

City of (Fallen) Angels

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Summary: While pursuing a lead on The Boss, the world's biggest Boy Scout meets the Devil, who's trying to become a better man. A *Lois & Clark/Lucifer* crossover. A multiauthored story by NostalgiaKick and Endelda.

Story Size: 33,576 words (189Kb as text)

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Authors' notes

NK: So recently I developed an obsession with the TV show *Lucifer*. Being the sharing person that I am, I passed the obsession along to one of our newer members, Endelda. (And by 'passed', I mean 'forced her to watch all 3 seasons with me').

Endelda: It's true, she did! It got into my brain, and I started wondering: What if the world's biggest boy scout met the Devil who's trying to become a better man? One thing led to another, and before we knew it we had a plot for a *Lois & Clark/Lucifer* crossover.

NK: The story quickly spiralled into something much longer than either of us anticipated, but we got it done. It's also Endelda's first completed L&C fic, so congratulations Endelda!

Thanks go to Folc4evernaday for letting us use her name for Mrs Cox.

We've had to tweak the timeline of *Lois and Clark* a little as *Lucifer* is set in the present day; so while this is set between "Fly Hard" and "Barbarians At The Planet" for *Lois & Clark* and straight after "All Hands on Decker" for *Lucifer*, it's also set in present-day Los Angeles.

Grammatical Note: All characters except *Lucifer* himself are from the US. *Lucifer* speaks with a British accent, therefore all of his dialogue and inner monologue are presented with British English spelling, punctuation, and other conventions.

Joshua Cox opened the door and entered the dark interior of the building cautiously. The abandoned warehouse was often home to squatters, thieves and drug dealers; you entered at your own risk, especially at night. It was a far cry from the home he'd once shared with his wife, but once The Boss decided you were a threat, you did everything you could to stay off-grid and anonymous if you wanted to stay alive.

He felt his way along the wall towards the corner he'd been dossing down in since he found this particular hideout, hoping that he wouldn't be forced to fight for a place to sleep like he had a few nights previously.

"Cox."

He jumped at the sound of his name from the darkness. The voice was familiar; the one that had been haunting his nightmares.

The one he knew would be coming for him.

He spun, moving towards the voice and trying to brazen it out. "I hear you've been planning something for my wife."

Stephens snorted. "Yeah? I hear she threw you over years ago."

"Maybe so, but we both knew whose doing that was. You need to stay the hell away from Beverly," Cox warned.

"Sorry pal—orders are orders, and orders are that she's taking the fall the next time the big man gets too close to the edge."

Rage filled him at the thought of Beverly taking the rap for his former employer. "You son of a bitch, leave her out of our filth!"

"I take orders from one man, buddy, and it ain't you!"

With a roar, Cox rushed Stephens in the darkness, trying to grab the other man's wrists to prevent him from using the knife Cox knew he'd have ready. He successfully grabbed Stephens's knife hand, feeling the sharp blade slice the back of his own hand to ribbons as the other man fought to free himself. Flailing to maintain control, Cox tried and failed to stop Stephens from switching the knife to his free hand. Another wild swing from Cox contacted with nothing but air. Panting from the brief scuffle, he turned on the spot, trying to get some idea of where Stephens had gone.

Without warning, Stephens attacked from the side; Cox's body jerked as the razor-sharp steel slid into his abdomen. Gasping at the sudden pain, he twisted violently, flinging his attacker to the ground before sinking to his knees.

His last conscious sight was the shape of The Artist looming over him, blacker against the shadows of the warehouse. "The Boss sends his regards."

Stephens rammed the knife home, twisting it to make sure Cox wouldn't get back up before pushing himself to his feet and staggering towards the exit. Suddenly woozy, he dropped the blade somewhere in the darkness. Reasoning that it would take a few days before the body was discovered, he resolved to come back for it in the daylight. He lifted one hand, touching the painful spot on the back of his head before shrugging it off.

In the darkness, he couldn't see that his hand had come away covered in blood.

"This is a waste of time."

Clark Kent looked at his partner, doing his best to hide his exasperation. She hadn't failed to make her displeasure at this cross-country trip known at any step of the way.

"Lois."

"I just don't see how some detective in Los Angeles can help us find out who The Boss is in Metropolis, Clark."

"I don't know either, Lois. But maybe if we question her, we can find out," he snapped before taking a deep breath to calm himself. "Perry pulled a lot of strings to get us in here." He leant one hand on the glass door, pushing it open. "Besides, has Bobby ever given us a bad tip before?"

The tip had come late at night, two days earlier. Bobby Bigmouth had called Clark out of the blue, telling him that a criminal Clark had been investigating had been found dead in Los Angeles. He'd passed it along to Lois, reminding her that Carl 'The Artist' Stephens had been linked to at least a dozen murders and had long been suspected of being an enforcer for The Boss, the shadowy figure responsible for controlling Metropolis's underworld.

Breaking the secret of The Boss's identity and bringing him to justice was high on both their lists of priorities; Lois's because a story like that would surely bring a flood of awards—Merriwethers, Kerths, and maybe even her much-coveted Pulitzer; Clark's motivation was different. He'd long suspected that The Boss was Lex Luthor, and bringing him down had become a personal vendetta.

Together they'd pitched the story to Perry, and before they

knew it they'd been on a plane to Los Angeles, armed with Perry's reassurances that he could get them access to the detective in charge of the Stephens case.

Lois grumbled quietly, for her, as Clark ushered her through the doorway and into the bullpen of the downtown LAPD precinct with light pressure from his hand on the small of her back. She looked around for Detective Decker's desk as Clark heard their names and zeroed in on the conversation in the corner office.

"I'm sorry you feel that way, Chloe," he heard a heavysset man say to an attractive blonde woman, "but their editor is a personal friend of Chief Monroe, and word from the top is that you have to cooperate with them."

"With all due respect, Lieutenant—" she started, only to be cut off mid-thought.

"With all due respect, *Detective*, orders are orders. Now, unless I'm mistaken, you have some reporters waiting out there at your desk," the lieutenant snapped out as he gestured briskly toward the desk that Lois had found and perched on the corner of, clearly dismissing the detective as he turned his attention back to the papers on his own desk.

Clark blinked, surprised at the almost open rudeness. He couldn't imagine Perry treating one of his reporters that way, and he couldn't imagine Henderson's boss behaving that way either. *I thought things were supposed to be more laid back in LA*, he thought, *but maybe not for the police*. His natural inclination was to try to be generous about what he'd heard, but something about the lieutenant set him on edge. He didn't often dislike people on sight, but apparently there were exceptions to every rule.

Detective Chloe Decker exited Lieutenant Pierce's office, doing her best to suppress her irritation with both the man and the assignment he'd just lumped her with. His apparent inability to behave professionally at work was making her even more regretful that she'd ever accepted his proposal, however briefly. Babysitting a pair of reporters from out of town was not high on her list of priorities—especially considering that the last time a reporter had gotten involved in one of her cases, people had wound up dead as a result. She was beginning to wonder if Pierce was trying to punish her for breaking off their engagement.

Two strangers dressed in business attire were at her desk; as she approached, the woman straightened up from her perch on one corner.

"You must be the reporters," Chloe observed. The man took half a step forward, straightening his glasses with one hand while he held out the other for her to shake.

"Clark Kent from the *Daily Planet*. This is my partner, Lois Lane."

"Chloe Decker." She shook hands with both Lois and Clark. "I usually work with a civilian consultant, Mr Morningstar, but he's not in right now. What's a Metropolis paper like the *Daily Planet* doing in LA?"

"A civilian consultant? Isn't that unusual?" asked Lois, ignoring Chloe's question to satisfy her own curiosity.

"Yes, but then I am unusual." Lucifer's voice came from close behind her.

"Oh boy," Chloe muttered under her breath. As she expected, Lucifer practically ignored Kent, holding out his hand to Lois.

"Lucifer. Morningstar. What brings a lovely creature such as yourself to our fair city?"

"Oh, um, hello." Lois took Lucifer's hand and smiled, looking up at him through her lashes as she brushed her hair back with her free hand.

Chloe made no attempt to hide her rolled eyes as yet another woman succumbed to Lucifer's own brand of charm. Three years and she still didn't get why women fell all over themselves around her partner. Personally, she'd found him irritating at first meeting—although he'd grown on her over time. But if this Ms. Lane was

going to develop a crush on Lucifer, this case could work out to be even more exasperating than she'd anticipated.

Lois froze for a moment, wide-eyed as she realized what she'd done. She snatched her hand back and set it on her hip. "Lois Lane, *Daily Planet*," she snapped out. "This is my partner, Clark Kent."

Lucifer took a half step back and placed his hand over his heart as he smiled wickedly at her. "Ms Lane, charmed to meet you."

Lois's brows drew together in a near-glower. "The pleasure is all yours, I'm sure." She paused for a moment. "Did you say Lucifer? Lucifer Morningstar? Lucifer as in Satan?" Lois's eyebrows headed for her hairline as she turned to face Detective Decker. "Doesn't the LAPD have any rules against consulting with crazy people?"

Clark put a heavy hand on her shoulder. "Excuse my partner, Detective, I don't think the MPD has anyone quite as... colorful... as Mr. Morningstar on their staff."

Clark watched, stunned. *What the heck, if Lois had dimples, she'd be dimpling at him!* He shot Lois a bemused look as she composed herself, blinking a little in surprise. The only man he'd ever seen her simper at like that on first meeting was Superman.

His hackles slightly raised, he surveyed the man that had somehow managed to charm Lois with a few words and a smile, however briefly. The civilian consultant was a few inches taller than him, and lean, with jet-black hair and designer stubble. Good-looking in a roguish kind of way, he was expensively dressed in a three-piece suit that was saved from stuffiness by the absence of a tie, obviously charming, and apparently both well-educated and English judging by his accent.

Although unlike Lex, Lois appeared to have seen through this man almost immediately, Clark didn't trust him an inch.

Aware of Clark's scrutiny, Lucifer raised a challenging eyebrow. "And Mr... Kent, was it?"

"Yes." Clark turned and addressed himself to the detective. "You're working a case we're interested in. The possible murder of a Carl Stephens."

"Why come all the way from Metropolis for one death? I mean, it hasn't even been confirmed as murder yet," Lucifer questioned.

"We think it might connect to something else we're working on. A crime lord that calls himself The Boss," Lois snapped, making no attempt to hide her dislike of the suave civilian consultant.

Clark shot her a quelling look. "We would appreciate any information you can give us, Detective."

"Sure," the detective responded. "Come this way."

They followed the detective around the corner to a vacant room, where she pushed open the glass door and gestured for them to enter.

"The lieutenant set this room aside for our use."

As Clark nodded his thanks, he caught a brief flicker of what looked like distaste on Mr Morningstar's face and quirked an eyebrow. Clearly, there was friction between the lieutenant and this particular partnership; he just hoped that the reluctance he'd overheard from the detective regarding their visit wouldn't impede their investigation.

"Carl Stephens collapsed in a diner on Vermont Avenue near West Sixty-First Street, at eight o'clock in the morning two days ago. Witnesses said he passed out face first into a plate of bacon and eggs." Chloe handed the folder to Lois and Clark. "Cause of death was a subdural haematoma—"

Lois snatched at the file eagerly, then looked up. "A blood clot?"

"Yes, looks like it was caused by a blow to the head. We're

still working through Stephens's known associates, anyone known to have a beef with him, that sort of thing, but right now we don't even have any clear evidence that this was a homicide. The bruising, the injury to the back of his head, they could have been accidental."

"So why do you have the case?" Lois knew why Henderson would have been involved back home, but wanted to test this particular detective's professionalism.

"Because I don't know how they do things in Metropolis"—*nor do I care* was heavily implied in Chloe's tone—"but here in LA we treat the sudden death of a known mob associate as a homicide until we know otherwise."

Clark looked at the detective curiously. "Do you think it was an accident?"

"No, I think it was murder."

"She's usually right about these things," Lucifer commented lazily. Chloe shot him a look, willing him to behave while they had reporters in tow.

"We have a couple of possible suspects to interrogate today. You're welcome to sit in on the interviews—from behind the glass. Observe, not participate. You can't name names or quote the interviews unless the department gives you permission. Is that clear?"

"I know the drill, Detective. I was doing this while you were still making teen movies," commented Lois snarkily.

Chloe's eyes narrowed at the dig at her professionalism and background; something which wasn't helped by Lucifer's amused snort and gleeful grin. These reporters had obviously done their homework; and as she'd long feared, *Hot Tub High School* was never going to stop haunting her.

"Your contacts in the chief's office aside, Ms Lane, if you want my cooperation with you tagging along on my case, you will do things my way. Got it?"

"We understand, Detective," Clark broke in hastily with a quelling glance at his partner.

"Good."

"This is going to be a dead end," Lois said, staring through the one-way glass with her arms crossed as Lucifer and the detective entered the interrogation room on the other side.

"You don't know that, Lois. Look, you saw the file. These two have the highest arrest and conviction rate in the precinct."

"Did you read the same file I did, Clark? She's a former B-list actress and he owns a nightclub! At least Henderson is a professional." She fell silent as the door to interrogation opened again and a uniformed officer brought in the suspect, a heavily-built blond man in his mid-thirties.

Lois let her mind wander as the interrogation preliminaries got underway. Just who was this Lucifer Morningstar, and how had he managed to tear down her carefully constructed walls so thoroughly with barely a word? She didn't normally react to any man that way—with Superman being a notable exception—and if she did find a man attractive, she was usually much better at containing it. The brief rush of intense desire had left her feeling embarrassed and angry.

