

A Super Meeting

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Summary: Why did Superman fly across the road? To get to the other Superman, of course!

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Author's Note: This story was prompted by a challenge on the Lois and Clark FanFic Message Boards by Christina. Her 5-year-old son came up with a joke. "Why did Superman fly across the road? To get to the other Superman!" The challenge was to write a story around that joke.

"Hey, Superman!"

The call caught Clark's attention as he flew through Metropolis. It had been a lazy Saturday morning thus far. His patrol had uncovered nothing more nefarious than a kite stuck in a tree, a skateboarder who'd broken his arm when a stunt had gone awry, and tour bus with a flat tire. It was as if the warm early summer weather had lulled the city into a sleepy peace, at least for the day. It was a good thing, to be sure, but it also made the day stretch on forever. He wished he could stop by Lois' place and entice her to take a walk and get some ice cream, but she was on assignment, in a rare instance where they had separate days off.

"Supermannnn!"

Clark stopped and listened, getting the direction where the call had originated. It had sounded close. And so very familiar.

"Murray," he sighed to himself as he finally placed the voice. "What does he want *now*?"

He was beginning to regret allowing Murray Brown to be the Superman Foundation's lawyer. In the short time he'd known the man, Murray had constantly bombarded Clark with questions, comments, concerns, and requests. Clark made a mental note to address the issue with Murray after he found out what the "pressing matter" was *this* time.

It wasn't even that he disliked that man. He seemed like a good enough person. But the constant calls for Clark's attention were becoming draining. And very distracting. Just the week before, Murray's calls for Superman had interrupted four of Clark's interviews. He'd ignored Murray each time, until he could spare a few moments away. Murray hadn't commented on how swiftly or not Clark had responded — and one of those times, it had been seven at night before Clark found time to swing by Murray's office — but Clark had felt guilty nonetheless.

This time, however, Clark had more than enough time to spare. He altered his flight path and headed to the lawyer's office.

Murray was on the balcony, scanning the skies for Clark. He grinned once the familiar blue, red, and yellow costume appeared in his line of sight, and he excitedly waved Clark into his landing. Clark lightly touched down and folded his arms across his chest.

"Supes! How are ya?" he asked. "I didn't take you away from anything, did I?"

"No. I wouldn't be here if there was a rescue that needed to be made," Clark reminded him gently. "What's going on, Mr.

Brown?"

"Murray, please," the man said, as if wounded by Clark's professional, aloof tone.

"Okay...Murray," Clark relented. "Is there something you needed? Something for the Foundation?"

"You know, Supes, you need to relax more," Murray said, as if not hearing Clark's question. "Take a break from all the superheroing you do. You're gonna get burnt out, sooner or later. Mark my words."

"Murray, please," Clark began, letting Murray know he wasn't in the mood for advice. "Can we just talk about why you called for me?"

"Geez, wake up on the wrong side of the bed or something?"

"No, just...I gave you the authority to make most of the decisions for the Foundation. You know I trust you and the board to make whatever decisions need to be made."

"I know, I know. I've been bothering you a lot lately. I get it. But the board members, you have to understand..." he defended himself with a shrug. "Sometimes...they can be a bit...shall we say, set in their ways?"

"I do understand, and I'll speak with them again at the next meeting," Clark assured him. "So...why *am* I here?"

"Walk with me. Talk with me," Murray encouraged.

"Where are we going?" Clark asked.

"Oh, just across the street and to the corner," Murray pointed. "To the Grand Metropolis Palace."

"The hotel?" Clark asked, surprised. "How come?"

Murray smiled cryptically. "You'll see. Now, what do you say? Elevator and walk, or fly over?"

"Fly."

It would be faster, in the long run, he mused. And the sooner he was done with whatever Murray wanted, the sooner he could make up some excuse to go visit Lois at the Planet. Maybe he could bring her some of that Chinese food he often picked up from Shanghai. He knew she wouldn't be able to turn it down, giving him at least a little time with her today.

Murray grinned. "That's what I like to hear!" He stood in front of Clark and allowed himself to be picked up and flown over to the hotel.

"So...why are we here again?" Clark prodded as they landed. He opened the door to the lobby, allowing Murray to step inside first.

"You'll see," Murray replied cagily. "Just follow me."

Clark sighed softly enough not to let the other man hear, but he dutifully followed. The first thing he noticed was that, as he trekked across the sizable lobby, not a single person looked up at him or approached. That was a first. It wasn't that Clark hated the attention, or that he needed it to stroke his ego, but it was...

Odd, his mind wondered.

He nodded to himself.

Definitely odd.

