

Christmas 2015: Matchmaker Chronicles Vol 1 CG2

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Rated PG-13

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Summary: This is the second part of the prologue for a longer NextGen story and follows up on the events of Thanksgiving and deals with events around Christmas 2015.

Story Size: 10,018 words (53Kb as text)

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

I wish to express my thanks to my Beta reader Ray Reynolds for his invaluable help. This was a VERY rough draft when it first landed in his hands.

/“text”/ indicates telepathic communication

text indicates bold

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This story follows on from [“Thanksgiving 2015 — Matchmaker Chronicles Vol 1 CG1.”](#)

From Thanksgiving 2015 — Matchmaker Chronicles Vol 1 CG1

In the evening of Friday, November the twenty-seventh, the doorbell was rung and when Lois answered it, Bud Kyle was on the stoop, holding a pumpkin. When she had opened the door, she said, “Well, Bud, did you want to see Jon?”

When he looked up she could see that he had some healing bruises on his face and around his eyes and he said, “I came to replace the pumpkin I ruined.” He proffered the large orange squash to her, “and to say that I’m sorry.”

Lois accepted the pumpkin and said, “I hope you have learned a lesson.”

In a somewhat belligerent tone, he replied, “Yeah, I have.” As he turned away, she saw that he moved stiffly, as if he were in pain. Using her x-ray vision, Lois checked and saw bruising and red welts on his back and ribs.

Bud didn’t hear her gasp of dismay. She stopped him, “Bud!”

He turned back to her as she asked, “What did your father do to you?”

He hung his head and said, sullenly, “Nothin’. He didn’t do nothin’, as he turned away and left.

Lois placed the pumpkin on the porch where the other had been and called her husband, /Clark!/ as she stepped back into the house.

Having just returned from a rescue, he replied, /I’m upstairs./ She rushed upstairs and plopping down on the side of the

bed, she said, “I think we have a major problem.”

“What would that be?”

“Bud Kyle was just here to deliver the replacement pumpkin. Clark, I think he is a victim of child abuse. I think his father beat him because of what he did. His face was bruised and when I checked using my x-ray vision, so is his body and he had red welts on his back.”

“Lois, you know we aren’t supposed to violate an individual’s privacy by using our x-ray vision on them.”

“This was justified. That kid was injured.”

“I know and I sympathize, but there are just some things we don’t do.”

Chagrined, Lois replied, “I know. It’s just like old times. I was jumping in before checking the water level, but it was probably my fault! I was the one that took him to the police.”

He could sense that she was on the verge of breaking down, so taking her in his arms, he said, “Look, maybe the appearance in family court will help. We can only hope that it will and that they will be ordered into counseling.”

Lois relented and slumped in his arms, “Yeah, you’re right. I guess we’ll just have to wait and see.”

The prologue continues.

Chapter 1

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120

Local designation — Canon Universe also called Prime 2015

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Things had been fairly quiet for the Kent family since Thanksgiving, but it was approaching the middle of December. Since it was common knowledge that Lois and Clark had a continuing relationship with Ultra Woman and Superman, Clark was contacted at the Daily Planet by the Clerk of the Court. When Clark took the call, he was surprised at the request, “Mr. Kent?”

“Yes, this is Clark Kent. How may I help you?”

“My name is Janet Harris. I am the Clerk of the Family Court here in Metropolis.”

Clark, who usually sat somewhat slumped in his chair to disguise his posture, unconsciously sat up a little straighter in his chair as he replied, “How may I help you?”

With a little, embarrassed giggle, she said, “I realize that this is not how things like this are usually handled, but ...”

Clark’s curiosity was piqued by this, and he encouraged her to continue, “Yes, unusual. Please go on.”

“Well, you see, it’s this way, we need to get hold of Ultra Woman and short of going up to the rooftop and shouting, ‘Help, Ultra Woman!’, this was the only way I could come up with.

Everyone knows how close you and Ms. Lane are to the superheroes, so I thought that just maybe; you could get a message to her.”

“I would be happy to. I’m always happy to help the courts. What message would you like me to give her?”

“Well, I can’t go into the details over the phone with anyone. I really need to speak with her. Could you have her call me and set up a meeting?”

“Sure, just give me your number.”

He wrote as she dictated the number and she finished with, “Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from Ultra Woman,” and hung up.

Clark sat there, thoughtful, for a moment before standing and taking the number to Lois. As he handed it to her he kidded, “Have you had any rescues involving kids recently?”

Smiling, she replied, “You know that most of my rescues

involve kids. Why?"

"Has someone accused you of abusing their child recently?"

Becoming concerned, Lois concentrated and came up with nothing. "Not that I can recall, why?"

As she took the note, he said, "I just had a call from Family Court asking that I pass on a message to Ultra Woman. They want to talk to you."

Taking the note, Lois mused, "I wonder what this is all about."

Smiling, Clark replied, "One way to find out, call."

Lois nodded and they moved into the conference room. Picking up the phone, Lois called the number that Clark had written down. When it was answered, she said, "This is Ultra Woman. I'd like to speak with Janet Harris."

She heard a gasp from the receiver and then, "Ultra Woman?" There was a pause and then she heard, "I don't mean to doubt you, but over the phone I could be speaking to anyone. Could you come into the office? I have a matter that I need to discuss with you."

Grabbing a pencil and paper, Lois said, "I'd be happy to. What is your address?" Lois wrote as it was dictated. "Got it. I'll be there shortly."

Clark smiled and asked, "Need any help?"

Lois shook her head and said, "I don't think so. I'll see you in a while." She walked out and entered the stairwell as Clark returned to his desk.