On top of all of that, how did Lucifer get his status as a civilian consultant in the first place? The file Jimmy had constructed for them hadn't been clear on the subject; Lucifer had gone from being a witness in the Delilah case to an official consultant just a few weeks later, his elevation approved by the now-chief of police with no accompanying explanation or, as far as Lois could tell, any qualifications for the role.

Her brow furrowed; if they were going to get the information they needed to bring The Boss down, they needed a thorough and well-run investigation. Right now, she wasn't sure if this detective and her weirdo partner could deliver the goods.

Clark joggled her arm as the interrogation moved past the

preliminaries, drawing her attention back to the present.

"What's your relationship with Carl Stephens?"

"Who?"

"The man you were arrested for assaulting." Lucifer lounged back in his chair, watching the suspect's face.

"Oh, that guy? I only met him that one time."

"So you didn't, I don't know, beat his head in with a blunt object?"

"What?!"

Chloe slid a photo of Stephens's corpse across the table. "Carl Stephens was found dead three days ago."

"What?" Rufus exclaimed in shock. "No! Look, the assault thing? It was a bar fight. I'd had a really bad day, I went to the bar, this guy got in my face, and I punched him. I haven't seen him before or since."

Chloe caught Lucifer's eyes; raising an eyebrow, she indicated that he should take the lead and use the trick she'd seen him use dozens of times but still didn't understand.

Lucifer sat forward, making eye contact with the other man, his mouth stretching into a knowing, unsettling grin.

"So, Rufus. If you didn't want our victim dead, what did you want?"

"Excuse me?"

Chloe saw the faint blurring of their suspect's eyes and knew that Lucifer's trick was working.

"What is it you truly desire? What's your darkest fantasy?"

"I want—"

"Yes?"

"I want my wife to stop sleeping with her boss."

"Oh!" Lucifer exchanged glances with the detective, who leaned closer.

"Unless his wife's boss happens to be Carl Stephens, I don't think he's our killer," she stated with her voice lowered.

"No. Might want to warn whoever employs the wife of this poor sap, though."

"I thought you didn't understand jealousy." She gave him a puzzled look.

"Yes, well, things change," he replied with a flick of his eyes towards her.

She shook her head, getting back to the suspect in front of them. "What's your wife's boss's name?"

"Marcus Roark."

"Owner of that seafood place on Seventh?" Lucifer asked.

Jones nodded. "She's a waitress there."

"Yes, he does have a reputation for sleeping with his staff."

"Look, if I was going to kill anyone, it'd be Roark. This Stephens guy? I barely knew him."

"What was that?!" Lois exclaimed, spinning and looking at Clark. She looked as puzzled as Clark felt.

"I have absolutely no idea," he replied slowly.

The suspect, Rufus Jones, had looked like he didn't know what he was saying. First Lois, and now this guy...

Was there something different about Lucifer?

Was it possible that he was like Clark—hiding his true origins behind the guise of an ordinary human being?

Disquieted, Clark watched as the next suspect was brought into interrogation.

"So. The three suspects we interrogated today brought us no new leads." Chloe swiped her hair out of her face frustratedly.

"So what now? It gets declared accidental death?" Lois asked.

"No. I still think it was murder, and we keep investigating until we know what happened—"

She broke off as she saw Dan walking past the interview room. "Excuse me." She stepped out into the hallway. "Dan? Wrap

up your case?”

“Just filed the last of the paperwork.” Dan waved the folder he was holding. “Who’s that in with you?”

“Oh, some reporters from Metropolis, looking into the Stephens case. Pierce is making me babysit.”

Dan made a face. “How’s it going?”

“Two reporters and Lucifer? Like herding cats.”

Dan laughed. “Yeah, you can have that one all to yourself. I gotta go get Trixie.”

He started to walk away; Chloe stopped him. “Make sure Trixie does her homework.”

“Chloe, it was one time.”

“Yeah, well you’re not the one that had to deal with the fallout with her teacher. She’s got a big report due this week, I just need you to make sure she works on it.”

Her ex-husband shook his head, stalking angrily off down the corridor. Her jaw tightened and she gave an annoyed snort before turning back to the interview room. First Pierce, then Dan, and now she had to go look after Lucifer and a pair of reporters.

“Great.”

Clark paced uneasily around his hotel room. Something was bothering him about this case, and he knew exactly what it was.

Lucifer Morningstar.

On first glance, he seemed like an ordinary human, but it didn’t take long to see there was something strange about him. The almost preternatural charm and the strange effect he’d had on the suspect they’d had in interrogation today proved that. Besides that, there was something behind the man’s eyes that set the hairs on the back of Clark’s neck to standing. Something that he couldn’t put a name to.

He sighed, running a hand through his hair. Pacing wasn’t helping anything. He felt caged; maybe a flight over the city would help clear his mind and help him figure out what to do about Detective Decker’s weird partner.

Once in the air, he flew large lazy circles, careful to avoid the constant stream of aircraft in and out of LAX and staying far enough away from the windows of the city skyscrapers to escape notice. Deliberately he’d chosen to remain in his dark business suit, reasoning that sightings of Superman in a city far from his Metropolis home would attract unwanted attention—especially when it would be all too easy to track Clark Kent’s arrival in the same city.

Something out of place caught his attention as he soared past one of the skyscrapers that lined Hollywood Boulevard; his brow wrinkling in momentary confusion, he slowed, scanning the area for what was wrong.

There. In an open-plan penthouse atop an Art Deco building, a man was nonchalantly holding a grand piano in the air. With one hand.

Clark’s eyes widened. As he watched, the man set the glossy black instrument down carefully and straightened up, turning enough for Clark to see his face.

It was Lucifer.

Feeling like he’d been kicked in the stomach, Clark came to a dead stop in mid-air. While Clark struggled to get his breath back, Lucifer picked up his suit jacket from the bar that lined the back wall of the penthouse and shrugged into it, boarding the elevator and disappearing from sight.

What had Clark just seen? A display of strength like that was far from human. Recovering the altitude he’d lost in his shock, Clark edged closer to the penthouse balcony and scanned the room, hoping for a reasonable explanation for what he’d just seen. Finding no sign of the piano hoist he’d expected to see, he backed away again, unwilling to risk being spotted—especially by someone he now knew to have some sort of superhuman strength.

What was Lucifer?

No human, to be certain. And was he a threat? The thought of Lucifer’s charm, apparent mind control ability, and strength coupled with Lex Luthor’s level of evil brought a shudder that racked his body, leaving him feeling slightly ill.

Clark dipped towards the street, surveying the crowds for Lucifer’s tall figure and coming up empty. Discovering that the building housed a nightclub brought another option. If Lucifer lived in a penthouse above one of the most exclusive clubs in Los Angeles, it stood to reason that he was the club’s proprietor. Annoyed that his unfamiliarity with the city cost him precious minutes, he found an unoccupied alley a few blocks from the nightclub and landed discreetly before walking back to the building.

This early in the evening, the line for entry to the venue was mercifully short. The bouncer looked Clark up and down a couple of times before waving him inside and turning his attention to the young women that were next in line.

Clark paused at the top of the stairs into the club proper, blinking in surprise. The name ‘Lux’ was spelled out in lights across one wall, helping to illuminate the scantily-clad dancers that seemed to be a feature of this particular night-time hotspot. The tall man Clark sought was seated at a glossy black piano, twin to the one he’d seen being lifted as easily as a feather, that dominated the area in front of the bar. As he watched, a waitress brought Lucifer a drink, to which he responded with a charming smile. Quickly Clark made his way down the stairs and to an out-of-the-way booth a discreet distance from the piano.

He settled into the shadowiest part of the booth, trying to keep his quarry in sight through the apparently endless stream of women that made it their business to pass close by the piano. Stopping a nearby waitress, he ordered a whiskey and tried to puzzle out the enigma in front of him.

He’d spent years travelling the globe, trying to find out who and what he was. Trying to find out if he was the only one that could do the things he could do.

Had he somehow missed one? Had there been someone like him—another Kryptonian—living in Los Angeles all this time?

His whiskey arrived; looking up, he nodded his thanks to the waitress before looking back towards the piano.

Lucifer was gone.

Clark looked around wildly, suppressing a jump of surprise when he realised he was no longer alone in the booth.

“Hello, Clark. I saw you watching me.” Lucifer gestured to the piano as he confronted the reporter, observing him over the rim of his glass as he took a sip.

Briefly, he wondered *why* Clark had been watching him. While it wasn’t unheard of for cuckolded former significant others of his various sexual partners to come looking for him at Lux, Lucifer was fairly certain that this man was too hung up on his work partner to have another woman lurking about anywhere.

“What brings you to Lux?” Lucifer asked with a lift of an inquisitive eyebrow.

“You own this place?” Clark gestured to indicate the large, open spaces of the club.

“That’s right.”

Clark tipped his head to one side. “And you work for the police.”

Lucifer lifted one admonitory finger into the air. “Work with the police, not for them, but I get the confusion.”

Clark looked down into his glass and did his best to exude harmlessness. “Nightclub owner and civilian consultant for the LAPD. You’ve got a lot on your plate. Why do you do it?”

Lucifer grinned. “Lux is my business. Working with the detective is a sideline.”

“So why do it?” Clark repeated.

“Because I enjoy punishing the guilty. It’s what I’m good at.”

He raised a challenging eyebrow. “Now I’ve answered your question. You answer mine. What brings you to Lux?”

The reporter tilted his chin up, meeting Lucifer’s stare without backing down. “Curiosity. Does that bother you?”

Lucifer leaned back against the cushioning, maintaining eye contact with his unexpected visitor. “The last time a reporter followed me to Lux out of curiosity, he ended up being responsible for the death of a girl in my club.”

Clark’s jaw dropped slightly and he leaned forward in the booth as he rushed to reassure Lucifer, “Mr. Morningstar, I swear —”

“No oaths necessary Mr. Kent, just know that people’s curiosity about me doesn’t always work to my advantage.”

Lucifer’s brow creased faintly in a frown as he thought back to Carmen Grant, the religious artifacts auctioneer whose curiosity about his wings had led to a certain amount of unpleasantness (mostly for Carmen), and to Reese Getty, the reporter whose curiosity and obsession had resulted in the death of that poor, innocent girl not so long ago. His frown deepened as he remembered Malcolm Graham as well, the resurrected madman his own dear brother had sent to kill him. He darted a wary look at Clark, then made an effort to appear relaxed.

The air of suspicion with which Lucifer regarded him came as a surprise to Clark. He knew why he was wary of Lucifer, but why on earth would Lucifer feel that way about him?

But then, could Clark really blame him? The sudden appearance of Lucifer in the booth beside him argued that he possessed some amount of superhuman speed. What other powers did he have?

The same waitress that had served Clark before walked past the table again, depositing a glass of what appeared to be whiskey in front of Lucifer. Clark took advantage of Lucifer’s momentary abstraction to quickly scan the back of his hand.

As he’d suspected, his boothmate wasn’t human; curiously, however, he didn’t display the same tissue density that Clark himself did.

Neither human nor Kryptonian; so what was he?

“Lucifer Morningstar. Unusual name. Not too many parents would name their child after the Devil.” Clark prodded gently.

“Oh, I’m not named for him. I am him,” Lucifer replied with a wide unsettling grin.

“Excuse me?” Clark’s eyebrows climbed toward his hairline and his voice rose with incredulity.

“I am the Devil.”

Clark gave him a sceptical look. “And... what is the Devil doing in Los Angeles?”

“I’m retired.”

“Retired?” Clark leaned back as he tried to take in what he was being told. Surely Lucifer wasn’t serious... was he?

“That’s right.” Lucifer nodded.

“And doesn’t God—” Clark interjected.

“My father,” Lucifer emphasized the word heavily, enjoying the younger man’s discomfiture.

Clark cleared his throat and forged ahead. “Sure, your father. Doesn’t He have something to say about that?”

Lucifer’s grin widened impossibly. “Frequently.”

Clark settled heavily into his seat, nodding to himself as he took a belated sip of his whiskey and tried to assimilate what he’d been told. Was this—no, could this be true? Was Lucifer actually the fallen angel he claimed to be? He held onto a thin thread of hope that his companion in the booth had just come up with an outlandish cover story for his origins and abilities. He clung hard to the belief that he’d found another like himself and just needed to peel back some verbal debris to prove it.

“That doesn’t surprise you, Mr Kent.” Lucifer tilted his head, surveying his unusual new acquaintance. “I wonder why.”

Clark took another sip and thought for a moment before responding. “I live in Metropolis. We’re no strangers to the unusual.”

“Yes, but this is different. You believe me.” He paused, his eyes narrowing. “Most humans that believe me have some sort of personal experience with my nastier side.” A thought occurred to him. “Or is it something else entirely?”

He tossed off the rest of the whiskey in his glass and stood. “Come. We can talk upstairs.”

Clark followed Lucifer to the elevator, eager to discuss exactly what it was that he did (or didn’t) believe.

Lucifer exited the lift, his new acquaintance close behind him. He strode over to the bar and fished a glass down from the shelf. “Freshen your drink, Mr. Kent?”

“Yes, please,” Clark answered absently as he wandered around the penthouse. He was curious to get a feel for how this man lived. He blushed as he translated some of the carvings on the ancient Assyrian sandstone walls around Lucifer’s bedroom area; *we definitely have different ideas about appropriate decor*, he thought ruefully.

As Clark wandered away, Lucifer felt behind the bar for the dagger he’d taken to keeping there, palming it and turning to throw it at his unwanted visitor in one smooth motion.

“Ow!” Clark yelled in surprise. The dagger caught him just as he was turning to ask a question about some of the slightly less salacious artwork.

