you very much and wants to protect you.’”

“Carrie said, ‘When I grow up I want to help people too.’”

Clark continued the story, “It almost felt like I was talking with you in some ways. I reached over and pushed a stray lock of her hair behind her ear and then gave her a kiss on the top of her head. I said, ‘You do that sweetheart. It would be good if everyone wanted to help others.’”

“I turned to Carrie’s mother and said, ‘Send me a note, care of the Daily Planet in Metropolis. I’d like to help her help others.’ Her mother said that she would. I’d like to encourage her.”

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Perry and Jimmy were standing in the middle of the bullpen, near Lois and Clark’s desks when they heard the elevator chime and they turned toward it. The doors opened and nothing happened for a few seconds. Then, like a box turtle sticking its head out of its shell, Clark’s head came out and he looked around before withdrawing back inside. A few more seconds elapsed before he finally stepped out and beckoned to Lois who finally exited the car.

Perry had watched this and as Lois appeared asked, “Lois, are you all right?”

Lois tried to act nonchalant as she replied, “I’m fine.”

Shaking his head he asked, “What in Elvis’s name are you doing here?”

Lois’s reply didn’t satisfy him, “This is where I work. I have a job to do.”

Perry’s reply didn’t encourage her, “Your job isn’t going to be worth the sweat off an Elvis imitator if you’re dead.” He turned his attention to Clark, “Kent, as her husband, can’t you talk any sense into her?”

“I’ve tried, but you know Lois. I’m hoarse from trying.”

Frustrated and angry, Lois replied, “Look, this killer can apparently find me anywhere, and can look like anyone. It’s probably safer around a lot of people I know.”

Clark blurted out, “Either we are dealing with a large gang or else we are dealing with one person that can change his appearance. My money is on the latter. I don’t think you’re going to be safe until we find Mr. I-Can-Make-Myself-Up-To-Look-Like-Anyone-Else is caught.”

Just as Clark finished speaking Lois let out a loud gasp.

Clark was quick to ask, “What is it?”

Lois almost shouted, “Mr. Make-up! Jimmy!”

At her shout Jimmy hastened to her side, “Try to find everything you can, especially the whereabouts of an ... uh ... Oh, I don’t know what he was. He was in the commune. What was his name ...” Suddenly as if the final piece of a puzzle had

fallen into place she snapped her fingers and said, “Sebastian Finn!”

Clark and Jimmy were both mystified and said almost simultaneously, “Who?”

Lois explained to Jimmy, “Sebastian Finn! He was part of the commune along with Winninger and Trevino. He was in the theater group. His acting was poor, but his ability to use make-up to look like other people was outstanding. I saw a picture. I thought it was Frank Sinatra, but it was really Finn.”

Jimmy said, “Okay, I’m on it.”

Lois was grabbing her bag as she said, “Come on, Clark. We have a press conference to attend.”

“Press conference?”

“Yeah, Barbara Trevino is having a press conference at the Trade Center. We need to be there. Let’s go.”

As they were exiting, Lois was saying to Clark, “Winninger, Finn and Barbara Trevino were all in the commune and the theater group together. I saw them all together in that photo. That’s the connection.”

Still not putting all of the pieces together, Clark said, “Fine, but why would Finn kill Winninger and what’s all of this got to do with Barbara Trevino?”

With a confident tone, Lois said, “That’s what we’re going to find out.”

They were looking for a vacant cab and as they did, it suddenly hit Lois. Looking around, she realized that anyone she saw could actually be Finn in another disguise. She suddenly couldn’t trust her eyes. She could feel the cold fingers of fear start to grip her so she took a firmer grip on Clark’s arm.

He looked at her questioning.

In reply, voicing her fears, she said, “This very creepy.” Her head was practically on a swivel as she tried to look in all directions at once, “Don’t you think it’s creepy? Finn could be anybody. Anybody you see could be somebody else.”

Clark was happy for his alien physiology because if not for that, the circulation to his lower arm would have been cut off because of her tight grip and it didn’t let up, even when they were in the cab.

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They arrived at the Trade Center and found the press conference in the courtyard. Barbara Trevino was at the microphone and finishing an answer to a question, “... it’s a global village now. We of the Rain Forest Consortium have to act accordingly.”

A reporter from the Star asked, “How does it feel to be the first woman to hold this post?”