Stranger yet, not a single member of the hotel's staff asked him about the nature of his business. Typically, he was at least asked if he'd picked up on some kind of threat within the building, whenever he'd walk into any kind of establishment whilst in uniform. This time, no one said a word. It was almost like he was invisible.

"Yeah, yeah, they see you Big Guy," Murray assured him, as though reading his thoughts. "You'll understand the indifference of these people in a few minutes. Feel a little strange to you?"

"Well, actually...yeah," Clark admitted in a low voice. "I've definitely never had this kind of a reception before. I'll admit it, you have me baffled on this."

"Right down here," Murray said at an intersecting hallway. He jerked his thumb to the right.

The signs indicated that Clark would find the hotel's pool and gym to the left. To the right was the large conference center. Clark

knew it from a couple of press conferences he'd covered at the paper. That piqued his interest further.

"Voila!" Murray said with a flourish, as he opened one of the double doors leading into the large gathering space.

Clark blinked as he stepped inside. A convention of some kind had taken over the space. He could see vendor booths standing in neat lines stretching all the way to the back of the room, all of them in a double row. A good many of the attendees were people dressed in normal, everyday attire. And the rest...

"They're all dressed as Superman," he whispered aloud in confusion.

"Isn't it great?" Murray grinned with obvious delight.

"What *is* all of this?" Clark wondered.

"The first annual Metropolis Superman convention," Murray said with pride.

"A...Superman convention?"

"You've heard of Comic Con and the like, right?"

Clark nodded hesitantly. "Yes..."

"This is the same thing, only all about *you*."

"Me? Why would anyone want *that*?" Clark asked, shocked.

Murray rolled his eyes. "You really don't get it, do ya? People love you. They're *addicted* to you. They want everything they can get with your logo or picture on it. Clothing, toys, lunchboxes, pet leashes, breakfast cereals. You name it. They want it. They want to celebrate you."

"Addicted?" Clark asked, his mind stuck on that one word. "Sounds a little...unhealthy."

"Nah," Murray said, waving his hand before his face, as if shooing the notion away. "It's all perfectly normal fanboy stuff. Or fangirl," he amended as two lanky blondes in Superman logo crop top shirts walked by, giggling together. He let out a low whistle, then brought his attention back to Clark. "Weren't you ever a kid? Didn't you worship the guys like...I dunno. The Lone Ranger or Luke Skywalker?"

Clark silently conceded the point. It was true. Like all normal kids, he'd been taken with the heroes of his favorite television shows and movies.

"These conventions though," Clark said. "It's a bit more than, say, playing with toy Stormtroopers, wouldn't you say?"

Murray shrugged. "Not really. It's a bigger forum, sure, and more adults dress up than the kids, but it's basically the same fanboy experience."

Clark found himself without an argument. "So, this is what you wanted to show me? A Superman worshipping celebration?" He smiled a bit, to let the man know he was talking tongue in cheek.

"Not quite. You're to be a judge at the Superman look-alike competition. In..." He checked his Rolex. "About twenty five minutes."

"A...look-alike competition?" This was definitely getting more uncomfortable by the moment.

"Yeah. There's cash prizes and everything. Fifty percent of the money raised from the entrance fees for each age group goes to the winner of that group. The other fifty percent goes to the Superman Foundation. I think the money is earmarked for getting new teaching materials into some of the less well-off schools in the city. I thought it best if you help to pick the winners. After all, who knows you better than you? Am I right or am I right?"

How could Clark deny the Superman Foundation? It was *his* organization. Still, he couldn't be expected to show up at every little event they held. On the other hand, he'd just done a series of articles exposing the poor conditions of the same schools the Foundation was trying to help. Could he *really* say no?

"Okay," he agreed after a long minute of indecision. "I'll do it."

"Excellent!" Murray said, clapping his hands together in glee. "We have some time, so let me show you around a bit."

They started to walk. Clark swiftly perused each stall as they passed by, awestruck by the sheer volume of merchandise. He'd been aware that Superman memorabilia existed, of course. But he'd never known just how expansive it was. Gold collector coins with his likeness struck on them. Bookmarks. Chocolate bars in wrappers with his face on them. Greeting cards. It was overwhelming.

"Cool costume, bro," a man said as he passed Clark. His voice was heavily accented with what Clark assumed was a Brooklyn or Queens upbringing.

Clark did a double take. The man could have easily passed for the real Superman, minus the little mole over the upper lip and the incorrect pleats in his cape.

"Thanks," he stammered. "Yours too."

"Thanks," the man said. "Cost me a fortune to make. Where'd you get yours?"

"Uh...my mother made it," Clark said, realizing that the man thought that he, too, was one of the many who'd be participating in the look-alike contest.