“What the hell?” Lucifer breathed as the demon steel clattered to the marble floor. Kent was examining a shallow scratch on his arm where the dagger had connected.

Clark looked down in shock as the strange dagger glanced off his forearm and bounced to the floor. Lucifer had moved so fast that Clark hadn’t had time to do more than shield his chest from the unexpected projectile. His jaw dropped a little as he realised that the blade had actually cut him slightly.

He looked up, suddenly both alarmed and furious. He’d known that Lucifer was suspicious of him, but an outright attack? Had he lost his mind? What if Clark had been a human being? He’d be dead right now with that wicked-looking dagger embedded in his chest!

“Are you crazy?” he burst out. “That thing could’ve killed me!”

In a few long strides, Lucifer was in front of Kent, wrapping his hand around the shorter man’s throat and hoisting him into the air. “What are you?” he growled.

“What?”

Lucifer saw the shorter man’s eyes shift and knew Clark would try to convince him that he was just another human.

“You’re no human. No celestial either. That dagger was cast in the forges of Hell, made from part of my very self, and yet you brushed it off like an insect’s sting! So what are you?!” He tilted his head menacingly and squeezed just a little tighter, letting his prey know he meant business.

“I’m... Kryptonian.”

“Kryptonian?” Lucifer echoed in surprise before realisation dawned. “So you’re the famous Superman.” He lowered Kent to the floor and let go. “You weren’t sent by my Father at all, were you?”

“I could have told you that, Luci,” Amenadiel commented, deadpan, from where he’d just disembarked from the elevator.

“Yes, because you’ve never lied to me before,” Lucifer answered his brother without taking his eyes off Clark.

“Who is this? Does everyone just wander in?” Clark asked, straightening his glasses and tie after Lucifer’s manhandling, his jaw still tight with anger.

“Amenadiel, this is Clark. Don’t let the glasses fool you, he’s actually Kryptonian and likes to spend his days flying around in skintight Spandex. Clark, this is Amenadiel; my brother.”

“The Devil has a brother?” Clark queried in astonishment.

“Actually I have many. Amenadiel is the only one I’m... in contact with, shall we say? He was sent here to return me to Hell but, well, ended up falling himself.”

Amenadiel’s eyes widened with outrage. “I did not fall!” he objected. “I may have... stumbled.”

“You lost your wings, brother. That’s more than a stumble.”

“Thanks for the reminder, Luci,” Amenadiel commented caustically.

Lucifer shrugged off his brother’s offended feelings and returned to the far more pressing question of his adversary-turned-guest.

“Wait. You’re both...” Clark trailed off.

“Celestial beings,” Amenadiel supplied.

“Oh yes, LA is a veritable city of fallen angels,” Lucifer commented, a shade impatiently. “Now if you don’t mind, if you weren’t coming to kill me, why did you follow me to Lux?”

“Kill you?” Clark echoed. Did the Devil have a rampant case of paranoia, or had that many attempts been made on his life?

His head was spinning from the sheer number and weight of the revelations he’d been hit with. He’d never been very religious, but... The Devil was real? Lucifer was the actual fire-and-brimstone, biblical Devil? “No. Look, I was flying past your penthouse and I saw you moving the piano. I thought...”

“Yes?”

“I thought you might be like me.” He paused. “The actual Devil?”

“Why is that so hard to believe?”

“But you look so...” he fumbled for a word that didn’t sound derogatory.

“Let me guess, you were expecting horns? Maybe a forked tail?” His host shot a look at the well-built black man that was somehow his brother. “That’s Hollywood for you, isn’t it?”

“Show him, Luci,” Amenadiel suggested.

“Okay, fine,” Lucifer said exasperatedly. He jerked his shoulders oddly; before Clark’s bemused eyes, an enormous pair of pure white, feathered wings unfurled from somewhere along Lucifer’s back.

Clark gaped. His lips were making shapes, but the only sound he could produce was a garbled moan.

“Clark?” Lucifer waved a hand in front of his face. “See, look, Amenadiel, now you’ve broken him.”

“You’ve got... wings,” Clark managed to stammer out.

“Yes, pesky things.” Lucifer jerked his shoulders again and the wings disappeared. “I had Maze—my demon—cut them off when I first came to LA but just lately the damn things keep growing back. My father’s latest way to torture me, taking my Devil face and giving me back the feathers. Do you want another drink?”

A demon. Devil face. Wings. Clark nodded jerkily, for the first time in his life feeling like he actually needed a drink.

“As for being like you... Well. Sorry to disappoint you, Clark, but last I checked the Kryptonians were all dead. In fact, I was surprised to see that you had survived.”

Clark’s face fell. “You’re sure?”

“Yes, there was quite an influx of Kryptonian souls into Hell as I recall,” said Lucifer, striving for a sympathetic tone.

“Heaven, too,” Amenadiel concurred.

Impatient at the interruption, Lucifer continued. “Even a race as long-lived as yours eventually dies, but to have so many at once arrive is unusual. How did you survive?”

“My parents sent me to Earth,” Clark muttered, his voice heavy with disappointment.

“Well, they were better parents than mine, apparently. Mine

sent me to Hell.”

“Your parents sent you to Hell?” Clark exclaimed, appalled.

“Yes. Well, my mother really. My father wanted to destroy me.”

“Oh my Go...oodness! What you were saying before, down in the club... that was all true, wasn’t it?” Icy horror slid down the back of his neck as he struggled to understand being treated that way by your own parents. Lois’s stories about her childhood were heart-wrenching, but what had been done to Lucifer was horrific.

“Yes. Look, it takes some time to get your head around all this. When I told my therapist, it melted her brain for nearly a week.”

Lucifer clapped Clark on the shoulder, then wandered over to the bar and poured himself another drink before settling into a corner of the couch and gesturing for his visitor to take a seat.

Clark shuffled over and joined him, struggling to shift his brain back into a working gear.

“Sorry about before, but I had to be certain.”

“Certain of what, exactly?”

“That you weren’t here to kill me.” He shrugged as his guest’s eyebrows climbed to his hairline. “So if you weren’t sent here to destroy me, Mr. Kent, and you had no sinister reason for being in my club, why are you so far from home?”

“Like I told you and Detective Decker at the station, we think the death of Carl Stephens may link back to The Boss. Whoever The Boss is, they’re running most of the crime in Metropolis. So our paper sent Lois and I out to look into it.”

Lucifer tilted his head, aware that he wasn’t getting the full story. “I don’t buy it.”

“I’m sorry?”

“Papers such as yours don’t send two of their star reporters across the country on the off-chance that something newsworthy might turn up. No, there’s something else at play here.” He put his glass down and leaned forward, catching and maintaining eye contact with the other man. “So tell me, Mr Kent... what is it that you want?”

“Excuse me?”

“What is it that you desire?” His mouth quirked into a grin, enjoying making this superhuman being spill his secrets.

“I want...”

“Yes?” His grin stretched wider, knowing that he’d gotten into the other man’s head. Clark might be close to immune to even demon daggers, but he wasn’t immune to Lucifer’s particular abilities.

“I want to save Lois from Luthor.”

“Luthor?” Lucifer questioned, wondering if it could possibly be the man he’d done a favour for nearly thirty years earlier.

Clark shook his head a little and blinked, trying to work off the daze that was the after-effect of Lucifer’s mojo.

“He’s a businessman. Third richest man in the world. But I think he’s also The Boss.”

“Luthor? Lex Luthor?”

“That’s him.”

Lucifer’s eyes narrowed. “Yes, he always was a nasty piece of work. And he still owes me. But I don’t think that’s it. There’s something else that you want, isn’t there Mr Kent?”

“I want to save Lois—”

“Yes yes, save the girl, I get that. What do you really want? For you?”

“I want Lois to choose me. The real me.”

For a moment Lucifer flashed back to his own heartfelt admission to Linda in this very same penthouse a few weeks earlier. The Kryptonian in front of him was evidently as deeply in love with his Lois as Lucifer himself was with the detective. And just like the detective had, the woman that Clark evidently loved seemed likely to choose a criminal.

Lucifer straightened up in his seat, gulping his whiskey in an attempt to cover his sudden discomfiture.

“Happy now?” Clark was glowering at him.

“What?”

“You use your abilities so casually.”

“Yes, and why not? They’re useful.” He lounged back in his seat. “At least I don’t hide mine behind some garishly-coloured costume. Although I notice you’re not wearing it tonight. Do you often fly around in a suit? If you can call that thing a suit—are you doing some kind of penance? Oh no, I forgot, you usually favour something a little tighter fitting.”

“Costume? What costume?” the other angel inquired from the balcony.

“You’ll have to excuse Amenadiel, he doesn’t spend much time around humans. Go on, show him then.”

Clark spun into the Suit and crossed his arms over his chest, assuming his accustomed ‘Superman pose’. “I’ll have you know, these ‘garish colors’ bring hope to a lot of people.”

“Red and blue Spandex? Really? And I thought Amenadiel’s dress was bad.”

“It’s a robe,” Amenadiel stated with exasperation in his voice.

Lucifer waved off Amenadiel’s interjection, continuing to needle Clark. “And the cape? What are you trying to hide? I mean, where did you even get that… outfit?”

“My mother made it for me.”

“Hah! Tell me, is your mother colour-blind?”

Clark turned to face Lucifer with a frown, his cape flapping with the sudden motion, but froze when he saw Lucifer’s delighted expression.

“So that’s what you’re hiding! I’m surprised Mum didn’t give you a little frill in the front as well.”

Clark blushed fiercely and quickly spun back into his street clothes.

Lucifer chuckled gleefully. “Oh, he blushes! Could it be, brother dear? Our Clark seems to still be quite the innocent!”

“Leave him alone, Luci. Innocent mortals are hard to come by these days.” Amenadiel chastised his brother.

Lucifer leered at Clark. “Yes, and harder still to come—”

“Luci!”

Lucifer bounced his eyebrows playfully as he sank back into his seat with a grin.

Clark, speechless with mortification, picked up his glass and did his best to hide his glowing face behind it. “Are we done here?”

“I suppose,” Lucifer drawled. “Back down to Lux for a nightcap?”

Clark nodded tersely and set his glass on the bar as he passed it on his way back to the elevator. *Another drink?* If he’d had any remaining doubts that Lucifer was what he said he was, the sheer volume of alcohol he put away would have squelched them by now.

The three men rode down in the lift together silently. Lucifer smirked to himself as he watched Clark, noting how the other man resolutely refused to make eye contact. Mortals chose the oddest things to be delicate about. *He’s young and fit. Surely he doesn’t really live up to that Boy Scout reputation I’ve heard so much about.* He shuddered a bit at the thought of all that self-denial. He just couldn’t see the point! Why waste all that time not enjoying oneself to the fullest? *You deserve to let your hair down, my Kryptonian friend, and I’m just the chap to make it happen.*

Lucifer grinned as the lift dinged and the doors opened onto the upper level of Lux. Three scantily clad young women were standing nearby in a cluster.

“Oh look, it’s the Brittanies! Brittanies, my friend Clark here has had a bit of a rough night. Maybe you could cheer him up? There you go.” Lucifer placed his hands on the girls’ backs and gently pushed them toward Clark.

Clark tensed immediately, giving first the three Brittanies and then Lucifer a wide-eyed stare.

“What? No! No, um yes, it’s nice to meet you, ladies.

Lucifer!” Clark squirmed as he evaded the Brittanies’ enthusiastic caresses.

“What? You deserve a bit of fun.” Lucifer beamed at Clark and the girls.

Amenadiel glared at Lucifer.

“This isn’t fun, this is— excuse me!” Clark removed a wandering hand from his backside as Lucifer abandoned him to the Brittanies’ mercies. He shot Lucifer a nasty look, then turned and started making his way through the crowd to the door.

“Where are you going? The party’s just getting started!” Lucifer called in a wicked tone.

“Not for me, it’s not.” Clark shot back on his way outside.

The Brittanies pouted and turned to Lucifer.

“Well, don’t just stand there.” He smirked at them. “If that one doesn’t want to play I’m sure I can find someone who’s in the mood.”

Clark hovered high above the city, knowing he needed to find an appropriate alley and touch down fast enough to not be seen by human eyes. Spotting a likely one near the cafe Lois had suggested that was mercifully unoccupied, he streaked down, spinning into his street clothes the instant his feet were on the pavement.

He’d gone out early this morning, California time, to fly very visible and obvious patrols over Metropolis in order to keep up the separation of Clark Kent and Superman in the public’s mind. Unfortunately, a nasty crash on the Luthor Expressway had delayed his departure, and now he was running late to meet Lois for breakfast.

“Sorry I’m late,” he told her as he jogged up to her. “Got stuck in traffic.”

“Where did you get to last night?” Lois asked as he joined her in the line.

“Oh, I went out for a walk. Needed to clear my head.” He paused. “I found Lux, by the way.”

“Lucifer’s club?”

He nodded.

“And?”

“I talked to him for a while. He’s… an unusual guy.”

“I doubt he’s the only rich playboy in LA, Clark.”

He shook his head. “That’s not it. He is a playboy, but… I think we underestimated him.”

“Yeah, well I’ll believe it when I see it,” replied Lois at her most caustic.

“I know you don’t like the guy, Lois, but you have to admit he was effective in interrogation yesterday.”

They reached the head of the line and placed their orders.

“I want to know how he does that ‘desire’ thing he was doing yesterday.”

Clark shrugged as they sat at a table near the window, placing the number the cashier had given them in the middle of the table. “I have no idea, but if it works—”

Lois made a noncommittal sound, but Clark could see she had mellowed slightly from her antagonistic stance of the day before. He’d had his reservations about the detective and her partner as well, but they had definitely worked as a cohesive and effective team.