With a self-deprecating smile she replied, “Well, I don’t officially hold it for two days, but at the risk of being premature ...” she smiled, “... It feels great.”

There was a round of applause.

As the applause died down, Lois shouted out, “Ms. Trevino, concerning the death of Dr. Vincent Winninger ...”

Ms. Trevino interrupted Lois and said, “Dr. Winninger was a brilliant scientist, and a dear friend of mine for many years. I was shocked and saddened by his death.”

Lois challenged, “How do you feel about the Ozone Layer?”

This seemed like a non sequitur and Barbara Trevino was momentarily puzzled.

Following up and not allowing Trevino to regain her composure, Lois challenged further, “What about increased male potency?”

There were a couple of snickers from the assembled reporters at that one, but Trevino and a number of the reporters looked at Lois like she had actually lost her mind. Clark was also quite puzzled at this line of questions.

Barbara Trevino’s eyes narrowed. She knew the source of these questions, it had to be Winninger. They had been too late.

He had talked to a member of the press. She asked in a sibilant whisper, “Who are you?”

Lois replied, challengingly, “Lois Lane, Daily Planet!”

Trevino raised her tone so that all could hear, “Well, Ms. Lane, I find your sense of humor odd, to say the least, and totally inappropriate. I suggest this would be a good time to close this press conference.” She stepped back away from the podium and turned to leave.

As Trevino left so did a number of the reporters. When they were almost alone, Clark said, “Bold, Lois. Not too bright, but bold. What were you trying to accomplish? Where did those questions come from?”

“That was what Winner was talking to me about. Did you see the look on her face? She knew exactly what I was talking about.” Lois looked around and in a lowered voice said, “Even if I didn’t. There must be something in that notebook to explain it all. Why else would he have given it to me?”

With a shake of his head, Clark said, “Well, now we’ll never get to her. It sure looks like you’ve scared her off. I’m sure she now knows that you had a chance to talk with Winner. That could make you just that much more of a target. We might as well head back. I don’t think we’re going to learn any more here.”

As they were turning away, an individual in a suit approached and, speaking with a distinct Spanish accent, asked, “Ms. Lane?” Lois turned toward him and he continued, “I am Dr. Trevino’s administrative assistant. She wishes me to tell you that she will discuss whatever you like, privately.”

Lois glanced significantly at Clark and said, “I’m here with my husband.”

His reply was not satisfying as he said, “I’m sorry. Just you, she said. You understand ...”

Lois nodded and said, “She wants to talk woman-to-woman. It’s a sisterhood thing.”

The aide nodded in agreement.

Lois said, “Sure, I understand, completely, but where I go, my husband also goes.”

The aide’s face fell, but he finally said, “This way please.”

He led them to an elevator which they entered. He took them to the top floor. When they exited the elevator, he led them to a stairwell which they took up to the roof access. He opened the door and ushered Lois through. He quickly followed and slammed the door in Clark’s face.

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## Chapter 07

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Clark had been feeling uneasy about the situation, all the way up in the elevator and when the aide had taken them to the roof access his unease became acute. When the door was slammed in his face, he was sure that his fears had just been realized. He knew what he had to do, but he had to make this look good so he shouted, “Lois!” and pounded on the door a couple of times.

He used his x-ray vision to look through the door. The aide had pulled a gun and was facing off with Lois. Clark snickered to himself, <He doesn’t know who he’s up against.> As he finished thinking this, Lois unleashed a kick that knocked the gun out of his hand and then followed up with a reverse punch to the midsection that doubled him over.

As he watched, the aide staggered back from the punch, but apparently it was a ploy, because it put him where he could recover his gun and he was too far away for Lois to kick him again. Seeing this, Lois turned to run. As she did he heard her mutter, too softly for the aide to hear, but loud enough for super hearing, “It sure would be nice if Superman would make an appearance now.” He watched as she ducked around an air conditioning unit, putting a large obstacle between her and the gunman.

Spinning into the suit at super speed he flew down the

stairwell to the first floor and out the door. Once outside he flew to the roof. He landed in front of Lois as she rounded the Air unit. Taking her in his arms he flew them up to the top of the unit where they could look down on her assailant.