Thirty seconds later, Ultra Woman was standing in front of a desk in a Clerk of the Court's office.

Sensing a presence, Janet Harris looked up from the papers she was perusing and was startled to see Ultra Woman standing over her. Her hand flew to her throat and she exclaimed, "My, when you said, shortly, I thought you meant later in the afternoon."

"The extent to which you went in order to contact me seemed to make it urgent."

Having second thoughts, she said, "How can I be sure that you're Ultra Woman?"

Lois thought for a second and then spotting a cup of cold coffee on her desk, used her heat vision and then said, "Enjoy your coffee."

Looking at her cup, Janet saw steam rising from it and picked it up to take a cautious sip of her steaming, hot coffee. She sighed in pleasure and all questions of the identity of her visitor removed, asked, "Would you like to have a seat?"

"No, thank you. I prefer to remain standing," and she crossed her arms over her chest.

"Oh, okay, well, the reason I needed to contact you is ... last month you brought in two teens. They were charged with vandalism and littering. As a result of the fine being imposed, a family court hearing has been ordered. I have been asked by the lawyers involved to arrange for you to appear at the hearing."

Lois nodded and said, "If you will let me know when it is scheduled, as long as I am not called away for a major rescue, I will make every effort to attend."

"We appreciate it. It is scheduled for the seventeenth at three PM."

"Thank you. As I said, I will make every effort to be there."

After she returned to the Planet, Lois pulled Clark into the conference room and said, "What am I going to do, Clark? They want me to appear at Bud's family court hearing. What am I going to say? I saw what his father did to him."

Putting his arms around her, Clark comforted her and said, "All you can do is answer any questions they ask, within reason, and tell the truth."

"I'll have to tell them about the bruises I saw."

"Lois, stop and think. Who saw the bruises?"

"I did."

"When?"

"When he dropped off the pumpkin."

"Who is going to be in court?"

"I am."

"Be specific, who will be in court?"

"Ultra Woman."

"Be specific again, who saw the bruises?"

She thought for a second before answering, "Lois Lane.

Wow, it is really coming home to me just how complicated your life has been ever since you created Superman. It gets confusing, doesn't it?"

He snickered and said, "You have no idea. You never worked with the best investigative reporter in the world and tried to keep a secret like the one I was keeping. Sometimes it was hard to remember who saw or said what. There were times I screwed up; fortunately, you didn't pick up on them. You just thought that Clark and Superman talked together a lot, exchanging bits of gossip."

When Ultra Woman entered the courtroom, the judge welcomed her and said, "I know how valuable your time is so if you will take the stand, we will precede."

After the bailiff swore her in, the judge addressed her, "Ultra Woman, are you aware of why you were asked to appear?"

"I assumed that it was to testify about the evening I apprehended two teenage boys in the act of damaging private property and littering."

"Yes, actually, it is about that night, but not about that act."

The lawyer standing next to Bud and his family started to speak and Lois was astonished at what she was hearing.

"Bud claims that you beat him up for this minor infraction because you and Superman have a special connection with the Kent family." He produced some pictures and said, "Your honor, I have here pictures taken of Bud shortly after he was picked up by his parents from the precinct. They clearly indicate bruising of the face and black eyes. These injuries, he claims, are the result of the handling he received from Ultra Woman. These are the pictures already placed into evidence." He then handed the pictures to the judge.

The judge leafed through the pictures, a thoughtful expression on his face as he refreshed his memory. As he placed them down on his desk, Ultra Woman asked, "May I see them?"

The judge nodded said, "Certainly," and handed them over. Ultra Woman looked them over and then handed them to the judge.

The judge asked, "Do you have anything to say?"

"Yes, Your Honor, those injuries look real enough, but he did not sustain them by my hands. When I dropped him off at the precinct, he was ... unblemished."

Bud's lawyer challenged, "Then how do you explain these injuries?"

"I have no explanation. All I know is that he was uninjured when I dropped him off. The sergeant on the desk that night can verify my statement. If he sustained his injuries after I dropped him off and before he was picked up by his parents, they were either self-inflicted or else he had a fight with the other teen that was with him when apprehended."

The judge said, "I thought of that and asked for the cell tapes for the night in question. Unfortunately the camera in the cell was malfunctioning. I had already tried to contact the sergeant. Again, unfortunately, he is unavailable. He just got married and is on his honeymoon."

Ultra Woman thought for a few seconds and then a thought came to mind. She said, "That night, when I brought them in, there were a number of patrolmen there. Some of them were taking pictures of me. Perhaps the boys could be seen in some of

those pictures.”

The judge smiled and said, “There will be a short recess while I contact the precinct and request that those patrolmen email those pictures to me. We will reconvene in one hour.” He banged his gavel and said, “We stand in recess.”

When Ultra Woman made that suggestion, Bud started to sweat. His lawyer closely scrutinized him, and as the judge exited, he said, “We have to have a discussion.” Inviting Bud’s parents to accompany them, he led the way from the room.

Lois had been blindsided by this accusation and hadn’t known what to do. Instead of being there simply to testify as to what Bud had done, she had been the one placed on the defensive. She continued to sit in the witness stand as she watched Bud, his family and lawyer leave. She knew she was innocent, but had no way, other than possibly the pictures taken by those patrolmen to prove it. She decided that she needed to talk to Clark.

Lois walked out of the courtroom, down the hall and out the door so she wouldn’t disturb anyone any more than necessary. Once outside however, she moved faster than the eye could follow and within a split second she was on the roof of the Daily Planet building. As she passed through the roof access door, she spun back into her beige business suit before descending the stairs at super-speed. Exiting the stairwell, she crossed to Clark’s desk and said, “We need to talk. Conference room.”