“We still don’t have any real leads,” she pointed out.

“Come on, Lois. You know these things can take time.” He paused, looking at her curiously. “Why are you so anxious to close this and get back to Metropolis? It doesn’t have anything to do with Lex, does it?” Clark asked the last question gingerly, hoping she would disagree.

“No, of course it doesn’t,” she denied. “Look, I just don’t like working with the police. There’s so many rules they insist on following before they do anything, and who knows if we’ll even

get a story out of it at the end of all this?”

“There’s nothing else we can do, Lois. We have no contacts or sources out here,” he reminded her.

“I know.”

The waitress delivered their food, effectively ending their conversation.

“Decker!” Chloe tensed as Lieutenant Marcus Pierce’s voice rang through the bullpen at a volume just below a shout. She tapped the file she’d been looking through against the desk, ostensibly to neaten the papers inside, but as soon as she realized she was just delaying the inevitable she rose and rounded the desk toward his door. *No sense giving him a reason to bellow at me again*, she thought as she entered his office.

“Yes, Lieutenant?”

Marcus narrowed his eyes as he gave her what he probably thought was a no-nonsense look but that Chloe saw as more of a glare. “Have you made any progress on the Stephens case?”

She straightened her shoulders. “A bit, but not much. We’ve been interviewing potential suspects, but we haven’t gotten any solid leads so far.” *Which you would know if you bothered to check my logs.*

“I have a lead for you from one of my sources,” he told her brusquely.

Chloe blinked in surprise. It wasn’t unheard of for cops to maintain active sources once they were off the street, but it was unusual. “Uh, I’ll be happy to look into anything you can give me.”

“Word on the street is that one Tomas Martinez heard or saw something that might be relevant. Check him out. He’s a junkie living on the edge of Skid Row, I’m sure you can find an address for him; he’s been brought in before.”

He looked down at the papers on his desk, clearly dismissing her.

Chloe waited for a moment to see if there was anything else, then rolled her eyes and walked briskly out of his office. *Some people just can’t keep their business out of their work*, she thought as she huffed quietly and sat back down at her desk.

Lucifer looked down at the file he’d picked up from the detective’s desk, leafing through the evidence they’d collected so far and skipping over the more technical aspects that’d he’d never bothered to familiarise himself with.

“Are you sure this is murder?” he asked the detective as she walked over to her desk, unable to pinpoint what it was that had attracted her attention to this case.

She reached over and yanked the folder out of his hand. “Yes,” she told him. “I told you, there’s something fishy about it. I don’t buy that it was an accident. There’s no evidence that Stephens injured himself at his apartment, and we found skin cells under his nails—clear sign of a struggle.”

“Yes, well he didn’t strike me as a big fan of bathing. Who knows how long they’d been under there.”

“Lucifer.”

“Fair enough,” he replied, letting it lie. He’d learned very early on in their partnership that the detective possessed notable instincts when it came to homicide; she was very rarely wrong about murder, and he’d never yet seen her fail to find the right person to punish.

“What did Pierce want?”

“Oh. He had a lead for us. Some guy called Tomas Martinez.”

Something about the detective’s tone caught Lucifer’s attention. His eyes narrowed briefly.

“Is everything okay, Detective?”

“Yeah.”

Her falsely cheerful tone cemented his suspicion that Pierce had been taking his feelings out on her; he let the subject drop as

she clearly didn’t want to talk about it, resolving to keep an eye on the lovesick former immortal.

“Oh look,” he commented. “Someone’s early.”

The two reporters were crossing the bullpen to the detective’s desk.

“Ms Lane. Clark. Do you two always start work this early?”

The detective looked at him curiously. “When did he become Clark?”

“Oh, he dropped by Lux last night. We had a very interesting little chat, didn’t we, Clark?” Lucifer gave Clark a knowing grin that widened with amusement when the reporter blushed.

In fact, Clark’s visit to Lux had left Lucifer with a certain amount of respect for the Kryptonian. While Lucifer might not understand or agree with Clark hiding his identity from the world, the man did live up to his clean-cut image. If he also managed to live up to his reputation as a seeker of ‘truth and justice’, as his paper had put it, they may even end up as friends. Superman and the Devil. Who would’ve thought it?

“Lucifer? You ready?” The detective’s voice broke into his musings.

Lucifer straightened up from where he’d been half-sitting on the edge of the detective’s desk. “Just where does this Tomas Martinez live, anyway?”

“East Fourth and Omar.”

“East Fourth and Omar!” he repeated incredulously. “That’s right on the edge of Skid Row! We’re certainly showing our guests the worst Los Angeles has to offer, aren’t we?”

She threw him a grin as they walked to the elevator. “I thought you liked danger.”

“This is a rough part of town,” Chloe warned.

“You’re not kidding,” Lois commented, looking out the window. Clark had to agree with her; this part of LA was easily comparable to the areas around Suicide Slum, back home in Metropolis.

Chloe pulled the car to the curb, killing the engine and turning in her seat to pin them all with a stare. “When we get out, I need you two to stay close. No wandering off, no disappearing, got it?”

Clark nodded, Lois agreeing a shade reluctantly.

“Lucifer. You’ve got my back on this, right?”

“Always, Detective,” Lucifer replied in one of the more sincere tones Clark had yet heard him use.

They popped the doors and climbed out, Clark deliberately staying on the street side of the detective as they rounded the car to get to the sidewalk. As he crossed behind the detective, his unusually sharp hearing caught a staccato sound he’d heard during his forays as Superman.

Automatic gunfire.

He saw Chloe’s head jerk in the direction of the sound of gunfire and screeching tires before she spun towards where Lois and Lucifer stood on the pavement.

“Back in the car!” she shouted.

As she dropped to a low crouch, Clark saw it—a bullet, flying in a direct path to bury itself in Chloe’s back. He reached out at superspeed, catching the projectile before it could make impact. Quickly he slipped the squashed pellet, still smoking, into his pocket before ducking back into the vehicle.

One hand on the holster at her hip, Chloe scanned the area before straightening up as no other shots were forthcoming. She stuck her head through the still-open driver’s door.

“You three. Stay here. I’m going to go check it out.”

“What? No, Detective, you can’t go in there without backup!” Lucifer protested. “What if there’s still someone with a gun?”

“Lucifer, it was a drive-by. The shooters are blocks away by now. I’m going to go see if anyone needs help.”

The three civilians sat in tense silence once Chloe had disappeared down the street. Clark restrained himself with

difficulty from making an excuse and finding somewhere to spin into the Suit; if it had been Metropolis, he would've responded without hesitation, but here, even his fallback excuse of going to get help wouldn't work. Not with the detective along with them.

He turned in his seat as Lucifer's phone buzzed, watching as the other man's expression cleared.

"Detective! Are you alright?"

Lucifer listened in mixed relief and worry as the detective explained her continued absence. While she sounded physically unhurt, her description of the scene sounded harrowing. Few people knew how badly crime scenes affected the detective the way Lucifer did. And he didn't like the thought of her being the only officer on the scene until the backup she'd summoned had arrived.

Hanging up the call, he turned to the two reporters he'd been saddled with.

"I'm going to go help the detective," he announced. "You two go... do whatever it is that you do."

He swung the door open and was on the sidewalk before Lois and Clark could react, striding off in the direction the detective had taken.

Now Lucifer is going? Lois questioned internally. Well, there was no way Lois Lane was going to sit idly in a car when there was a story to be gotten.

"I'm going too," she informed Clark, scrambling out of the back seat.

"Lois!"

Knowing that Clark would follow her, she didn't bother to look over her shoulder as she followed in Chloe and Lucifer's footsteps.

Crossing the last street needed to reach the scene, she stopped in her tracks, causing Clark to nearly collide with her.

She'd seen the aftermath of drive-by shootings before—like many large cities, Metropolis had its share of gang violence.

But never this fresh. Never this raw.

The crumpled remains of what had been people going about their lives just a few minutes earlier. The screams of the people left behind. The red pools of blood, dark against the asphalt.

And amongst all of the chaos, Chloe and Lucifer knelt by the victims' sides, faces set in nearly identical expressions of rage and grief, blood in their hands as they tried to help the fallen.

Lois choked back a sob and turned, burying her head in Clark's shoulder. Instinctively he comforted her, reaching up and cupping the back of her head with one hand while he himself averted his eyes from the tragedy before them.

He'd seen some truly horrific things in his time at Superman—things that would haunt his dreams for years to come—but he never ceased to be appalled at the things humans did to one another.

"Hey. You okay?" he asked Lois softly.

She nodded, stepping out of his loose embrace and drawing herself up. He gave her a half smile, knowing that a show of strength was how Lois coped with the more challenging aspects of their job. She moved away, clearly searching for whoever was in charge now that police units and ambulances had started to arrive.

"Clark."

Clark pulled his attention away from Lois at the sound of Lucifer's voice, suddenly aware that he hadn't seen the other man leave the detective's side and approach him.

"Did I see you catch something back there at the car?" Lucifer asked tersely.

Clark nodded, pulling the slug out of his pocket and giving it to Lucifer. Lucifer wrapped his hand around it tightly, his jaw tightening. For a split second, Clark could have sworn he saw the

other man's eyes glow red.

Lucifer swallowed hard at the knowledge that it had happened again. The detective had once again been in mortal danger, and it had been another man that saved her.

He hadn't protected her.

Granted, while she was in such close proximity he wouldn't have been able to do what Clark had done. With the way his invulnerability disappeared around the detective, the bullet would have shredded his hand had he tried to catch it, but that wasn't the point.

He hadn't protected her.

Every instinct he possessed demanded that he seek out the person that had fired at the detective and deliver some of his own personal brand of punishment, but he wasn't able to do that either. Both the improbability of finding one gun-toting idiot in a city with over a hundred thousand active gang members and his own missing Devil-face made that an impossibility.

He gritted his teeth. He hated being beholden to anyone. At least this time it had been Clark and not Pierce. "Good thing you were here, Superman," he ground out.

Clark spun and gave him a warning look.

"Not so loud, Lucifer!" Clark hissed, glancing around to make sure that neither Lois or the detective had heard Lucifer's indiscreet comment.

Lucifer turned, his previously dark expression lighting to one of unholy glee. "Ooh, so it isn't just the world you're hiding that from, is it? Even your prickly partner isn't in on the secret!"

"She doesn't know," Clark confirmed, deciding to bypass the categorisation of Lois as 'prickly'.

"Really? Why not?"

"Because unlike you, Lucifer, I don't tell everyone I meet that I'm not human!" Clark's heart was racing. Didn't Lucifer understand how fragile his life was? What a delicate balancing act it took to maintain all the secrets that kept everyone safe? That Lois would find a way to murder him when she found out he'd been lying to her daily for almost a year?

"Well at least I'm not the one hiding things from my partner," Lucifer fired back.

"Oh really? So Detective Decker knows you're the Devil, does she?" Clark asked pointedly.

"I've told her," Lucifer hedged.

"And?"

"She doesn't believe me. But at least I've tried. Which is more than what you can say, my cape-wearing friend."

"If you tell her—" Clark started.

"Oh, do you think I should?" Lucifer replied, clearly taunting him. Clark was taken aback for a moment. He wasn't used to dealing with people who knew he was Superman.

"Lucifer, I swear to God—"

"Don't." Lucifer's expression became deadly serious, nearly offended, and for a moment Clark almost flinched away, remembering the previous night's revelation of how Lucifer had been treated by his father.

"You say you love this woman. So why not show her your other side? Why keep her in the dark?" Lucifer pressed.

"Because I prefer to be judged on who I am," Clark insisted through a clenched jaw.

"Right." Lucifer was almost dismissive and Clark felt the tension running through him ratchet that much higher.

"Dan." Chloe waited until her ex-husband finished giving instructions to the uniformed officers he was talking to before attracting his attention.

"Chloe? What are you doing here? I thought you were working the diner case."

“I’m the one that called it in.” She crossed her arms over her chest, noticing the blood that stained her hands for the first time. “We were following a lead down the street when we heard the shots.”

Dan tilted his head sympathetically. “You okay?”

She nodded. “Yeah. Yeah, I’m okay. It’s just...” she trailed off as she saw the team from the medical examiner’s office start to load the four victims onto gurneys and shook her head. “They were just kids.”

“I know,” Dan said gently.

She blinked, forcing herself to remain professional. “What do you need from me?”

Pushing her emotions aside, she gave Dan a rundown of everything that had happened since she’d heard the first shot, then looked around. She’d known that telling Lucifer to stay put at the car had been a waste of breath even as she’d said it, and she’d been grateful for his help and support when he’d inevitably shown up. But now she had to gather him and the two reporters up and get back to the case they were actually working.

Chloe walked over to where Clark and Lucifer were locked in what looked like a quasi-argument, ducking under the police tape that had been set up now that the other units she’d requested had arrived.

“Hey. What’s going on?” she enquired, looking from one man to the other.

“Nothing, Detective,” Lucifer replied, looking away from Clark and giving her his usual grin, the little crease between his brows the only evidence of his inner emotion.

Chloe took another look at the tension on the reporter’s face and raised an eyebrow before deciding she didn’t have the mental energy to deal with a fight right then.

“Okay. Are you guys ready to go?”

“We’re not taking this case?” Lucifer gestured to the activity behind the taped-off area.

“No, the gang unit is piggybacking homicide on this one and it’s officially out of our hands. So. Let’s go back and pick up our guy.” She looked around for Lois and found her questioning Hernandez from the gang unit.