The pebbled surface of the rooftop had been a noisy one to walk on and her assailant headed in the direction that he had seen her run. As he followed he could hear her footsteps and just as he was about to turn the corner, they stopped. Thinking that he might have cornered his quarry he approached the corner cautiously. He rounded it by giving the corner a wide berth, just in case she was waiting to attack him again. When he jumped from behind the barrier he was surprised to see that there was no dead end, but there was no Lois either.

Wondering how she could be moving silently, but convinced that she was still on the rooftop he started searching, moving from one cull-de-sac to another.

He was becoming increasingly frustrated because he couldn’t find her. He stood there, reaching up to scratch his head when he saw the shadow. A shadow of two individuals, one with a cape blowing in the wind. He was careful not to let on that he had seen it and slowly prepared. Once he was ready, he spun and aimed up at where the shadows were coming from and snapped off a shot.

He had Lois lined up in his sights, but the bullet never hit its intended target. A hand moved to intercept the slug before it could hit her, snatching it out of the air.

In the blink of an eye, they disappeared and then he heard a whoosh behind him.

He spun and brought the gun into play once again. Superman was standing next to Lois and before the first slug was half way there, he was between her and the gun. His hands became a blur as he snatched the bullets out of the air.

Lois said to the aide, “Is this guy cool or what?”

While Superman was doing this he focused his heat vision on the automatic the would-be murderer was wielding.

His magazine was only half empty when suddenly his gun started to heat up and got so hot that he cried out in pain and dropped it.

Superman quipped, “Hey, if you can’t stand the heat ...” He turned to Lois and said, “I’ll be back for you in a minute.” He picked up the aide and flew him off the rooftop.

Lois looked over the parapet as Superman landed on the ground with his captive and placed him in a lawn chair. As she watched he bent the metal arms in forming an effective restraint system which would hold him until the police arrived. As she watched, she said to herself, “I just love that man.”

Superman picked her up and flew her to the courtyard, landing next to the chair that the aide was restrained in. As soon as he set her down he said, “I need to go release that roof access door. When I do I’ll tell Clark that you are down here.”

“Thanks for your help, Superman.”

“Any time, Ms. Lane.” So saying he flew off.

A couple of minutes later, Clark, apparently out of breath from running down the stairs, came out of the doors. Spotting Lois he approached and said, “Superman had to run, or rather fly. I said that we’d wait for the police.”

Lois was thinking out loud when she said, “Dr. Hubert, Mr. Tracewski, the guy in the wheelchair, now this guy. I wonder ...” She leaned down and examined him closely. She noted something that looked almost like a seam in fabric around his neck. On impulse she reached for this and sliding her fingernails under began to pull. A rubber mask of sorts came off in her hand. She addressed him, “Sebastian Finn, I presume. Sooooooo, why’d you kill Dr. Winner?”

Finn was sarcastic as he replied, “His Rosencrantz was atrocious.”

“But why come after me?”

“You could identify me.”

“No, I couldn’t. I thought it was Dr. Hubert.”

He shrugged as best he could restrained as he was and replied, “Well, that’s the way it goes sometimes.”

Lois challenged, “How does Barbara Trevino fit into this?”

He gave her a look as if to say, ‘You really think I’m going to tell you anything?’

In response to his look, Lois said, “Maybe you’ll talk to the police.”

Finn replied, using his best theatrical expression, “Not very likely. Superman may be the Man of Steel, but I ... I have a will of iron.”

At this performance, Lois raised an eyebrow and said, “I hate actors.”

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After they returned to the Planet, Lois and Clark enlisted Jimmy’s aid in making phone calls to follow up on various aspects of the case. All three finished with their individual calls almost simultaneously

Seeing that they had all finished, Lois took charge and, turning to Jimmy said, “You first.”

Jimmy grabbed his notebook and read the notes he had taken during his call, “According to the police, Sebastian Finn wasn’t just moonlighting when he killed Winner. The police think he’s been a successful hitman for years. I guess he finally made his ability to disguise himself as anyone pay off.”

With a smug smile, Lois said, “I can top that. I just talked to the dean of the Philosophy department at Metropolis University. He used to be a member of the Elimont Commune. He knew Winner, Finn and Trevino way back when. Apparently it was a regular Peyton Place. Winner and Trevino used to be together, but then he dumped her.”

Playing the straight man, Clark asked, “Why?”