Clark could see that she was upset, but had no idea as to the cause so he stood and walked with her to the conference room, his hand at the small of her back. He could feel the tension in her body which added to his concern. As soon as they were inside, he closed the door and the blinds, then he turned to her. He could see that she was having difficulty restraining tears. In a comforting tone, he asked, “All right, what happened?”

Stepping to him and throwing her arms around his neck, she sobbed, “Oh, Clark, they accused me of child abuse.”

“What? How could they?”

“Remember the night that Bud brought over the replacement pumpkin? I told you about the bruises. He is claiming that Ultra Woman did that to him.”

Clark stuttered out, “But you didn’t. You wouldn’t have. There’s just no way.”

“I know, but he had pictures and is claiming that I did that to him.”

“There’s always someone looking to turn us into a big payday. Don’t they have surveillance on the cells? What about the desk sergeant?”

“They already thought of that. The camera was on the fritz and the desk sergeant is away on his honeymoon.”

“There has to be someone. What about the patrolman that put them in the cells?”

“Fortunately I thought of them and some of them were taking pictures of me which may have the kids in the frame. For once I am very happy about the skin tight suit. If not for that, they might not have been taking pictures.”

Pulling her in tighter, he said, “I love you in that suit. Frankly, though, I love you better ... out of it.”

Smiling, she tilted her head up and kissed him, then she sighed and said, “You always say the sweetest things.”

While this was going on, the lawyer was talking to the Kyle family, “You said this would be a sure thing.”

Bud replied, “It should have been. I noticed the out of order sign on the camera. I knew it would take Pop a while to get there. In that time they were sure to have a shift change so the same guy wouldn’t be on the desk. I threatened Mike until he hit me a few times, hard enough to make bruises. I forgot about those cops takin’ pictures of Ultra Woman.”

“All right then, the only thing to do is say it was all a mistake.”

Bud’s father stopped him and said, “Nothin’ doin’. I hired you to keep my kid out of juvie and to keep me from havin’ to pay that fine and make some money in the deal. You’re gonna get in there and convince that judge that she done it. Then we all get a big payday.”

“That is going to be impossible if those pictures show him unblemished.”

“Maybe they won’t. We’re just gonna have to wait and see.”

When the hour had elapsed they had all returned to the courtroom. The judge addressed Ultra Woman, “Please resume your place in the witness box.”

After she had resumed her seat, he said, “I just received the pictures.” He pulled them up on his laptop and said, “It is hard to tell. The pictures are rather small.”

Ultra Woman zoomed in with her microscopic vision and in her anxiety went too far, seeing a field of dots spaced wide apart without seeing a picture. She backed off on the magnification and scanned the pictures. Pointing to two of them, she said, “If you have these two enlarged and printed, I believe it will show that Bud was unblemished at the time the pictures were taken. From the angles, I would say that these were taken by two different individuals.”

The judge checked the original emails and saw that her supposition was correct. He looked at the lawyer with a stern expression, “Well, councilor, what do you have to say?”

The lawyer was in a panic and chose to throw his clients under the bus, “I didn’t know anything about that, Your Honor. They came to me with the pictures and told me that Ultra Woman had done it. That’s all I know.”

Bud’s father responded with a loud snort.

Hearing that, the judge replied, “Councilor, if there was any way I could prove that you willingly participated in this attempted fraud, I’d have you disbarred. As it is, all I can say is — get out of my courtroom and thank your lucky stars that I can’t prove it.”

The lawyer hastily grabbed his bag and left. As the door closed behind him, the judge muttered, “I hate ambulance chasers,” then turned his attention back to Ultra Woman, “I want to apologize for doubting you and taking your time this way. You are excused.”

“Thank you, Your Honor, but might I ask what is to be done here?”

“I have to say, I don’t like what has happened here. First, there was the incident that brought this young man in, in the first place, but complicating that is what they tried to do to you. I don’t know if I should blame the child or the parents. I think it is apparent that the parents had some level of involvement.”

“May I speak on their behalf?”

“You want to speak for them, after what they tried to do to you?”

“Yes, Your Honor. The attempt has failed. They paid for a lawyer unless he was working on commission. I think there is a fine for littering. Let that be the end of it, unless you feel that family counseling would help.”

“I am inclined to agree with you.” He turned so that he was facing the Kyles and said, “The fine for the littering will be fifty dollars and I agree with Ultra Woman. I think that family counseling is needed and it is so ordered.” He brought his gavel down with a loud thwack. “Pay the bailiff. Court dismissed.”

As Ultra Woman was leaving, she could hear Bud’s father grumbling and muttering indistinctly. She couldn’t make out the words, but the tone was a threatening one.

As soon as Lois was back at the Planet, she sat on the corner

of Clark's desk and looked at what was on his computer screen. It was a write-up of a recent Superman rescue.

He asked, "How did it go?"

"I'll never complain about my uniform being too tight again."

"The pictures showed that he was uninjured."

"Sure did. Their lawyer threw them under the bus, claiming he had nothing to do with the attempted fraud, but I think the judge knew better."

"All's well that ends well."

"Yes, all's well that ends well and this ended well. They've been ordered into family counseling."

"It just might do some good."

"To borrow a phrase from Herb, 'Only time will tell.'"

Chapter 2

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120

Local designation — Canon Universe also called Prime 2015

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Once the issue with Bud and the family court appearance had been resolved, the Kent family was able to concentrate on the upcoming holiday.