“Does she ever stop working?”

“Tomas Martinez?” The detective knocked on the door, which rattled under the blows.

Lucifer surveyed their surroundings with distaste. The hallway they stood in was dark, narrow and smelled of a disgusting combination of mould and urine; somehow he doubted that the interiors of the apartments would be much of an improvement.

“Mr Martinez? LAPD!” The detective knocked harder on the door, causing Lucifer to worry about its structural integrity.

“Just kick it in, Detective,” he advised.

She shot him a look. “No. Not without a warrant.”

He rolled his eyes, stepping forward and grasping the doorknob; under his hand, he felt the lock tumblers realign themselves, and the knob turned easily.

“Detective?” He gestured for her to proceed him into the apartment.

She gave him another dirty look. “You have got to stop doing that.”

“What? We’re in, aren’t we?”

She shook her head as she stepped past him into the tiny sitting room, followed by Lois and Clark.

Tomas Martinez sat on the stained and torn couch, his eyes fixed on the television with the vacant stare of the high.

The hypodermic syringe, spoon and foil on the rickety coffee table told their own story.

Walking over, Lucifer leaned close to the suspect, snapping his fingers in the other man’s face and receiving nothing more than a delayed shift of the eyes in his direction.

“Detective, I don’t think we’ll be getting any sense out of this one for a while.”

“Are we really going to just stand here and wait for him to sober up?” Lucifer queried as they watched Martinez through the one-way glass of interrogation.

“We don’t exactly have much choice,” Chloe pointed out. “He couldn’t string two words together when we picked him up.”

“Yes, but that was two hours ago, Detective. Surely by now, he’s come down enough to question?”

She rolled her eyes at his impatience but privately conceded he had a point. They’d be more likely to get useful information out of their witness if he hadn’t started to go through withdrawals, and they had no way of knowing how quickly withdrawals would set in once he’d sobered up completely.

“Okay.” Gesturing to Lois and Clark to stay and observe, she left observation and entered the interrogation room, settling herself at the table across from their witness while Lucifer lounged at his ease in a chair off to one side.

Martinez was about what she’d expected: vague, strung out and easily distracted, none of which was unusual for a junkie.

“Do you know this man?”

Chloe placed a photo of a dead Carl Stephens on the table in front of Martinez.

“Oh man! Someone killed this guy? Man, that’s so weird, I just saw him like two, three days ago. I always thought he’d just as soon kill you as look at you, but he just stumbled right by like I wasn’t even there!”

“Stumbled by? Stumbled by where?” she pushed.

“This warehouse in South Central. West Fifty-Seventh. I was down there to meet my dealer. He’s always got real good stuff.” He got a longing look on his face, and Chloe knew he was probably thinking of his next fix.

“Okay. So when was this? Two days ago, or three?”

“I dunno, man.” Chloe saw the witness’s eyes try to focus and heard Lucifer scoff from behind her.

“Oh, it’s like watching Dan try to think.”

She held up a hand, silencing Lucifer while Martinez tried to gather his thoughts.

“Three days ago. It was three.”

“Uh huh. And how do you know Mr Stephens?”

“I don’t. I seen him around is all. He’s a bad dude.” He shuddered.

The detective paused in the doorway to observation.

“We’ve arrested Martinez for felony possession. And I’ve phoned in for a warrant to check out the warehouse, but it’s late. Chances are we won’t get one till tomorrow.”

The detective left the room. Lucifer made as if to follow her, then caught sight of the expression on Lois’s face. It was one he was extremely familiar with.

Desire.

“Ohh... you want to go and check out that building, don’t you, Ms Lane?” He grinned, catching her eyes.

“You heard the detective. She won’t get a warrant till tomorrow.”

“Yes, but I bet that’s never stopped you before now, has it? After all, who knows what newsworthy things you’ll find?”

He saw the tiny movement of her head and knew he’d gotten to her. “Come on, what are you waiting for?” he asked her with a wicked grin.

“Nothing.” She grabbed her bag and headed for the door.

“Lovely.” He trailed behind her eagerly.

Lois tried the knob and muttered something under her breath before fishing in her bag for something.

“You should probably let me do that,” Lucifer commented,

knowing that his ability with locks would have the door open in an instant. She gave him a dirty look before inserting the tips of two dainty lockpicks into the keyhole.

There was a faint ‘snick’ as the tumblers aligned and the knob turned in her hand.

“You were saying?” she shot over her shoulder as she walked through the now-unlocked door.

“Impressive, Ms Lane. You know, I’m liking Clark’s human more and more.”

“Clark’s *what*? I am not his-his *human*, as you put it—” Calling her ‘Clark’s human’ had to be the weirdest attempt she’d ever heard at making a non-gender specific personal remark about her relationship with Clark. What was with this guy?

“Ms Lane.” Lucifer attempted to draw her attention to the thug pointing a semi-automatic pistol in their direction.

“—Clark and I are partners. That’s it.” She huffed impatiently, glaring at Lucifer.

“Ms Lane.” He put his hands up.

“And friends.” Why had this weirdo tagged along with her anyway? And why had she let him?! Her relationship with Clark was none of anyone’s business, and she really wished that people would stop assuming—

“Ms Lane!”

“What?” she snapped.

He jerked his head in the direction of the very surprised and annoyed drug dealer.

“Detective?”

Chloe turned to find Clark walking purposefully towards her.

“Have you seen Lois?”

“I thought she was with you. I’m just looking for Lucifer... oh no.” Chloe’s shoulders dropped.

“What?” Clark asked with foreboding in his voice.

“I bet I know exactly where he is. That building in South Central,” she said grimly as she gathered her things off the table and tucked them into her pockets.

“What?” The alarm in his voice was unmistakable, but Chloe noted that he didn’t sound the least bit surprised.

She turned and strode in the direction of the elevator, leaving Clark flat-footed in her wake.

He stuck his hand through the elevator doors, stopping them from closing, then boarded the elevator with her.

“Why would Lucifer go to South Central?”

“You don’t know Lucifer. He’s impatient and impulsive and he has a habit of getting himself into dangerous situations.” She suppressed a smile as she heard Clark mutter something under his breath that sounded suspiciously like ‘sounds familiar’.

The elevator stopped, opening to the garage level. Quickly she got to her car, opening the driver’s door and starting the engine before the door was fully closed. As she shifted into reverse, the passenger door popped open.

“You should find Lois,” she told Clark.

“She’ll be with Lucifer.” Clark sounded resigned.

Lucifer lowered his hands and took a step towards the gunman.

“Give me the gun.”

“Stay back!”

Lucifer made eye contact with the thug, giving him the little half smile that went so well with his ability.

“This isn’t really what you want, is it now?”

“I said, stay back!”

Lucifer ignored his demand and the increasingly shaky gun, taking another step forward.

“You don’t really want to shoot us. No, what you want is to be gone before the police arrive.”

A hand grasped the hoodlum’s gun arm and twisted, causing

him to shriek in pain and drop the weapon. Lois then clouted him on the back of the neck for good measure, waiting until the criminal had collapsed to the ground before straightening up and pushing the hair out of her face.

“Well done, Ms Lane!” Lucifer beamed at Lois in pleased surprise.

“Lucifer?” The detective’s voice came from outside the door.

“Oh, the cavalry’s arrived. In here, Detective!”

The detective advanced around the door with her gun in hand, lowering it as she saw the criminal Lois had recently despatched on the floor.

“Did you do this?”

“Can’t take the credit for this one, no. This one was all Ms Lane.” He looked at Clark, who’d entered the room after the detective. “I can see why you like working with her, she’s feisty.”

“Lucifer.” It was all Chloe could do not to shout at him. How many times were they going to have this conversation? Was there even anything new to say? Some secret phrase she hadn’t found yet, that would magically make Lucifer listen to her?

“What? This miscreant came at us with a gun, Detective.” He gestured between Lois and himself as he nudged the fallen man with the toe of his Italian leather shoe.

“You shouldn’t even have been here!” Dammit, there went the shout. Chloe clenched her jaw.

At their feet, the thug stirred. “I didn’t do it!”

Lucifer looked down. “Do what?”

“I just found him, I swear!” There was genuine fear in the voice of the man on the floor—something that piqued Chloe’s professional curiosity.

“Found who?”

Chloe knelt and snapped the cuffs around the wrists of the guy Lois had taken down, then stood and unholstered her gun again.

“Okay. You two”—she gestured to Lois and Clark—“watch him. Lucifer?” She jerked her head in the direction of the inner door that stood ajar.

Advancing slowly, she took up position behind the door, nodding to Lucifer to swing it wide before she entered, making sure Lucifer was behind her.

It was dark inside the abandoned warehouse; coming to a stop, Chloe fumbled at her belt for her flashlight, clicking it on and bracing it below her gun before resuming her sweep. The narrow beam of light fell across a lump in the middle of the concrete floor; knowing with absolute certainty what she’d found, Chloe cleared the rest of the cavernous building before returning to look down at the dead body.

“Well. No wonder our drug dealer seemed nervous,” Lucifer commented.

Chloe swept the scene with a practised eye as the techs moved in to cordon off the area and start processing evidence, before crossing her arms over her chest and dealing with her far-from-repentant partner.

“Lucifer, what the hell were you thinking? It’s bad enough that you go leaping into danger every time I turn my back, but now you’re dragging other civilians along with you?” she snapped out.

“Boots on the other foot actually; I came with her, not the other way round.”

Her eyes narrowed, unimpressed by his semantics. “You can’t tell me that you had nothing to do with this.”

“I may have given her a little encouragement.” He grinned.

Chloe gritted her teeth, knowing full well what form his ‘little encouragement’ had taken. “Give me one good reason why I shouldn’t bench you from this investigation,” she ground out.

“Oh come now, Detective. We did find another body, after all.”

“The pair of you almost got yourselves killed!”

Her name being called from behind her made Chloe fix her thoroughly un-chastised partner with a look. “I haven’t finished with you yet.”

“Is that a promise?” Lucifer called after her as she left the room, shaking her head.

Chloe conferred quickly with the tech that had wanted her opinion on how large a radius she wanted to be marked with the crime scene tape, then took the opportunity to grab Lois’s attention.

“Ms Lane. A word.” She pulled Lois aside, out of the way of the bustling techs.

“What do you think you were doing?” Chloe bit out. “You and Lucifer had no right to be here, you put yourselves in danger, and if that body hadn’t been here, me coming in to save your ass would’ve been on very shaky legal ground. I’m used to Lucifer and his approach to protocol. And I don’t care how things are done in Metropolis, or how you conduct yourself on one of your ‘investigations’. But while you are here, you will not compromise my case. Is that clear?”

The other woman glared at her for a moment, clearly sizing her up.

Chloe stood her ground, refusing to be intimidated by someone who had obviously already decided she could be pushed around. “If you cooperate, I’ll make sure that you and Mr. Kent get access to the full file. Step out of line again, and I’ll bench both of you.” She strode away, ducking under the police tape that had been strung around the scene.

Lois stared after the detective with narrowed eyes. It appeared as though she’d underestimated the former actress.

“She’s right, Lois,” came a disapproving voice from behind her.

“Don’t you start, Clark,” she snapped.

“Lois, you can’t go taking off like that! We don’t know the city, we don’t have any contacts here; that guy could have shot you!” Clark struggled to keep the exasperation out of his voice, and almost succeeded.

“It’s fine, Clark, really. Lucifer used whatever his ‘look into my eyes’ desire gizmo is to distract the guy. And what is that, by the way? Is he hypnotising these people somehow?”

Lois’s curiosity about Lucifer’s abilities had been well and truly piqued, now that she’d experienced his desire trick firsthand; all she’d heard was his voice and a ringing in her ears that had drowned out all extraneous sound. Unsettlingly for her, she’d been unable to resist the compulsion to follow her desire to check out the warehouse.

“I thought you didn’t believe in hypnotism.”

“I don’t, but he’s doing something to them.”

“Hypnotism?” Lucifer appeared in the doorway. “Like those idiots down in Las Vegas, getting people to act like chickens? Charlatans, the lot of them. I don’t hypnotise people, Ms Lane. I’m the Devil, or have you forgotten?”

“Right,” she replied sceptically.

“Lucifer.”

Chloe pulled her partner away from his conversation with the two reporters. Lois had a sceptical look on her face that Chloe recognised from her own expression when he started talking about the Devil. Clark, however, had looked merely uncomfortable. What was going on with those two?

“You seem to have made friends easily with Clark,” Chloe commented.

He fell into step with her as they walked towards the taped-off area. “And?”

“You just don’t usually get along well with the virtuous.”

“That’s not true; I get along with you,” Lucifer teased her

playfully.

“Right.”

“Look, Clark and I have certain... similarities that make it easier to like him.”

She snorted in disbelief. “You two are nothing alike.”

“Not superficially, I’ll grant you. Oh come now, Detective, you don’t believe me about my other side, I’m certainly not going to tell you about his.”

Ella lit up like Christmas morning as she caught the last part of their conversation. “OMG, are you guys talking about that reporter that’s been going over the Stephens case? He’s so cute, right?” Ella looked at Chloe expectantly, only slightly deterred by her quelling head tilt and Lucifer’s dirty look. “Too soon, right?”

“Yes, well, Miss Lopez, I have it on good authority that he’s taken.”

Momentarily distracted from the dead body, Chloe turned and looked at her partner. “Whose authority?”

“Why, his own, of course.” He gave her a wide-eyed look of affected surprise.

“Seriously, how do you know so much about him already?”

“I told you. He dropped by Lux last night.”

She shook her head, surprised by his sudden friendship with someone so different to himself, then focused her attention back on the corpse in front of her.