Lois smiled and continued, “Because Winner felt she was selling out, abandoning the ideals they all believed in. Then, she took up with Finn. They eventually split, but stayed in contact.”

Not that he was playing one ups-man with Lois, but Clark said, “I can top that. Dr. Hubert, the man no one can find. Well, I found him. He’s flying in tonight. He’ll talk to us tomorrow.”

Lois pointed out, “That’s great but, we still don’t know the connection between increased male potency, the rainforest and Barbara Trevino. The police questioned her and she’s got an airtight alibi, of course. She was getting in her limo. She claims she has no knowledge of any attempt on my life. It would be real nice if I could talk to her myself.”

Jimmy had a sarcastic tone in his voice as he said, “Yeah, good luck with that.”

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Later, in the evening, Jimmy had gone to the darkroom to catch up on printing some shots, Lois was still at her computer and Clark had just shut down his computer and was preparing to leave. He went over and sat in Lois’s visitor chair. He asked, “You ready to call it a day yet?”

She looked at him and smiled before turning back to her computer, “Not quite. I’ve got a little more work.”

“Anything I can help you with?”

“I don’t think so. I just need to get this written up.”

Just then, Clark cocked his head to the side in a way that Lois had come to recognize. She asked, “What are you hearing?”

“Fire in Suicide Slum.”

“Go. Finn’s in jail. I’ll be fine.”

“Are you sure?”

“I’ve got enough to do to keep me busy until you get back. Go ahead. I promise, I won’t go anywhere.”

As Clark headed for the stairwell, Lois went back to her computer. Five minutes later, Lois’s phone rang. Lois answered, “Daily Planet, Lois Lane.”

She heard a familiar voice come from the receiver, “Lois,

Barbara Trevino here.”

Lois was shocked, but recovered quickly, “I missed you the other day after the press conference.”

Trevino’s reply was enigmatic, “No, I believe that it was I that missed you.”

Not one to beat about the bush, except when it would help, Lois went straight to the point, “Would you care to tell me what this is all about?”

Trevino kept up the mystery by replying, “I think I’ll tell you when I see you. And that should be soon. Very soon.” As soon as she finished speaking, the connection was broken.

Thoughtfully looking at the now dead phone, Lois hung it up. Concerned with the implications, Lois looked around warily taking in the mostly empty newsroom.

Five minutes later Clark returned.

“How was it?”

“Nothing major, grease fire in a kitchen. A lot of smoke damage. I was able to prevent the spread of the flames. You ready to head home yet?”

“Yeah, we have to talk.”

Intrigued, Clark asked, “Oh, what happened?”

“As soon as you left to take care of that,” she looked around, “item, I had a phone call.”

“Oh, who called?”

“Barbara Trevino.”

Clark’s eyebrows rose until they almost merged with his hairline.

“Yeah, I asked her what this was all about. She said she would tell me when she saw me. She said it would be soon.”

“That could be a problem.”

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The next day

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Ever since Barbara Trevino called, Lois and Clark had been on heightened alert. He was concerned that Lois could be attacked anytime or anyplace, the newsroom of the Daily Planet included. When the doors of the elevator opened, Clark checked the area before allowing Lois to exit. On the way up in the elevator, he had gone so far as to ask people at intermediate stops to wait for the car to return just so that Lois and he could be in the car alone.

Lois appreciated what he was doing, but felt it was over-the-top and was starting to be annoyed by the restrictions he was placing on her. “Clark, I think you can drop the Kevin-Costner-protecting-Whitney-Houston bit. We’re inside the Planet. We should be safe here.”

Perry was walking by and heard Lois’s comment. He stopped and said, “I’ve put on extra security in the lobby. Nobody gets in or out without proper I.D.”

Lois gave Clark an I-told-you-so look and said, “See? All taken care of. I should be safe here.” She reached out and caressed his cheek as she said, “I do love it that you care so much.”

Seeing them still near the elevator, Jimmy approached and said, “Hubert’s waiting for you in Winner’s study.”

Clark, concern in his voice asked, “He won’t meet us here?”

Shaking his head he said, “Uh, uh. He’s afraid to come out, with what happened to Winner and all.”

Lois nodded and said, “Come on, Clark. Looks like we have to go meet a source.”

“Lois, why don’t you stay here and let me go meet with him.”