"Tell her she's got mad skills," the man said. "Good luck in the contest."

"Barry Letterman," Murray said as the other man sauntered away. "He's a professional look-alike. I've run into him a couple of times. Works with a talent agent friend of mine. He's supposed to be pretty convincing, but I've never seen him in character."

"He's nearly a dead ringer for me," Clark commented. "And at least I finally understand why no one thinks I'm, well, *me*."

Murray laughed. "You think *he's* good, you oughta meet Dean. Could be your identical twin, down to every freckle, mole, and voice inflection."

"How'd you meet *him*?" Clark wondered.

"Eh, guy's an actor. Came in about...oh, a month ago. Wanted to make sure we'd truly given a green light to Warner Brothers to make a Superman Adventure Hour show. No surprise, he's playing you."

"Ah..." Clark managed, very weirded out by the idea of a Superman show.

Murray seemed not to notice his discomfort. "Yeah, script looks good. Villain-of-the-week kind of stuff, but solid. Hey, you don't have a problem if they make your home an ice castle in the Arctic, right?"

"Uh...no," Clark replied. "Not at all."

"Good," Murray said distractedly, looking over Clark's shoulder. "Hey! Chris! How are you, man?"

"Can't complain," the other man said, coming over to shake Murray's hand. "Who's this?" he asked, nodding toward Clark.

"Superman," Murray said simply.

Chris laughed. "Yeah, sure. Me too," he said, glancing down at his own costume. "Really, who are you? I'm not sure I've seen you around," he continued, looking straight at Clark.

"I'm Superman," Clark repeated.

"Nice. Staying in character. I get it. That's cool," Chris said with an easy nod. "Look, Murray, I'd love to chat, but I need to make a quick run before the contest. See you later?"

"Absolutely. You still owe me fifty bucks from our last poker game."

"Yeah, yeah," the other man said, waving it off as he started to walk away. "You'll get it."

"Chris is an old friend," Murray explained. Clark simply nodded. "Come on, let's get you over to where the contest is taking place. I want to introduce you to the rest of the judges and let them explain what, exactly, is going to take place."

"Sure," Clark said, resigned to his new role as a judge.

Together, they cut across the convention space and to the raised stage where the contestants would be strutting their stuff. Clark knew one of the judges from the Superman Foundation's board, but the other two were strangers to him. He greeted them

warmly, glad that they, at least, believed that he was really who he said he was.

The contest was more complicated than Clark had thought it would be. There were several different age brackets — everything from babies, to toddlers, to older children, to teens, to adults, and even a seniors group — as well as separate divisions for men and women. At first, it was odd, seeing all of those people — young and old, male and female alike — parading around doing their best to look and even sound like himself. But as the competition really got underway, and as Clark sat in his hard metal folding chair, he found himself having more fun than he ever would have thought. He got a real kick out of the children, in particular. All of those tiny little Supermen and Superwomen had him smiling and laughing before he knew it.

Choosing the winners, however, proved to be difficult. It was hard for him to pick just one winner from each category, particularly for the younger groups, even with the help of the other judges. But decisions had to be made, and he managed to help choose each one. He was simply grateful that he had three other people to help him with it. In fact, the only easy decision of the day was when the three of them chose Barry as his category's victor.

Caroline, the woman he knew from the Foundation's board, suggested that Clark be the one to hand out the prizes to the winners — checks and Superman logo trophies — and he was more than happy to do so. One young boy, Warren, was so thrilled to win that he gave Clark a huge hug right there on stage. After the awards presentation, Clark lingered behind to take photos with each of the winners, even hoisting young Warren up on his shoulders while the boy gleefully laughed.

Once the winners had their photo opportunities, Clark allowed the remaining onlookers to have their turn. Not as many people stayed as he'd imagined would, thanks to a brusque security guard who'd shooed away a good many people while Clark had been occupied. Still, a sizeable crowd was left, and it took Clark almost two hours to get through them all.

"So? What'd ya think?" Murray asked, once the picture taking was finished. He took Clark's elbow and began to guide him back toward the doors they'd come in through.

"I have to admit, I wasn't so sure about the whole idea when you first brought me in here," Clark replied. "But now, I think I get it. Why people like this kind of stuff. It's not the memorabilia or the photo opportunities or the chance to win a contest. It's the *fun*. Meeting people with the same interests. Making new friends. I see why these kinds of conventions are so popular."

Murray nodded. "Glad you liked it. So, let's say we make this a regular thing then? Assuming you're not, I dunno, stopping a mudslide or negotiating a peace treaty or something."

Clark chuckled. "We'll see, Murray. We'll see."

THE END