Since Grandma and Grandpa Kent had come to Metropolis for Thanksgiving, the younger Kent family was going to be visiting Smallville this holiday. Christmas was on a Friday this year, but the schools were closing after only a half day on Wednesday, and the children did not have to be back in school until January 4th of 2016. Accordingly, on Wednesday, as soon as everyone was home, they finished their packing and loaded their fifteen passenger van. The van was equipped with a DVD player for the rear passengers and in a strategic move; they started out later in the evening.

After a little over an hour, Jessica, Jimmy, Lucy and Sam (8, 6, 4, and 2 years old, respectively) were all asleep in their child safety car seats and to the joy of Jon, Lara, Sean and Celeste, while Lois continued to drive, Clark slipped out through his window and while flying beside the van, spun into The Suit, picked up the van, and started flying with it just above the tree tops. When they were over a deserted stretch of Kansas countryside near Smallville, he lowered the van to the road and reversed the process by changing and slipping back inside.

Half an hour later, they pulled up in front of the Kent farm house. Jonathan and Martha were sitting up, waiting for them, and when they saw the headlights, they came outside to welcome them.

As they came out, the side door of the van slid open and the four older children, Jon, Lara, Sean and Celeste all piled out and surrounded their grandparents who welcomed their hugs and kisses.

Lois and Clark watched in amusement as the kids mobbed their grandparents and smiled seeing the affection displayed. After reveling in the display for a time, they opened their doors and started to release the remaining children who had all started to stir as soon as the van had come to a halt. Lois could start to feel the strain on her cheek muscles from her irrepressible smile as she watched each child as they were released from their restraints join their siblings greeting their grandparents. After the last had joined the mob, she and Clark simply stood by the van, arms around each other, watching the love on display; until; Jon and Lara saw them. Breaking away from the pack, they took their parents' hands and dragged them over to join the group.

Lois and Clark were both laughing as they were dragged over to join the group hug. They were both super pleased that their children loved their grandparents so much. In recent years the

senior Kents had been virtually their only grandparents.

Sam and Ellen Lane had reconciled after the Bad Brain affair, first moving in together and then re-marrying. Sam had taken the robot he had created, the one he had called Baby Gunderson, and sold her to a department store to be used as a 'living' manikin in their store windows. Sam had given up on his get rich quick schemes and using the seed money from the sale of Baby Gunderson, had gone back into legitimate practice with Ellen as his nurse. The practice had flourished and he had brought in two other physicians as partners. Building the practice had taken a lot of time, and Lois and Clark hadn't seen that much of them. They did drop by now and then, but it was nothing like with the regularity of the older Kents even though they were right there in Metropolis.

As the practice had prospered, Sam's relationship with Ellen had prospered. He had decided that they could afford to 'give back' to the community. So, with the agreement and assistance of his partners, he had started a small clinic in the Suicide Slum section of town. The doctors in the group all staffed it on a rotating basis. The only problem was that, in spite of signs stating that no money or drugs were stored on the premises, there were frequent burglaries. After the fifth break-in, they had decided to close the clinic, but Sam still wanted to 'give back' so he talked it over with Ellen and they had decided to do missionary tours with *Doctors Without Borders*. Once they had started this, they had found it difficult to stop because the work had been so rewarding, not in a monetary sense, but emotionally.

They had engaged in this endeavor shortly after the birth of the twins in 2004 so Jon had only been four at the time and Lara two. As a result, this set of grandparents were almost strangers to all of the Kent children when they did show up. They had returned to the states briefly a year and a half earlier, when Lucy was about six months old and Sam had just been conceived.

Currently, they were helping relief workers in northern Afghanistan. They had been working as a doctor and nurse surgical team in a hospital under more or less battlefield conditions for almost six months. They took great pains to try and 'blend in' with the local population. Ellen didn't mind wearing a niqab, but she preferred the hijab. The niqab didn't bother her because she was so used to wearing a gown, mask and head-covering while in surgery. (A/N — The niqab is a head covering and veil which leaves an opening for the eyes as well as a burka like robe to cover the body. The hijab is a head scarf that covers the hair, but leaves the face exposed.)

Lois and Clark had both been concerned for the continued welfare of Sam and Ellen and had told them that if they ever needed help that Superman and/or Ultra Woman would always be available.

The incident that had made their reconciliation possible occurred at the end of the Bad Brain adventure. When the Bummer-Be-Gone had malfunctioned, it had erased all of the bad memories that had constituted their relationship. Along with that, they had both lost the memory of just who Superman was, and Lois and Clark had deemed it necessary to keep them in ignorance. They had simply been told that a call to Lois or Clark would galvanize their close friends, the superheroes, into action.

Two months earlier

Recently, Lois and Clark were even more concerned about Sam and Ellen's welfare. Truth be told, Lois was almost frantic. There had been a period of no contact, and Lois was about to fly out to investigate whether Clark accompanied her or not. There had been an accidental bombing of a hospital, a friendly fire incident, but they hadn't been in the facility at the time. At literally the last second, they had gotten a call from them.

Realizing that Lois and Clark would worry about them, they used a satellite phone they carried with them to call.

It had been a couple of days since the accidental bombing and also without Sam or Ellen calling. Lois was just about to pick up the phone and call Lucy to babysit when the call came in. Because of the time difference, Lois and Clark were at home when the call came in. The caller ID displayed the source of the call and Lois leaped to answer it. “Hello? Mother? Daddy?”

Ellen’s voice came through the receiver, “Hi, Lois, it’s Mom. Listen, honey, we’re fine. I know it has been a few days. We didn’t want you to worry so we decided to call.”