“Clark, look, this is still my story. If you hadn’t been called away I wouldn’t have been there alone. I need to follow through on this.”

Shaking his head, Clark said, “You really are high maintenance, you know that?”

Smiling, Lois nodded and said, “But, I’m worth it and you

wouldn't have me any other way.”

With a rueful grin, Clark said, “Once more into the breach.”

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They were still unsure that Finn was the only assassin that was out to get Lois so when they exited the Planet building, Lois couldn't help looking seemingly everywhere at once, checking out all of the faces that she could see. They quickly crossed the street and hailed a cab and as soon as one pulled up, Clark hustled her into it.

When they arrived at Winninger's Clark paid the cabbie. Lois stopped him and said, “You're not leaving me for another elementary school visit are you?”

Clark put his arm around her waist and pulled her into his body before he answered. “This time, I'm with you, body and soul.”

Lois smiled and admitted to herself that she felt relieved that he was with her. It wasn't that she didn't feel like she could handle herself, but the last time had shaken her. There wasn't much that karate could do against a gun.

Doctor Hubert let them in and led them back to the den.

With the pictures of the commune on the wall behind him, he began to speak. “During the time Vincent spent in the Amazon, one of the discoveries he made was a rare plant which, when correctly harvested and processed, increased male potency.”

Lois snarked, “So then his prowess with the ladies wasn't all God given?”

Doctor Hubert replied succinctly and with a nod, “Correct.”

Clark commented, “Better sex through science.” He looked at Lois and lifted an eyebrow, “Why not?”

Lois blushed and patted his arm. “Every man wants to be Superman in bed, I guess.” She looked at him significantly and said, “Some men don't need the help.”

Doctor Hubert noted this byplay and pressed on, “He also discovered vast mineral deposits beneath areas of the rain forest that are currently protected by law.”

Clark asked “How does Barbara Trevino fit into all of this?”

Doctor Hubert nodded and replied, “I was just coming to that. Barbara knew of Vincent's discoveries and research, and tried to convince him they should be exploited for their commercial value. He turned her down cold.”

A sudden thought occurred to Lois and she dug into her bag, almost frantically. She finally found what she was after and pulled it out. It was a piece of paper, she explained as she read, “This Is the background sheet on Trevino they handed out at the press conference. Yes, here it is ... Barbara Trevino is, among other things, on the of board directors of Hobbs Mining.” After reading she looked up and said, “Extensive mining operations in protected areas of the rain forest would constitute an ecological disaster.”

Doctor Hubert was enthusiastic as he said, “Winninger knew that. The world saw him as a hedonist, but he was really a humanist. The plant he discovered was just one of the many potential treasures hidden deep in the rain forest, waiting to be discovered for the eventual good of all mankind. He devoted his life to preserving that resource.”

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## Chapter 08

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Lois and Clark left Doctor Hubert at Winninger's and headed back to the Planet. They had some researching to do. They were at it most of the day. Lois had forgotten all about Barbara Trevino's call of the previous day. By the end of the day, Lois was feeling more than a little frustrated. The day staff was starting to head out, but Lois, Clark and Cat all congregated around Lois's desk.

As Perry walked up to join the group Lois asked, “Anything on Hobbs Mining?”

Perry had been trying to use his influence as Editor-in-Chief to cut through some of the bureaucracy. “No, they're being very closed mouthed. Ben Bradley used to call it ‘non-denial’ denials.” He was concerned for her safety still and looking around he asked, “You going to be all right?”

Lois nodded in Clark's direction and said, “Sure, I've got my protector right over there.”

Perry looked in his direction. He had heard Lois's comment and he put on a show for Perry. Pretending to be reading something while he walked, he bumped into a desk.

Seeing this didn't alleviate Perry's concerns. He said, “Oh, brother. Well, you be careful.” As he finished speaking, Perry headed for the elevator. He made a parting comment, “There aren't many people around. Good night.”

Just then the elevator doors opened and Perry started to enter, but he was delayed by the cleaning woman and her cart which were coming out. As Perry got into the car the cleaning woman said, “Night,” and pushed her cart down the hall.

Lois was still hard at work embellishing her notes from the meeting with Hubert when Cat strolled over. Cat interrupted her by asking, “Big story, huh?”

Lois didn't even look up, “Mmm.”

Cat said, “You must have been terrified.”