“So what have we got, Ella?”

“Well, dead bodies don’t usually freak me out, but this one is super gross.”

“What happened to his face?” Lucifer queried in disgust.

“Rats,” Ella replied.

“Look at his fingertips,” Chloe commented. “Did someone try to remove his prints?”

“Nope, that would be the rats again.” Ella lifted one of the corpse’s hands to show them the bite marks in the remaining flesh. “Looks like they went for the exposed tissue first.”

“And like this building has a serious rodent problem,” Lucifer put in, looking around distastefully. “That’s South Central LA for you.”

“Cause of death, Ella?”

“Hmm, hard to tell. No obvious cause of death, but that’s probably because the rats got to him.” She rolled the body over. “Wait. See this mark here?” She pointed to a small vertical puncture mark, around an inch and half wide, midway down the body’s side. “That’s a stab wound.”

“Hmm. Single thrust,” Chloe commented. “Probably not a crime of passion.”

“Yeah, they tend to go all stabby-stab. From the width of the blade, I’d say anything from a kitchen knife to a small hunting knife. I might be able to get an impression of the hilt from the surrounding tissue.”

“That’s a lot of possible murder weapons. And without fingerprints or facial recognition, it’s going to take a while to get an ID. Great. Any idea when he died?”

“From the rate of decomp, I’d say three, maybe four days.”

Pierce was waiting near the entrance to the bullpen when they returned to the station, a disapproving glower on his face.

Mentally Chloe rolled her eyes. This had to be about Lucifer and Lois taking off without warning, but how had the lieutenant even heard about that?

“I expect you to keep the civilians in line,” Pierce barked, shooting a brief glare in Lucifer’s direction, then swiftly returned his attention to scowling at Chloe. “Do I have to give this case to somebody else?!”

“I have it under control, sir,” she struggled not to snarl at him.

“Decker. My office,” Pierce snapped.

He was waiting behind his desk when she entered, a forbidding expression on his face.

"I hear Lucifer and one of your reporters ran off and almost got themselves killed today," he said without preamble. "That doesn't sound like control to me. I expect you to keep the civilians in line. They're your responsibility. If you can't do that, I'll have to find another detective who can. Understood?"

"Understood, Lieutenant." She struggled to keep her tone even, but inside Chloe was seething. It wasn't enough that Marcus was behaving like such an ass and Lucifer was still running off half-cocked and being all... Lucifer, now she got to be called on the carpet for Lane's behavior too! *This isn't a daycare, she thought fiercely as she stomped out of his office, they're freaking adults! They came here voluntarily and they can manage their own business!*

Ella paused her music as the computer dinged, letting her know the DNA results she'd been waiting for had arrived. "Yes!"

Glancing up, she saw Detective Decker leaving the lieutenant's office with her arms crossed over her chest and bounced out of her lab to catch her.

"Hey, Chloe?"

The detective turned and Ella winced away a little from the hurt and angry expression on her face.

"Trouble with Pierce?"

"You could say that. I don't know, it's like he's trying to punish me for breaking the engagement or something." She shook her head.

Ella's brow furrowed in guilt. She'd pushed Chloe towards Pierce again and again, and she'd been so happy when they'd started dating. She'd been so focused on them being together that she hadn't even noticed how unhappy Chloe had been. Now that they'd split up, she couldn't help but feel responsible. "It'll get better soon, I promise," she assured Chloe.

Chloe waved away Pierce and his pettiness. "Yeah, well, I can't think about that now. What did you want to show me?"

"What? Oh! Yeah. So I got an ID for our victim. His name is Joshua Cox. Gunrunner, murderer, all-around bad guy. I sent you the file."

"Thanks, Ella."

The detective strode purposefully down the hallway, detouring past her desk and scooping up her tablet on the way.

Chloe shot a glare at Lucifer as he fell into step with her down the hallway, still stinging a little from the dressing-down she'd received from Pierce.

"Something on your mind, Detective?"

"Yeah, you could say that. As if that shooting wasn't bad enough, now I'm getting heat from Pierce because of your little stunt with Lois, although how he even knew what happened is beyond me."

"Detective."

"I've got a lot of eyes on me with this case, and I need you, for once, to follow protocol—"

He cut her off. "Detective, I'm sorry."

"What?"

"I shouldn't have encouraged Ms Lane to go to the warehouse, I was wrong, and I apologise."

"Oh. Well. Thank you." She blinked, slightly taken aback by his unexpected apology.

"So what did Miss Lopez find?"

"What? Oh. Yeah."

They rounded the corner to the interview room they'd been using, Lucifer stopping and allowing her to enter in front of him.

"Ella got a hit on the DNA." She handed him the tablet as he came through the door, watching as he raised an eyebrow at the information on the screen.

"Well, he has been a naughty boy, hasn't he?"

"Yeah. He's been suspected of everything from racketeering to

murder, but we've never been able to make it stick."

"Looks like whoever murdered our bad guy did us a favour."

"Lucifer. Just because the victim was a criminal doesn't mean —" Chloe started to speak in reflexive defense of the deceased.

"Yes, yes I know. It doesn't mean that his murderer shouldn't be punished." He handed the tablet back to her. "Okay, so how do we find whoever killed this Joshua Cox?"

"Criminal or not, he's still a human being, Lucifer—" Clark put in.

"Yes, we've established that," snapped Lucifer at his most biting. "Look, I understand the whole sanctity of human life bit, I just like to make sure that the guilty get punished."

"Did you say Joshua Cox?" Lois interjected before the argument between Clark and Lucifer could escalate.

Chloe looked at Lois. "Yeah, why?"

"Well it could be a coincidence, but Carl Stephens was a known associate of a Joshua Cox."

"It's not in the file," Chloe commented.

"It's an old connection," Clark explained. "Look, we've been digging into Stephens for months. Cox and Stephens were friends, back when Stephens operated out of Metropolis. They had some kind of falling out right around the time Cox disappeared from New Troy."

"That was also right around the time his divorce went through," Lois put in.

"We think his ex-wife, Beverly, has ties to The Boss." Clark finished her thought.

"Your elusive criminal mastermind?" Lucifer queried.

"Do you think this Beverly Cox is The Boss?" Chloe questioned.

"Or she's in the inner sanctum," Clark agreed. "If we can get enough information to get her to flip, we could take down the whole empire."

"My, aren't we ambitious?"

Chloe shot Lucifer a quelling look, trying to chase down a thought.

"If this Joshua Cox is a known associate of Carl Stephens... Ella said that Stephens died shortly after Cox of a subdural haematoma. That kind of injury takes time to kill somebody."

Lucifer gave her the grin he always did when he thought she was onto something. "You think that Eggs Over Dead had something to do with the death of Rat-boy here, don't you?"

"We need to go back to the building where Cox was found."

"We're coming too," Lois announced.

"I am not taking three civilians into the field," Chloe stated flatly. "Not after the stunt you two pulled." She gestured at Lois and Lucifer. "Lucifer is my partner, he goes with me. You two are staying here. End of story." She left the room.

Lois exchanged glances with Clark.

"We're coming too," Lois repeated to Lucifer.

"The detective won't like it," Lucifer observed.

"Wasn't going to ask her," Lois shot back.

Lucifer's face creased into a wicked grin.

"My dear Ms Lane, I'd never dream that you would!"

Chloe flashed her badge and ducked under the police tape with Lucifer at her side, striding to the discoloured patch of concrete where Cox's body had lain. Using the spot as a starting point, she began to sweep the area.

The warehouse was littered with debris; fragments of rusted iron sheeting from a small roof collapse, broken bricks from what looked like an interior half-wall that had been demolished, shelving in various stages of disrepair, plus discarded clothing and bedding that had been used by the homeless people who often sheltered here.

"Just what are we looking for?" Lucifer queried.

"Ella said the wound on the side of Stephens's head came

from something jagged and irregular, like a stone..." she trailed off, spotting two familiar figures at the edge of the police tape and shooting Lucifer an annoyed look.

"Lucifer!"

"What?" he replied innocently. "It wasn't me. Though I do approve," he continued with an infuriating grin. "Oh come on, Detective, they do seem to know a lot about our victim. Perhaps they could be useful."

She scowled as he gestured to the beat cop to let the reporters under the tape. Were Lois and Clark always like this? Rushing into potentially dangerous situations without a second thought, even when they'd been told to do the opposite? Shepherding them was like dealing with multiple Lucifers—although at least he'd apologized for taking off earlier.

Well. If they were going to tag along to crime scenes even when they'd been told to stay put at the station, she'd take advantage of their presence. Quickly she sized the two reporters up and decided that separating them was her best option.

"Okay, fine. As long as you're here, you can help search. Clark, you go with Lucifer. Lois, you're with me. We're looking for anything that could've caused the wound on the back of Stephens's head. Keep an eye out for anything that looks like it has dried blood on it, and do not touch anything." She fixed Lucifer with a look. "Got it?"

Chloe watched Clark and Lucifer as they wandered around the edges of the crime scene, deftly avoiding the CSIs. She noticed that Clark kept pulling his glasses down to peer at things; was there something wrong with his prescription?

Lois interrupted her musings. "Why do you work with a civilian consultant?"

"I'm sorry?" Chloe turned her attention to Lois and dismissed her speculation about Kent's eyesight.

"Well, you seem to have a problem with civilians in the field. So why are you partnered with one?" Lois asked again.

Chloe looked the other woman over. Lois seemed less confrontational than usual, and she decided there was no harm in answering basic questions as long as the reporter didn't get too personal. "Off the record?" She smiled faintly as Lane nodded. "It's a long story. But... despite all his weirdness, Lucifer's actually a really good partner. He helps me look at things differently. He's been responsible for breaks in cases more often than I can count. He's always got my back; even when we argue I can always go to him with problems." Chloe thought for a moment. "He even likes my daughter, and he doesn't seem to have much use for children."

"Oh." Lois paused. "I didn't think the LAPD allowed partners to date."

"What? Ow!" Chloe straightened up abruptly, cracking her head on the tattered shelving above her. "Lucifer and I aren't dating." Seeing Lois's disbelieving look, she sighed. "We've gotten close. A couple of times. But no, we're not. Trust me. Dating coworkers never ends well."

She knew that from experience. The failure of her marriage to Dan had been long and awkward, even if had been mostly amicable. Her breakup with Pierce was far worse. At least Dan hadn't been in a position of authority over her—something which, right now, was making every interaction with Pierce more painful than it needed to be. She got that she'd hurt Marcus when she'd broken off their engagement so abruptly, but all she wanted was a little professionalism while they were at work. Surely that wasn't too much to ask for?

"Oh, believe me, I'm the last person you have to tell." Lois snorted. "Can I ask you something? Does Lucifer always call you 'Detective'?"

"Ah... pretty much. But he's formal with Ella too. I think it's a respect thing. I don't know, maybe it goes along with him being

British. His brother's much less formal."

"He has a brother?"

Chloe nodded. "Amenadiel."

"Lucifer and Amenadiel? Who calls their kids that?" Lois laughed. "Does he really believe he's the Devil?"

"He's certainly pretty adamant about it."

Lois cocked her head. "Do you believe him?"

"No. I mean, I've seen him do some things I can't explain, but that they add up to him being the Devil? No. What about you?"

"I don't know." She surveyed the detective for a moment. "I used to be like you. Didn't believe anything unless I had solid proof."

"What happened?"

"I met a man who can fly. I'm just saying... sometimes the strangest explanation is the right one."

Chloe shot her a look. "Lucifer isn't evil."

Lois raised her eyebrows slightly at Chloe's emphatic defense of her partner, wondering just how close they'd actually gotten to being more than work partners. The detective seemed

awfully protective of Lucifer, especially for someone who'd just broken an engagement to another man. After working with her for a few days and seeing how she interacted with her colleagues and handled herself in her job, Lois had been forced to reevaluate her initial opinion of Chloe. As much as Lois hated to be wrong—and especially to admit it—she also knew how much she hated it when people held her own past against her. Clearly, the woman she was working with now was no longer the same one who had made that... movie.

"So you and Clark aren't..." Chloe's voice broke her train of thought.

"Me and Clark? No. No way! I mean..." Lois trailed off, then started again. "He's my best friend and the only partner I've ever been able to tolerate, but no, we're not... we're just friends." She looked around at the mention of her partner. "Where is Clark, anyway?"

Chloe turned and surveyed the scene. "I have no idea. Lucifer's gone too." She looked back at Lois. "Does he do this often?"

Lois rolled her eyes. "All the time."

"I guess I'm not the only one stuck with a disappearing partner," Chloe observed.

The two women spent a few moments silently evaluating each other, then Lois smiled tentatively at Chloe.

"So... does yours make up lame excuses about checking his mail or returning videos?"

Chloe gave her an incredulous look. "Returning videos?? Are there still Blockbusters in Metropolis?"

"No! It's infuriating!" Lois rolled her eyes and laughed.

"Well"—Chloe shrugged—"it could be worse. Mine just wanders off when he gets bored and doesn't even bother to make an excuse."

Lois grinned. "Don't tell Clark, but I've learned to just carry on, he always turns up eventually." She paused. "Can I ask you a question? Lucifer's desire thing... is it some sort of parlor trick?" Lois asked.

"I don't even begin to understand it. But it works." Chloe shrugged. "As long as he's getting results—"

"Detective?" Lucifer called from behind her.

"Speak of the devil," Chloe muttered under her breath. She broke away from Lois and turned towards the rear entrance of the building.

"You're back, are you?"

He ignored her acerbic comment. "The wound on Rat-boy's head, could it have come from a broken brick?"