Relieved, Lois asked, “Wasn’t that the hospital you have been working in that was bombed?”

“Yes, it was. You know, we are very short handed, so we don’t get many breaks, but we just happened to be out of the facility when the bomb hit.”

“That’s a relief. We were afraid that you had gotten injured.”

“No, we’re just fine. A little overworked, no, a lot overworked. There are not only the patients we already had, but now those injured in the incident. We just heard that it was an accident. Friendly fire. We’re making do.”

“Is there anything we can do for you? Superman or Ultra Woman could bring you whatever you need.”

Ellen laughed, “That would be a pretty tall order. What we could use is more doctors and nurses, and I don’t think that they could supply them.”

“How are things going otherwise? Are the locals treating you well?”

“Yes, we’ve been here for a while now and the local population all knows us and that we work in the hospital. They treat us well enough. They know we’re non-combatants.”

“Are you guys going to be coming home anytime soon?”

“You know how it is. You can’t tell from one day to the next what is going to happen. Things change very rapidly and without warning. We can only hope that the fact that we are here to help will keep us safe.”

A serious tone entered Lois’s voice as she said, “We are aware of how rapidly things can change. All I can say is, keep the satellite phone handy and give us a shout if you need help.”

Ellen’s tone, which all things considered had been light, changed to one of seriousness as she said, “I don’t go anywhere without it. It is a bit larger than a cell phone, but it is more reliable. I carry it in my bag at all times. Sam carries a spare battery, and I try to remember to keep this one charged. If we need help, we’ll shout.”

Lois’s tone turned bantering as she said, “You’d better.”

Ellen’s tone was serious as she replied, “I will, Lois. I don’t have a death wish and neither does your father. As soon as there is a potential problem, we’ll call, rest assured.”

“I want you to continue to check in with us on a regular basis.”

Don’t worry, dear. We will. I need to go. It’s time for our shift to start.”

“Mom!”

“Yes, dear?”

“We love you, Mom.”

Ellen’s tone was soft as she replied, “I know, and we love you too.” Lois could hear her talking to her father even though her hand had apparently been placed over the mouthpiece before she came back on, “Gotta go. We have patients backed up into the hallway. We are working emergency, and apparently there was a firefight down the street. Bye.”

Lois said, “Bye, Mom,” as she heard the connection broken.

Lois turned to Clark and said, “I’m worried about them.”

“I am too, Honey, but there isn’t a lot we can do about it until they call for help. It isn’t like we could fly over there and pick them up and bring them home as Superman and Ultra Woman

without their consent. They are doing important work over there, and they would really resent the intrusion.”

“I know, but that doesn’t keep me from wishing things were different and that they were home. Why did Daddy have to decide to do something so dangerous?”

“I think that, subconsciously, he is trying to make amends for what he did in the past. Those enhanced boxers were potentially dangerous. We can only guess why Luthor was financing that research. When we found the documentation on that after Luthor finally died, it opened the door to all kinds of speculation. It was obvious that at least one of his purposes was to create someone that could take me on. After that failed, he created that clone of me and indoctrinated it with his values.”

“Fortunately, your innate goodness came through, and he rebelled against his ‘father’.” Lois draped herself over him with her arms around his neck as she said, “As for the boxers, I for one am glad that Daddy failed.” Lois kissed the side of his neck.

“Unfortunately, his research was the foundation for Metallo. By the same token, it was a good thing, because that was the foundation for the creation of Baby Gunderson. If not for that invention, he might not have gone back into legitimate practice.”

“Yeah, and it was Baby Gunderson that put us on to The Mechanic when he tried to kill us with the microwave.”

“There, you see. There was a lot of good that came out of that research.”

“I wish we could convince him of that.”

That had all taken place a couple of months ago and now it was Christmas week. On the Thursday of Christmas Eve, the kids were all up early, almost as early as Martha, and by the time Lois and Clark came down with Sam, who still shared their room, the rest of the children were in various stages of having breakfast. Lois placed Sam in his highchair and proceeded to feed him while the kids that were finished eating all went out to ‘help’ Grandpa Kent with his chores.

The weather was brisk with a light overcast. During the day the temperature was in the fifties while at night it was dropping down close to freezing, but unfortunately there was no snow in the forecast.

At eleven o’clock, when the chores were all finished, they all piled into the van, all that is except, Jon and Lara who rode with Grandpa Kent in the truck while Grandma Kent rode in the van with the rest as they headed into town to purchase a Christmas tree.

Once they arrived, Sam was placed under Celeste’s charge, and Lucy was to be watched over by Sean, an assignment that would fall to his lot, well into her pre-teen years, to his chagrin.

The children all dispersed and each was looking for ‘the perfect’ tree. While they were all running from section to section, covering and recovering the entire lot, Lois and Clark strolled leisurely around the lot chatting with Clark’s parents, amused by, smiling and commenting on the activity.

Suddenly, Lois heard Sean calling from off to the extreme left, and she led Clark in that direction. When they arrived, they noted that they were actually off the lot when they spotted Sean and Lucy. Lucy was standing there staring at a scrawny little tree, obviously a reject, and crying.

As she approached, Lois said, “Lucy? Why are you all the way over here? What’s the matter, sweetie?”

Without even looking at her, tears streaming down her face, Lucy replied, “Mommy, I feel sorry for this little tree. Nobody is going to want it.”