This finally got Lois's attention. She looked up and said with a little bravado, “It was a little scary.”

Cat was actually more than a little envious of Lois although she would be loathe to admit it, especially to her. Lois had the man of her dreams, Cat's dreams that is and she seemed to have it all together. To keep the conversation going, Cat said, “You want to talk scary? I covered the governor's wife's speech at the museum volunteers' luncheon today. Her dress — \*that\* was scary.”

Lois was mystified as to how the two could compare. Her life had actually been threatened, several times in the last couple of days, and Cat was comparing that to a dress. A little of Clark must have rubbed off on her because rather than giving a snarky comment, Lois just smiled politely and went back to her notes.

Lois was surprised when Cat persisted. She was wondering just what was eating Cat and hoping that she would just ‘spit it out.

Cat said, “Look, be honest. You can tell me, I won't breathe a word, you \*were\* scared, right?”

Lois didn't want to betray any weakness to Cat for fear that it would soon be all over the newsroom so she said, “Like I said, a little.”

Cat challenged, “A lot.”

Lois argued, “Little.”

Cat came back with “Lot.”

Getting frustrated with this back and forth, Lois challenged, “Why is it so important to you that I admit how scared I was?”

Cat put her hands on her hips and said, “It just makes you more human.” She thought for a second before she continued, her jealousy started to come out, “Okay. Look, I write as well as you do, I'm more fun at parties. But you're the star here — the chief's favorite. You are in on \*all\* the action. And when you get in trouble, look who's hanging around to come to the rescue — not \*only\* a cute guy who you happen to be married to, but also a god with a cape ...”

Lois tried to interrupt, “But ...”

Cat wasn't finished her tirade, she continued, “Excuse me. You asked, I am answering. You've got something the rest of us don't have, Lois. So it would be nice if for once, just once, you could admit that you have bad days, problems, and \*fears\* just like the rest of us mortals.”

Cat was finished and with a disgusted snort turned on her heel and started to stalk away.

Lois took a deep breath and stopped her, “Cat!”

Cat stopped and turned back toward Lois.

Lois shrugged and admitted, “Okay, I \*was\* scared ... a lot.”

Cat stood there just looking at Lois for a time, judging her sincerity and eventually she started to smile and turned away to return to her desk satisfied that she had gotten Lois to finally admit to a fault. Finally she admitted that she wasn't Superwoman. She had fears like everyone else. Somehow that was a comfort to Cat. It brought Lois down closer to her level.

As Cat stalked off, Clark approached and asked, “What was that all about?”

“Oh, Cat just wanted to be reassured that I'm not superhuman like someone we won't name. That I am subject to the fears common to humanity.”

Seeing that she had materials still on her desk he said, “I guess it would be foolish to ask if you were ready to go.”

Lois swept her hands over her desk to indicate the materials spread out as she said, “I've just got ...”

Clark joined her in her answer and it was like a minor echo, “... A little more work A little more work to do. to do.”

Leaning in close, Clark said, “I want you to promise me you won't leave until I get back.”

Looking around and dropping her voice to a conspiratorial level, she asked, “What is it? Fire, car wreck, hostage crisis?”

He smiled and replied, “Nothing so mundane, I'm going to look for Barbara Trevino.”

Lois looked at him in disbelief, “We have no idea where she could be. How do you expect to find her when the police haven't been able to?”

He simply said, “It's worth a shot and it's better than sitting around here doing nothing. Do you promise not to leave?”

Lois gave him a look and asked, “Do you want it in blood?”

Clark replied, “No, you don't need to do that, but I don't want to leave you here alone, either.”

Jimmy had just returned from the darkroom and as he exited the elevator heard the end of Clark's statement. Jimmy offered, “I'll stick around.”

Not realizing he was around, at the sound of his voice, both of them looked up.

“I don't mind, really.”

Clark nodded his thanks to Jimmy and started to turn to leave, but before he did he turned back to Lois.

She asked, “What?”

Trying to reassure her he said, “I'll be back in a little while, okay?”

“Okay. See you soon.”

Clark strode to the stairwell and exited. A few seconds later Superman was seen flying by the Planet building. He stayed at relatively low level and started canvassing the city.

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Lois had been working at her computer typing up her notes and creating the outline of her story when she reached for her coffee mug and found it empty. She looked around and spotted Jimmy who was surfing the internet. She shouted over, “How about a cup of coffee?”