"Yes, of course it could have—"

“Well, I can’t help but notice that this particular broken brick has what looks astonishingly like dried blood on one corner.” He pointed the toe of his shoe at the brick he was talking about.

Ella brushed past her, crouching beside the litter of bricks and broken planks of wood with the crime scene camera in hand.

“I’d have to make a mould to be certain, but yeah, that brick could’ve made the dent in Stephens’s skull.”

Chloe looked around, walking away from Ella and Lucifer to where Cox’s body had been found.

“It’s possible,” she observed.

“What’s possible?”

Lucifer walked closer to where Chloe stood.

“Stephens could’ve landed there.”

“Hang on. You’re saying that Rat-boy managed to fling our first bad guy off him and into this pile of rubble, while he was being filleted from the inside?”

“Adrenaline can do tricky things,” Ella responded with a shrug.

Chloe looked at Lucifer with narrowed eyes, considering if that was what accounted for the few times she’d seen him lift men many times his size like they weighed nothing. “Yes, it can,” she commented slowly.

Clark walked further away from where Lucifer and the detective were conferring with the lab tech—Miss Lopez, Lucifer had called her—scanning the area surreptitiously with his glasses halfway down his nose, looking for anything suspicious or out of place.

A dull glint from beneath what looked like a tattered burlap bag caught his attention. He leant closer to the gleam, using his vision to look through the occluding material.

The knife was unexpectedly ornate; it looked like it belonged on display somewhere, rather than half-underneath a dirty piece of fabric in a close-to-derelect building in a rough area of the city.

“Hey, Detective?” He waved a hand to attract her attention. “I think I’ve got something over here.”

The detective walked over to where Clark stood and knelt carefully, using a pair of gloves to lift the sacking off the knife. She looked up at him.

“Did you touch anything? Move anything at all?”

He shook his head. “I saw it and called you over.”

“Okay.” She walked back over to where Miss Lopez was examining the broken brick and said something to her before coming back over to Clark and lifting the sacking again.

“Looks like one of those fancy reproductions, the kind that people use as letter openers. What is that, Chinese?” Chloe wondered aloud.

“Looks like it,” Clark commented. In fact, to him, it looked eerily familiar. While he was no expert, he’d nearly swear he’d seen that same blade in Luthor’s penthouse, forming part of the billionaire’s ostentatiously displayed antique weapon collection. But was the detective right? Was it a replica? He couldn’t examine it to make sure, not now that it was about to be bagged and tagged as evidence.

Clark lifted the pot of coffee off the burner and sniffed it gingerly. The precinct break room was the only place he’d found that served worse coffee than the *Planet* newsroom, but this one smelled slightly less scorched than the ones he’d tried earlier. He poured two cups, adding the artificial sweetener that Lois preferred to one. It was after eight pm here on the West Coast; with the time difference, he knew Lois was starting to flag. Briefly, he wondered if Detective Decker always pushed herself this hard. She was as driven as Lois.

He rejoined his partner, handing her the cup of coffee and returning her tired smile of thanks just as Lucifer approached out of the gloom of the darkened precinct.

“Miss Lopez won’t have anything on the mould or the knife you found until tomorrow, so there’s nothing we can do until the morning,” he informed them. “You two should”—his gaze wandered to a point over Clark’s shoulder—“go and do whatever it is you do after a day like today. Now, if you’ll excuse me…” Without waiting for a response, he stepped around Lois and Clark and walked off purposefully.

Clark turned, curious to see what had attracted Lucifer’s attention, and smiled to himself when he saw the fallen angel seat himself on the edge of Detective Decker’s desk.

In spite of his open and matter-of-fact revelations of the night before, Clark still wasn’t sure what to make of Lucifer. Sunday school was admittedly a long time in his past, but wasn’t the Devil supposed to be evil?

Granted, Lucifer clearly happily embraced many vices. Clark blushed at the memory of the three women named Brittany he’d been introduced to the previous night. And yet…

And yet.

Lucifer had also saved Lois’s life, displayed a respect for human life at that horrific shooting that rivalled Clark’s own, and unless Clark had severely misread the chagrin and pain on Lucifer’s face when Clark had given him the bullet that had been destined for Chloe, he was deeply in love with his partner.

None of that added up to evil.

“Clark?” Lois waved a hand in front of his face. “Earth to Clark?” she asked, a note of amusement in her voice.

He pulled his attention back to her. “Sorry, Lois.”

“Come on. Let’s get out of here,” she suggested. “It’s been a long day and all I want to do is go back to the hotel and eat chocolate.”

He laughed softly at Lois’s cure-all as he placed one hand gently at her back, guiding her towards the elevator.

Lucifer half-sat on the edge of the detective’s desk, observing her as she stared blankly at her tablet in the darkness. While the screen was displaying the file of their latest victim, he doubted she was absorbed in thoughts about their case.

“Detective?”

She blinked in surprise, looking up at him with pain in her eyes. He was right; she’d been thinking about that horrific drive-by scene from earlier today. Not for the first time, he marvelled at her strength. An event like that was hard to witness even for him; and yet she’d carried on working like nothing had happened.

“You all right?” he asked gently.

“I’m fine.”

He shook his head. “Come on.”

She stood obediently even while she questioned him. “Where are we going?”

“I’m taking you to Lux.”

“No,” she protested. “The last thing I need right now is to be around people.”

“No, the last thing you need right now is to be alone. What you do need, Detective, is a drink and someone to talk to so you don’t go home and punish yourself for something that isn’t your fault.”

“What makes you think I’d do that?”

“Because, my dear Detective, I know you better than you think.”

“You really do, don’t you?”

“Yes.” He smiled tenderly at her before deflecting the emotional moment by reaching over and pressing the button to lock her tablet.

“Come along, Detective. Our dead guys will still be dead in the morning.”

“Good morning, Detective,” Lucifer greeted as he approached her desk. “Feeling better?” he asked solicitously.

Chloe nodded, considering.

“Yeah. Yeah, I do.” She smiled at him, getting a genuine smile in return that was warmer than his usual mischief-laden grin. “Thanks, Lucifer.”

“You’re welcome, Detective.”

Actually, she did feel better. Her usual instinct when she’d been confronted with a particularly bad crime scene was to get drunk in solitude, but last night she hadn’t felt up to resisting Lucifer’s urging.

And he’d been right. Lux was comparatively peaceful in the middle of the week, and they’d been able to sit and talk without the blaring music or the interruptions that happened on weekend nights. And it had been... easy. The jealous, hurt Lucifer of the last few months had disappeared and by the end of the night, she’d felt like she’d gotten her Lucifer back. Her friend. The one she’d always been able to turn to. That she’d missed—and shouldn’t that have been a sign that there was something drastically wrong with her relationship with Pierce? That she’d missed Lucifer even when she was in Marcus’s company? She pushed the thought aside, unwilling to delve too deeply into that right now.

The arrival of Lois and Clark broke her train of thought; turning her attention back to the case, she picked the file up off her desk and greeted the two reporters.

Lois followed Chloe into the forensics lab and recoiled slightly from the early ‘90s pop music being played at high volume.

“Ella. Ella! Turn the music down!” Chloe yelled over the bombardment of sound.

The slightly built tech Lois recognised from the crime scene the day before spun on her heel towards them, flicking the off button on her stereo. Silence fell on the lab, to Lois’s relief.

“Hey! You must be Lois, right? I’m Ella.” Startled, Lois found herself on the receiving end of an unexpected hug. “Good to meet you.”

Lois’s eyes narrowed as she caught Chloe trying to hide a smile.

“What have you got, Ella?”

“So I dusted the knife for prints and got nada but... the width of the blade matches our second victim’s stab wound, and the hilt matches the imprint we found on our dead guy under UV light. But yeah, no DNA, no prints, nothing on the knife. Killer must have worn gloves.”

Chloe nodded, but Lois could tell from the furrow between her brows that it wasn’t entirely good news.

“And the brick Lucifer found?”

“Definite match for the dent in our first dead guy’s skull. It was his blood on the edge of it too.”

“Okay. Thanks, Ella.”

Chloe left the lab; Lois made as if to follow her but was stopped by the ebullient tech.

“So you and Clark, huh? Good job girl, he’s a hottie! And so sweet too! He brought me coffee this morning and he doesn’t even know me!” Ella bubbled aggressively at Lois, who took a startled half step back and blinked in surprise.

“What? No, we’re just friends!” Lois hoped she wasn’t blushing.

“Are you sure? I was sure, and I’m never wrong,” Ella got a bit shifty-eyed for a moment, “Well, hardly ever... but anyway wow! You two have chem-is-tee with a capital hubba! How can you keep your hands off that?!”

“Oh, um, I mean I guess Clark’s okay looking, if you’re into”—*don’t think about his shoulders or his eyes or his chest or that damned towel*—“uh, corn-fed country boys,” Lois stammered defensively. “Anyway he’s my partner and I don’t date co-workers. It’s a rule.”

“Huh. That’s a weird rule,” the forensic scientist commented.

“I mean, where are you gonna meet someone except at work? Unless you go out all the time or something, and who has the time, am I right? Although, it’s gotta be easier in your job. At least you get to meet people you interview and stuff. All the people I meet in my job are usually dead, you know what I’m saying?”

Lois eyed the talkative forensics tech for a moment before finally managing to get a ‘goodbye’ in and escaping the lab, going in search of Clark and her temporary colleagues, finding them in the room they’d been using and entering in the middle of a discussion of the evidence.

Chloe was standing with her back to the door, leaning with her hands on the table as she studied the folder Ella had given her.

“We know Stephens was at that warehouse,” Lucifer pointed out.

“The only evidence we have is circumstantial. The real killer could still be out there. Unless...”

“Unless what?” Clark put in.

“We found skin cells under Stephens’s fingernails, remember?” Chloe reminded them.

“Yes but we had nothing to compare them to.”

“Yeah, but what if they came from Cox?”

Lucifer’s face creased into a grin. “Oh! Well that would be the proof you need, wouldn’t it?”

“Yeah.”

Lois took a quick step to the side as Chloe turned towards the door, mentally rolling her eyes at the thought of going back to the domain of the overly eager tech. Clark said that *she* babbled, but Lois was willing to bet she had nothing on Ella.

“Hey, Ella?”

Chloe walked up and tapped the lab tech on the shoulder, gesturing for her to turn her music off for the second time that morning.

“The skin cells we found on Stephens. Is there any way you can see if they came from Cox?”

“Oh! You think your first bad guy scratched the second one? Hang on.”

She bounced over to the computer terminal, pulling up the forensic records for the case.

“I ran the DNA on the cells we found under Stephens’s nails when they first came in, but I didn’t get a hit on any of the databases.”

She clicked again, bringing up what Chloe recognised as DNA profiles before turning towards them.

“Looks like your hunch was right,” Ella told them. “The skin cells under Stephens’s nails definitely came from Cox.”

“Why would Stephens want to kill Cox? Over a five-year-old argument? It doesn’t make sense,” Chloe pondered.

“We’re missing something,” Clark put in.

“Bank records!” Lois exclaimed. “Look, we know Stephens was a killer for hire. If he went after Cox, someone must have paid him for it.”

“You’re right,” Chloe agreed, waking up her desktop computer. She searched through the digital evidence that had been gathered on Stephens, pulling up his bank records. “Look at this. There’s a two-million-dollar deposit into his account three days before Cox was killed.”

“Pocket change,” Lucifer commented, earning himself a speculative look from the other three people crowded around the computer.

“Can we trace who made the deposit?” Clark asked.

“No.” Chloe shook her head. “It’s a numbered account.”

“Oh, those come in handy if you’re trying to hide money from someone,” Lucifer mentioned knowingly. Chloe turned and pinned him with a stare. “So I’ve heard, Detective,” he continued defensively.

“Anyway, I’ll turn it over to the Financial Investigations Unit, maybe they’ll have more luck.”

“So that’s it?” Clark asked.

“Officially, yeah. If Stephens had lived, he’d be looking at a murder charge,” Chloe stated, frustratedly aware that they hadn’t uncovered the whole story.

“So who wanted Cox dead?” Lucifer asked.

“Well, Financial Investigations is looking into it, but numbered accounts are notoriously difficult to trace.” She paused, looking at the two reporters. “I’m sorry about your story.”

Lois nodded tightly in acknowledgment.

“We’ll get him eventually.” The little tic in Clark’s jaw spasmed as he spoke.

Chloe gathered up the paperwork, sliding it neatly back into the file. “So are you two heading back to Metropolis straight away?”

“Probably tomorrow,” Clark answered after exchanging glances with Lois.

Chloe nodded abstractedly, catching sight of the expression on Lucifer’s face.

“Hey. Are you okay?”

“That’s the first time we’ve failed,” he stated, his black brows drawn together in a scowl.

“We know who killed Cox and Stephens, Lucifer.”

“Yes, but we don’t know who’s responsible for their deaths, do we? Whoever ordered Cox’s murder is still out there.”

She reached out and put her hand on his arm. “We’ll find them, Lucifer. It’s just going to take some time.” She smiled at him. “We’ve never failed before, right?”

“Right,” he agreed before pulling away and striding towards the exit. Uneasily, she watched him go; she’d seen that expression on his face before, and it usually led to him ending up in yet another dangerous situation.

Clark noticed Lucifer leaving the building with a dark expression on his face and briefly wondered where the consultant was headed.

He understood Lucifer’s anger, however. He shared it.

Cox was dead. An untraceable payment had been made to his murderer. Clark would bet anything that Luthor was behind this; but as with so many other crimes Luthor had orchestrated, Clark had no proof. No real evidence tying Luthor to the deed.