Lois was immediately cast back many years into her past. Unlike now, Christmas had never been a happy time for Lois. After her parent’s divorce, there hadn’t been enough money to satisfy her mother’s thirst and also pay for decorations. After she had met Clark, things had begun to change. Finally, she had

decided to celebrate Christmas. She had ordered in a complete Christmas dinner and sent out invitations. She had gone looking for a tree, but by that time, they had been very picked over, but she had found a scrawny tree that had actually grabbed her fancy. When the night had come, the only one who had shown up had been Clark. He had told her that his flight had been cancelled due to snow. She knew very much better now. He had delayed his plans of flying out to Smallville so that she wouldn't be alone on Christmas. It had turned out to be a magical night.

Identifying with Lucy, Lois knelt next to her and said, "Tell you what, why don't we give it a home and decorate it. We can have a mama tree and a baby tree. How about that?"

Lucy threw her arms around Lois's neck and sobbed, "Could we, Mommy? Could we?"

"We sure can, Sweetheart. We will."

Clark said, "Wait right here. I'll be right back." He went in search of the salesman.

A few minutes later he returned and the salesman wrapped the tree up and handed it to Clark who carried it to the truck and placed it in the bed.

As this was being done, Lucy's tears stopped and she started to smile. She hugged Lois and said, "Thanks, Mommy."

Lois returned the hug and said, "I just want to see my little girl happy."

"You're the bestest mommy in the whole wide world! I love you, Mommy."

"And I love you, sweetheart."

Eventually they found another tree and after loading everything and everybody, they headed back to the farm.

Jonathan and Clark set up both trees, one on either side of the fireplace, in the corner, at a safe distance.

While they were setting up the trees and arranging the decorations, they had the radio on in the background playing Christmas music.

Everyone was enjoying the process as they placed the decorations on the trees when suddenly the music was interrupted, "***We interrupt this broadcast for a news bulletin. Flash: Afghanistan — ISIS rebels, who had been massing in northern Afghanistan are striking south, moving through Khorasan Province. They have been actively attacking the Taliban in that area and are now starting to seize territory. We now return you to your regularly scheduled program.***"

As the music resumed, Lois asked Clark, "Isn't that where Mother and Daddy are?"

"I'm afraid so."

"I'm going to call home and check the answering machine."

"Okay. I hope everything is okay."

Lois replied, "So do I," as she picked up her cell phone and dialed.

As the phone on the other end was ringing, Lois heard a beep, indicating an incoming call. Hitting the 'flash' button, she accepted it. "Lois Lane."

She could hear what sounded like shooting or explosions in the background as she heard a familiar voice, "Princess?"

"Daddy? What's happening?"

"Princess, we need help! The city is being overrun by ISIS fanatics. It won't be long until they are in the hospital. We have heard that they don't give any special treatment to medical personnel. If you are not Muslim they capture you, make you slaves or kill you. Can you get your friends, Superman and Ultra Woman to come and pick us up?"

Lois tried to remain calm as she said, "Consider it done. We are in Smallville. Do you mind if they bring you here?"

"Anywhere, will be better than here before too much longer. Please ask them to hurry."

"We will." She closed the connection. Looking at Clark she

said, "You heard?" At his nod, she turned to Martha and said, "Clark and I have to go out for a while. Would you mind a couple more visitors?"

"No problem. The sofa pulls out into a bed." With a conspiratorial wink, she added, "Go get them. Keep them safe."

Lois said to Jon, "Jon, we have to go out for a while."

"Can Lara and I help?"

"Not this time. We will have passengers."

"Okay, Mom. We'll see you when you get back."

Nodding to Clark she led the way out the back door. As soon as the door was closed behind them, they spun into their uniforms and took to the sky.

Chapter 3

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120

Local designation — Canon Universe also called Prime 2015

%%%

Lois and Clark, AKA Ultra Woman and Superman, stayed in close formation as they crossed the continent and soared out over the Pacific Ocean. At any other time they might have loitered to take in the majesty of the broad expanse of water, but there was an urgency to this trip.

They landed in Madras, India and found an isolated spot to spin into their regular clothes. They landed near a market area and quickly found a bazaar that had clothing of various types. They started looking for something they could use as disguises. The Muslim population of India was in the minority; however there were numbers of them throughout the country. With a minimum of haggling, Clark purchased two sets of Muslim attire, a niqab for Lois and a burnoose and knit cap for himself. The niqab would hide Lois's uniform, the only part visible being part of her mask showing through the opening in the head covering. The burnoose would not disguise the fact that Clark was clean shaven, but the disguises should hold long enough to do what they had to do. Returning to the same secluded area, they spun back into their uniforms, carried the disguises as bundles, and took off again. It was only a short hop from Madras to northern Afghanistan. They stayed high and used their telescopic vision to scout the area. They could see the firefight already in progress. They were high enough that they were unobserved while they decided their next move.

Spotting a deserted house with a courtyard, they put on a burst of speed and moving faster than the eye could follow they descended into the courtyard. As soon as they landed, they each put on the disguises over their uniforms.

"I think the hospital is two blocks away. The firefight is on the other side of the hospital from us. Ready? Remember, walk a pace or two behind me."

This rankled Lois's feminist leanings, "Must I?"

"That's the way it is over here. If we don't want to attract attention, that's what you'll have to do."

With a smirk, she replied, "As if your red boots and my hot pink ones showing below the disguises won't attract attention."

"We can only hope that they don't look at our feet. As long as you don't show someone the sole of your boot, we should be okay."

Mystified, she asked, "Why is that?"

"Showing the sole of your shoe to someone is the supreme insult in this culture. Remember when the U.S. military, at the request of the locals, tore down the statue of Saddam in Iraq? One of the first things that happened was a local leaped up on the fallen statue, took off his shoe, and started beating the face with it."