He didn't even look up and replied, “Sure, I'd love one.” Then he realized that it wasn't an offer and, getting up, approached Lois's desk and picked up her cup. He said, “I'll be right back,” and headed for the coffee station.

Lois had switched back to her notebook and pencil. As she was writing she pressed too hard and broke off the point of her pencil. Growling in frustration she searched through the drawers of her desk looking for a replacement. She found a number 2 pencil box and grabbed it only to find that it was empty. She shoved the drawer closed in frustration and, standing, headed in the direction of the supply closet.

On her way to the supply closet, she passed the cleaning woman, barely noticing her.

Lois entered the supply closet and switched on the light. Moving past several shelves she found the pencil supply on a shelf at eye level. As she was reaching for a box she heard the door close and jumped because it startled her. Spinning around saw the cleaning woman.

Lois said, “Oh, you scared me. Are you looking for something?”

As Lois was asking this, the cleaning woman reached behind herself and locked the door.

Seeing this Lois took a closer look and belatedly recognized Barbara Trevino.

Trevino pulled a gun and said, “I found it. Now, tell me where that notebook is.”

Lois tried to hedge, “I don't know what you're talking about.”

While she had been speaking, Trevino had started to remove her makeup. There had just been enough to alter her appearance slightly. “I knew Winninger was about to expose my true motivation in wanting to be appointed chairperson of the Rain Forest Consortium. From there it would have been easy to grant Hobbs the exclusive strip mining licenses they needed to exploit the area. So, I called on our old friend Finn to eliminate him. But, Finn left a loose end, you.”

Lois choked out, “Me?”

Barbara agreed, “Yes, you and the notebook. Where is it?”

Trying to put her off, Lois said, “There's nothing in the notebook except Winninger's processing formula for the male potency plant.”

Barbara looked surprised and said, “Then I guess I went to a lot of trouble for nothing. But, with the strip mining proceeding even as we speak and you eliminated ...”

Lois gasped out, “Eliminated?”

Barbara shrugged and said, “I guess that's the way it goes sometimes.”

Jimmy had poured himself and Lois each a cup of coffee and returned to her desk. He was surprised when she wasn't there and looked around. He didn't see her in the newsroom. Looking at her desk he spotted the empty pencil box and concluded that she had gone to the supply closet. He didn't think that it should have taken her this long to get a box of pencils and decided to investigate.

He crossed the floor to the supply closet and tried the door only to find it locked. He rattled the doorknob a few times and then stepped back, puzzled.

As Barbara was taking aim at Lois she heard the noise of Jimmy trying the door behind her and halfway turned in that direction. She realized her mistake and whirled back to Lois.

Lois had heard the noise and seen Barbara's distraction and seized the opportunity it afforded. Launching herself at Trevino, she grabbed the arm with the gun and forced it up.

Trevino reflexively pulled the trigger firing into the ceiling. Lois used both of her hands to slam Trevino's gun hand into the shelves. Hearing the shot, Jimmy redoubled his efforts to get into the storeroom.

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Hearing the shot with his superhearing, Superman zeroed in on it and realized that it had come from the Daily Planet. Changing course, he headed in that direction.

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Trevino continued to try and bring her gun to bear, but Lois was able to stave her off. Lois kept slamming Trevino's hand into the shelves trying to dislodge the firearm from her grasp. Trevino was using her free hand to grab Lois's throat in an attempt to strangle her. Finally they both fell to the floor and Lois shouted, “Help!”

Suddenly there was a crash that neither heard as they wrestled on the floor. Seconds later Trevino relaxed her grip and

dropped the gun. Looking up, Lois saw that Trevino had a pair of hands around her neck which caused her to drop the gun so that she could use both hands to dislodge them. Looking up the arms she saw who it was that had saved her, Jimmy!

Lois shouted, “Jimmy, help me hold her.”

Jimmy knelt and, pushing Trevino to the floor, started to hold her down, but a savage twist by Trevino freed her and she bolted out through the door.

She was only gone for a few seconds when she came back in, propelled by a pair of blue spandex clad arms and Superman followed her in.

Relief flooded through Lois at the sight of her husband, but she couldn't resist getting in a little dig, “Cutting it a little close there, aren't you, big fella?”

Clark was relieved. If Lois could make a comment like that, she was okay. To be sure, he asked, “Are you all right?”

Lois replied, “I am, but the rain forest isn't.”

“What do you mean?”

“I'll explain later. Right now you need to fly to the Amazon and prevent Hobbs Mining from destroying the rain forest.”

Nodding in understanding he took a large cable-tie used for bundling file folders and used it to bind Trevino's hands behind her back. As soon as this was done he flew out through the large windows en route to the Amazon. Remembering the map that he had seen in Winninger's notebook he knew where to go.

He was almost too late. As he landed, he spotted a number of men clustered around a detonation plunger. The leader of the group signaled and a warning horn began to sound. Those standing around, if they didn't already have them on, donned hard hats.

He shouted, “Alto!”

With a sneer the foreman ignored his command. Seeing the leader or foreman approach the plunger, Superman knew his time to act was short. At superspeed he moved to where the cluster of wires that were attached to the detonator began to separate and picking up the entire cluster tore them apart just before the foreman plunged the handle down.

When nothing happened the foreman looked up in bewilderment.

Superman was standing there holding the severed ends of the wires in each hand. In Spanish he told them that the mining operations were being stopped.

The foreman took off his hard hat and threw it down in disgust.

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Back in the states, Lois and Jimmy had been busy on the phone calling the State Department and anyone else they could think of. They had finally gotten through to the Rain Forest Consortium and presented their evidence. In the meantime the MPD had arrived and collected Barbara Trevino and the weapon that she had tried to shoot Lois with.

As soon as the RFC was enlightened about Trevino's activities they contacted Brazil and cancelled the contract with Hobbs Mining.

Finally, Lois hung up the phone and said, “Superman got there in time. All mining operations have been suspended and the authorities are cleaning house at the Rain Forest Consortium. I guess everything's back to normal.”

Just as Lois finished speaking, Clark exited the elevator. He asked, “Sorry I took so long. Anything happen while I was gone?”

Jimmy looked at Lois and smiled, that he was one up on Clark and said, “Not a thing.”

Clark looked at Lois and shared a smile with her.

Lois put away her pencils and cleared her desk. When she finished she said, “Come on.”

“Where are we going?”

“I'm finished here for the night. Let's go home.”

Smiling, he helped her on with her coat and they walked out arm-in-arm.

As they approached the apartment, Clark said, “You know, I'm having second thoughts about your old apartment.”

“Oh? Why?”

“The other apartment might be smaller, but it does have the balcony that I can use when I leave and return. Your old apartment doesn't. Back when you lived there, the occasional visit by Superman at the window, well, something like that could be accepted, but to have him leaving and returning on a regular basis ... someone could start to put two and two together and I don't think we'd want that sum to be made known.”

“What about when your folks come to visit?”

“I think they'll just have to stay in a hotel, at least until we can find a bigger place that will suit our needs.”

“Okay, let's move back.”

“I'm surprised that you're not putting up much of a fight.”

“Clark, honey, wherever we are, as long as we are together, that's home for me. Besides, your apartment always felt more homey than mine did. Stop and think, when we had work nights, where did we usually end up? Your apartment. When we had movie nights where did we have them? Your apartment. Whenever I was frazzled and needed to feel safe and protected, where did I come? To you and your apartment. Do I need to go on?”

Laughing he said, “I think you've made your case. I guess we can start moving back tonight.” With an ornery grin he started rubbing his back and added, “I have to admit, it'll be a relief. Those couches of yours aren't that comfortable.”

She grinned up at him and to his surprise, she agreed, “I know. I can't believe I let that salesman talk me into them. They look nice, but for comfort, your sofa is the best.”

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After they were home, the first thing they did was pack. At superspeed, Superman ferried the bags to 344 Clinton before going back for Lois. Once there, they started putting a meal together. While they did, Lois filled Clark in on what they had been doing while he was in Brazil and he in turn told her about confronting the mining crew.

After dinner they headed for the bedroom. They got undressed and cuddled on the bed. As they started a lovemaking session, Lois said, “Ohhh, I'm glad we were able to save Winninger's find. This way other couples can experience what we have, but of course, you don't need any drugs.”

“Oh, are you saying that I'm enough for you?”

“Shut up and make love to me.”

THE END