“I wondered about that.”

“U. S. servicemen are warned against showing the sole of their boots. Evidence of what the Muslims think of our presence can be seen in news clips. I saw in one, coalition troops on patrol and as they walked by, a Muslim sitting on a stool in a doorway crossed his leg presenting the sole of his sandal to the troops. It is very subtle, but it is there. Unless you knew that about them, you’d miss it.”

“Now that you mention it, I remember seeing that clip.”

“To the uneducated eye, there is nothing amiss, but knowing that, the meaning is obvious. There is a definite clash of cultures.” He looked her disguise over and said, “Looks like we are ready to go. Remember, two paces behind.”

“If you insist.”

“You could also tilt your head down. That should hide your mask.” As she tilted her head down, he said, “Okay, here we go.” They exited the courtyard and started down the street.

There must have been something in their gate or posture. They couldn’t be sure what it was, but something gave them away. As they walked down the street, there was a shout from behind them, “Allahu Akbar,” which was followed immediately by a burst of automatic rifle fire. Subconsciously, Clark recognized the sound and identified the weapon as an AK-47, Kalashnikov, as he felt slugs slam into his back. He spun and using his heat vision melted the action seizing the weapon making it useless for anything more than a paperweight. While he did this, Lois used her super-speed to close with the shooter and using one finger knocked him out.

Standing over him and looking down at her handiwork, she said, “Serves you right, shooting at unarmed people.”

Clark said, “I think we need to be on our way.”

“Right. What was that again, two paces?” she asked sarcastically.

“Let’s try to get there without any further incidents, shall we?”

“He did it, not me.”

“I know, and I appreciate the restraint you showed by just knocking him out.”

She fell in behind him as he moved off.

After a couple of minutes, they located the hospital. There was a lot of hustle and bustle as patients were prepared for relocation. Unfortunately, there were a number that were just too badly off to be moved. They found Sam and Ellen working frantically to prepare one of the less injured. As they watched, Ellen said, “That’s the last of the semi-ambulatory. Those are all that we can help. I hope our transport arrives soon. They are almost at the doors.”

Ellen was startled by a voice behind her, “Somebody here call for a cab?” After she spoke, she became concerned thinking that her parents might recognize her voice. She sent, /”Maybe you should do all of the talking.”/

Ellen snapped around and with a startled look stared at the woman in the niqab. Suddenly she spotted the hot pink mask through the slit in the niqab and knew that it had to be Ultra Woman. The man in the burnoose next to her lifted his cap off and she recognized the slicked back hair of Superman. When she did, she released a sigh of relief.

Superman took the lead from that point and asked, “Do you need to recover anything from your rooms?”

Sam replied, “No, we have been in the habit of carrying our passports on our persons. We have them in pouches slung around our necks. All that is in our rooms is some clothing. Easily replaced.”

Ellen stepped to the side and picked up two tote bags. She said, “The satellite phone and other valuables are in these. We are ready to go.”

They each pulled clothes from the totes and put them on.

When they finished Ellen was also wearing a niqab and Sam was wearing a pair of loose pants and a long loose tunic with his head bare.

Superman said, “That’s great. We will walk out together. We found a secluded area that we can take off from. It is only a couple of blocks away. We will keep you safe now.”

Ultra Woman sent a thought, /”I suggest single file. You lead and I’ll bring up the rear, that way they are between us.”/

/”Good idea.”/ He then told Sam and Ellen, “I suggest single file. I’ll lead and Ultra Woman will bring up the rear, that way you are between us.”/

They headed out and were almost to the house when a group of armed men appeared in front of them and Ultra Woman shouted, “There’s more behind us!”

Superman shouted, “Sandstorm!” and accompanied the shout with a telepathic message, /”Super-breath. Sand.”/

Ultra Woman picked up on his ploy instantly and as soon as she turned to the rear she used her super-breath as Superman was, blowing at the ground, stirring up the sand and sending it at the men gathered at either end of the thoroughfare.

The men were armed with a mishmash of weapons, predominately AK-47s, some M-4 carbines that they had captured from the U.S. military and RPGs. Sighting the four in the street, they brought their weapons to bear and started shooting. Until the leading edge of the artificial sandstorm hit them, Superman and Ultra Woman were kept busy catching or deflecting the bullets. When it reached their assailants, they forgot all about shooting and threw up their arms to defend their eyes from the stinging grit.

Once their assailants had stopped shooting, reaching back, Superman placed one of Ellen’s hands in one of Sam’s and took Sam’s other hand. He sent Lois a telepathic message as he started to lead Sam and Ellen away, /I have your parents. We need to get to the house. Back up slowly and keep the sandstorm going./

Superman and Ultra Woman kept up the sandstorm until they found the house they were after and ducked inside, closing and bolting the door behind them. Lois sent a telepathic message, /Let’s stay in the disguises. The less they can see of me the better I’ll like it. With a close inspection they may recognize me./

/Good idea./

Once the door had been closed and barred, all four of them ran through the house and into the courtyard. They allowed Sam and Ellen a second to catch their breath before Superman moved next to Sam, and Ultra Woman stood next to Ellen to place their arms around their passengers.; Superman said, “Hold onto your hats. We’re going to take off . . . rather fast. Once we are high enough, we will slow down. Don’t worry, our auras will protect you.” He paused a second while Ellen put an arm around Ultra Woman’s shoulders and then he said, “Okay, here we go,” and the two of them took off at extreme velocity.

Once they were at twenty-five thousand feet, they came to a hover and Superman asked, “Everyone okay?”

Ultra Woman, other than the comment in the hospital had maintained her silence, fearing that Ellen or Sam would recognize her voice. She hadn’t had as much practice at disguising it as Clark had.

At nods from both Ellen and Sam, he said, “Okay, next stop, the U. S. of A.”

They slowly descended to ten thousand feet as they headed south-east, flying over India, the Indian Ocean, over Australia and then north-east across the Pacific Ocean. It wasn’t too long until the California coastline appeared before them. They altered course once again to almost due east and finally landed in the front yard of the Kent Farm house.

As they were being set upon their feet, Sam asked, “Why here? We belong in Metropolis.”

Clark replied, “When Lois and Clark asked us to pick you up,

they asked us to bring you here because this is where they are. Now, if you'll excuse us, we have somewhere to be." So saying, Superman and Ultra Woman took off in a blur. Once they were out of sight of the ground, they reversed course and approached from the rear to enter through their bedroom window.

Once they had removed the disguises and spun into their regular clothes, they were ready to welcome their guests.

It was just about that time that there was a knock on the door and then Jon's voice shouting, "Grandma and Grandpa Lane!"

Lois and Clark exited their room and headed downstairs, appropriately surprised at the unexpected arrival of Lois's parents.

They were quickly brought inside because they were dressed for weather quite a bit hotter than the fifty-three degrees that the thermometer read.

Jonathan was just putting the finishing touches on the fire he had built in the fireplace.

Martha took charge, "Ellen and Sam, so good to see you. Superman warned us you may be stopping by. Come on in and get warm by the fire. We'll have to see about getting you some warmer clothing."

As they sat on the couch, Lois and Clark entered the room. Lois picked up Sam and said, "Mother and Daddy, this is our youngest. He's named after you, Daddy."

Sam's smile was so big it almost split his face, "Come to Grandpa, Sam," as he held out his hands to him.

Next, Lois called Lucy over and said, "This is Lucy Ellen. I guess I don't need to tell you where she got her middle name."

Ellen smiled and held out her hands, saying, "Come to Grandma."

This broke the ice and then there was a general getting-to-know-you session as the grandparents met their grandchildren.

After a time, Ellen turned to Sam and said, "I don't think I want to go on any more mission trips." She indicated the grandchildren and said, "Look at all we have been missing."

Sam nodded and said, "Yeah, you're right. I think we're gonna stay home from now on. I want to see this family grow up."

Lucy jumped down and started pulling on Ellen's hand, "Come help me decorate the baby tree."

Ellen stood and followed her granddaughter.

Sean addressed Sam, "Do you want to help decorate the tree, Grandpa?"

As Sam stood up, he said, "I can't think of anything I'd rather be doing."

Lois and Clark stood near the stairs and watched. Lois had tears streaming down her cheeks as she watched her children as they bonded with her parents.

Clark pulled her into a hug and said, "Merry Christmas."

"Yes, it is, isn't it? The best one ever."

Over dinner, Sam and Ellen kept the grandchildren entertained with tales of their adventures in foreign lands working as medical missionaries.

Lois let Ellen help baby Sam with his dinner, and afterwards they all gathered in the living room and sang Christmas Carols while the lights twinkled on the trees and the flickering flames of the fire lit the room in an amber glow.

Years earlier, Jonathan had made an ingenious device which clamped to the fireplace mantle without marring it which would hold the stockings. He installed this, and each of the children hung up their stockings. Sam lifted Lucy and Sam up for this purpose.

As she was being placed on the floor, Lucy tugged oh Lois's skirt and asked, in a worried tone, "Mommy, if Grammy and Grampy Lane are sleeping here in the living room and there's a fire in the fireplace, how is Santa going to deliver the presents?"

Lois smiled and said, "Santa is magic. He can do it even if there is a fire, and he won't even disturb Grandma and Grandpa Lane. Just you wait and see."

Her fears relieved, a smiling Lucy said, "Okay, Mommy."

Lois smiled in return and said, "Now, the sooner you are in bed, asleep, the sooner Santa can come and drop off the presents."

Without even waiting, Lucy turned on her heel and made a dash for the stairs, shouting over her shoulder, "Nite, Mommy!"

"Don't forget to brush your teeth."

"I won't, Mommy."

Lara said, "I'll make sure."

"Thanks, Lara. Sometimes I don't know what I'd do without you."

Sam and Ellen had been standing there, arm-in-arm as this had all played out. Ellen said, "Lovely children and so loving. You've done a wonderful job, raising them."

Lois stepped over and gave her mom a hug, "It's all Clark's influence. He's been good for me. The best person to come into my life."

Ellen returned the hug and said, "That is obvious. You work well together." Looking around, Ellen noted that they were the only four in the room. In a conspiratorial tone, Ellen whispered, "Why didn't you tell me?"

Lois was shocked, and blurted out, "Tell you? Tell you what?"

She held Lois at arm's length and said, "Lois Olive Lane, or should I say, Ultra Woman, I recognized your voice when you spoke in the hospital. Did you think I wouldn't recognize my own daughter's voice?"

Lois gave Clark a crestfallen look as she said, "I was afraid of that. I didn't think of that until after I spoke."

"The silence was also obvious. So when were you going to tell us?"

"We weren't sure we should, but now that you know, I'm glad you know."

"I've got a million questions. How did it happen and when?"

Most of the remainder of the night was spent in explaining the whys and wherefores of Ultra Woman to her parents.

When the children all trooped downstairs in the morning, they found presents and filled stockings and everyone had fun.

THE END