He needed one break. One piece of concrete proof to bring Luthor down; and he needed to find it soon. It was painfully obvious that Lois had started to care for the crime boss.

Not for the first time, Clark considered telling Lois the truth about Superman. Was getting her away from Luthor worth the pain of knowing she only wanted him, Clark, because he was Superman? Or would telling her backfire completely and drive her into Luthor’s arms?

He couldn’t risk that.

Lucifer sat in unaccustomed silence on the couch.

Across from him, Linda Martin tilted her head, giving him the look that was usually followed by an unexpected insight.

“You look... troubled,” she observed.

“And why do you say that?” Lucifer deflected.

“Well, for starters we weren’t due for a session for another couple of days. And secondly, I don’t think I’ve ever seen you silent for so long. You’re struggling with something.”

“Okay, fine. I met a man who is in a very similar situation to my own,” Lucifer began, unsure of why Clark’s appearance in Los Angeles had driven him to seek out his therapist.

“And what situation is that?” she asked.

“He’s similarly inhuman, in a manner of speaking, but his partner—whom he’s embarrassingly enamored of, really Linda,

it’s painful to watch—has no idea!”

“She doesn’t believe him either?” Linda arched a brow at him.

“What? No. I mean, I don’t suppose she... you know he refuses to tell her? Isn’t that the damndest thing you’ve ever heard? He’s invented an entire persona solely to hide the truth about himself from the entire world, including her!” Lucifer’s voice fairly dripped with disgust at the idea of such deliberate deception.

“He refuses? Why do you think that is?” the doctor probed.

“Apparently she has an equally embarrassing infatuation with his alter-ego, and he doesn’t trust her to see past all that flash to the man beneath.”

“It sounds to me like your situations are actually the opposite.”

“I’m sorry?” Lucifer crossed his arms and pressed himself back into the sofa cushions, putting a bit of distance between Linda and himself.

“Well, you say this friend of yours is afraid to tell his partner who he really is because he’s worried that she’ll only want to be with him because of his other side. Whereas you... you’re afraid to show Chloe who you think you really are because you’re afraid she’ll reject you if she knows you’re the Devil.” Linda resettled herself in her seat and turned a page in her notepad. “The truth is, both of your problems can be solved the same way. Telling these women in your lives the truth.”

She pinned Lucifer with her pointed stare. “You say you want Chloe to choose you. But without her knowing the whole truth about you, you’re asking her to choose someone who doesn’t really exist. You’re not just the Devil. And you’re not just Lucifer Morningstar. Both of those identities are part of you.”

“You think I should tell her.” Lucifer’s lips thinned as he pressed them together in displeasure.

“I can’t tell you what to do, but yes. I think you need to tell her.”

“It’s still pretty early,” Clark said as they walked out of the station to hail a cab. “Did you want to get a bite to eat before we head back to the hotel?”

Lois shrugged. “Sure, I could eat. What did you have in mind?”

“How about burgers? It seems like a shame to come all the way out here and not try In-N-Out at least once.”

“That’s fine,” Lois said disinterestedly as she brought her hand to her mouth and let out a piercing whistle. Clark winced as the echoes of her whistle died away and a cab swung in to the curb and stopped.

He opened the rear door of the cab for Lois, then slid in after her. “Excuse me”—he glanced at the driver’s ID clipped to the visor of the car—“Mr. Kozlov, is there an In-N-Out near the LAX LuthorSuites?” he asked the driver.

“Da, there is one on Sepulveda.”

“We’d like to go there, please.”

The driver nodded and pulled back out into the flow of traffic as Clark began to chat with him casually.

At least, that’s what Lois assumed they were doing. Since they weren’t speaking English, it was hard for her to be certain. She momentarily bristled at the idea that they might be discussing her, then forced herself to relax into the seat. *Clark may be an infuriating weirdo sometimes, but he doesn’t gossip*, she reminded herself. *Russian though? Really, Smallville?* She still felt bad occasionally about dismissing him so quickly as a hack hick from Nowheresville so soon after meeting him, but she was careful not to let on. It was enough that he knew she thought differently now without highlighting how wrong she knew she’d been.

She let the foreign babble taking place from the seat next to her wash over her and watched out the window as they drew closer to their destination, the flashy sights of downtown LA becoming more prosaic and businesslike as they got closer and

closer to the airport. Clark's voice really did sound good in Russian, sort of... growly and dark. *Kind of sexy*, her inner voice whispered before she clamped down on it. None of that, thank you. He was her partner and her best friend, and that was plenty. She knew he would never betray her like Claude had, but still saw no reason to risk their friendship on anything... else. Besides, she had Lex. A woman with a boyfriend had no business evaluating anyone else's possible appeal.

Lois shook herself out of her reverie as the cab pulled into the parking lot of the burger place and stopped, waiting for them to exit. She opened her door and got out, brushing herself off as Clark paid the driver with a final friendly-sounding burst of chatter.

"What was that all about?" she asked absently.

He grinned at her. "Alexei was telling me how long he's been here, and what his family thinks of the adjustment to LA from Russia. His daughters..."

Lois tuned him out again. *Leave it to Clark to spend the entire ride getting some shmoozy American Tale story instead of anything interesting.* She nodded and made the appropriate 'uh huh', 'yeah?' and 'wow, really' noises as they headed into the restaurant. Mr. Cab Driver From Russia had clearly fascinated Clark, but she just couldn't bring herself to care that much about the life of a man who'd barely spoken to her and who she'd never see again. The AC fan in the restaurant kicked on loudly as Clark took a half step around her and pushed the door open, holding it for her as she went through.

"Any idea what you want?" Clark asked. His eyes lit up like a little kid's. "They have a whole secret menu online!"

She curled her lip a little. "No thanks, if it was any good they probably wouldn't need to keep it a secret." She stepped up to the counter, grateful that the early hour meant there wasn't much of a crowd. After the day they'd had, standing in a long line was the last thing she wanted to do. "A burger and fries please, with a medium Diet Coke." She paid and took her receipt, double checking the number on it as she glanced at Clark and indicated that she was going to find them a table.

He nodded and stepped up to the counter himself. "I'll have a Double-Double Animal Style, extra toast, with Animal Style fries and a large Neapolitan shake, please!" he chirped at the cashier.

Lois wrinkled her nose as she staked out a table by the window. *I swear, he's such a child sometimes.* She had no idea what he'd ordered, but 'Animal Style' sounded revolting. And a shake! Knowing Clark, whatever it was probably had about a million calories and was dripping with fat. It wasn't fair that he could eat that way all the time and still look the way he looked. Her eyes involuntarily darted to where he stood at the counter waiting for their meals, measuring out the broad expanse of his shoulders and how well his suit coat fit him.

She jerked her eyes away and went over to the condiment station for a pile of napkins; 'Animal Style' sounded messy. She flushed lightly as her thoughts tried to veer off in an inappropriate direction again.

"Order 192" a crackly voice called over the speakers.

Clark looked over his shoulder at her and she nodded to let him know that was her number, although *really? we're the only people in the place who aren't already eating—who else's number would it be?*

He brought the tray over to their table with a smile. "Here you go!"

Lois mumbled her thanks, then went back to the condiment station for a straw while he went back to the counter for his own tray. She grabbed a straw for him while she was there, then headed back to her seat.

Clark joined her a few moments later, setting down his tray and shedding his jacket before sliding into his side of the booth.

She looked at his burger in dismay. She thought she was

looking at his burger, anyway, what else could it be? Yup, there was some bun peeking out from all the... stuff. Both the burger and his fries were heaped with an obscene looking pile of grilled onions and pickles, and were positively oozing with a pale orange sauce. *Is that Thousand Island dressing? On a burger? Yuck! And are those two patties?* His entire tray also reeked of mustard.

He grinned at her across the table. "See what you're missing out on by sticking with that boring old menu?"

She shuddered delicately. "Yeah, it looks like I'm missing out on the chance to have my stomach pumped later!"

Clark took a large bite as she made a disgusted face and looked away. She cut her own burger in half with a plastic knife she'd grabbed when she was getting their straws and started to eat, trying to ignore what was happening on the other side of the table.

He swallowed and wiped his mouth with one of the napkins, "I'm surprised you're not more adventurous, oh Takeout Queen." He picked up the fork he'd grabbed on the way to their table and stirred all the goop into his fries.

Lois shook some extra salt over her plain fries and narrowed her eyes at him. "I'm plenty adventurous, but adventure is for real food that you either order out to eat at home or eat in a restaurant with table service," she said emphatically. "Burgers are burgers and don't need to be buried under all that... glop."

He forked up some adulterated fries and waved them at her. "Oh c'mon, just one little taste? Aren't you the least bit curious?"

Her eyes widened slightly as her traitorous brain tried to cheer for taste testing. "Absolutely not."

Clark shrugged and ate the forkful himself, wondering what was going on in her head. "Suit yourself, but don't say I never offered."

Lois almost knocked her drink over as she picked it up and took a sip, reining her imagination back in. She applied herself to her meal in workmanlike fashion, then wiped her mouth and hands when she was done and settled back into her seat to wait for her partner to finish. She pulled her tablet out of her bag while she waited, to work on her notes and see what kind of story they could pull together out of this mess. Lois just wasn't sure their readers would care much about the murder of a small-time hitman and gangster in LA and the murder of a former Metropolis resident who was *also* a hoodlum and a crook.

She looked up when Clark cleared his throat.

"Working on the story?"

"Yeah, what there is of it. I can't believe Perry sent us all the way out here for this wild goose chase!" she huffed.

"It's not all Perry's fault, Lois. Bobby thought there was something here too." Clark shifted in his seat, unwilling to tell her that although Bobby *had* given him a tip, it had been mostly his and Perry's idea to get Lois out of Metropolis and away from Luthor for a few days. *Not that it seems to have helped*, he thought morosely. Lois seemed to be just as hung up on the billionaire as ever.

"Yeah, well, the great Bobby Bigmouth has finally struck out!" Lois said sourly.

"I dunno Lois, at least we found out who Mr. Cox was. Personally, I was starting to wonder if she ate him on their wedding night." He grinned at her.

The corner of Lois's mouth twitched as she fought a smile. Neither of them had actually met the woman in question yet, but lately she seemed to be a permanent fixture at Lex's side during any remotely business-related function and neither of them cared for her.

"And speaking of Beverly Cox..." Clark ventured before Lois cut him off.

"Are you about to say something about Lex?" she asked in a warning tone.

"Well I... maybe." Clark said defensively. "Lois, Beverly Cox works with him every day, and we've found all this information

out about her ex-husband, and—”

Lois cut him off again. “I don’t care who her ex-husband was! Lots of women date conniving men”—*like Claude*—“and some even marry them, but that doesn’t make them guilty of anything but bad judgement!”

“Yes, but—”

“No! No buts! And anyway, even if she *was* just as dirty as he was, that doesn’t mean she hasn’t turned over a new leaf since then, or that Lex has anything to do with it if she hasn’t!”

Clark raised his voice a little, trying one more time to get her to see reason. “Lo-is, c’mon! You have to admit—”

“No, I don’t, and I’m not going to! Clark, you’re being ridiculous! Is this where you tell me again that I don’t know him like you do?” She arched a sarcastic brow at her partner.

Clark clenched his jaw and pressed himself back into the booth, determined not to get into a public fight.

Lois hissed in exasperation. “I have to admit you’re right about that.”

His eyebrows went up.

She continued with saccharine sweetness. “You’ve been glaring at him in hallways and making nasty accusations, while I’ve been dating the man and actually getting to know him. *Clearly* I don’t know him like *you* do.”

“C’mon Lois, that’s not what I—” he tried again.

Lois gathered her things and slid out of the booth. “You know what, Clark? I don’t care what you meant. Lex is a good person, a generous man, someone who really cares about me, and I’m tired of the constant attacks. I’m done here, and I just want to get back to the hotel and relax for a while before we have to catch our flight home tomorrow. Are you coming or not?”

Wordlessly, Clark slid out of the booth and put his jacket back on before following Lois out the door.

The ride back to LuthorSuites was tense, but by the time they’d gotten out of the cab and were in the elevator things felt like they were loosening a little.

Clark walked her to the doors of their adjacent rooms and shuffled awkwardly as she unlocked her suite.

“Lois?”

She gave him a sharp look. “Yes?”

“Lois, I’m sorry. I wasn’t trying to make you mad, I was just curious about what’s going on with Mrs. Cox.” *And her relationship with Luthor*; he was careful not to say.

Lois softened a little. “I know, Clark, and I’m curious too, but you’ve got to let these ridiculous suspicions about Lex go, okay?” She pressed a little harder when he didn’t respond right away. “Please, for me?”

He sighed heavily, then nodded. “Fine, since you asked so nicely”—he smiled at her and her lips curved to match—“I’ll keep my thoughts to myself.”

“Fine, thank you. I wish you’d stop thinking all those horrible things about him, but if silence is the best offer I’m going to get then I’ll take it.”

“Lois?” he asked as she started to open her door.

“Yeah, Clark?”

“Wanna watch a movie or play some cards or something to wind down before we have to start packing?”

Lois nibbled on her lower lip for a moment, hoping she wasn’t about to provoke another shouting match. She was tired, and not in the mood for Round Two in the hallway. “Maybe later, okay? I was going to call Lex and have a bubble bath.”

Clark’s shoulders slumped, though he tried to hide it. “Fine, call my room when you’re done and we can watch a movie if I’m still up. I’ll turn the ringer off if I go to bed before you’ve called.”

Lois nodded and slipped into her room, softly closing the door behind her.

Clark stood in the hall for a moment, watching her door and

suppressing a mild urge to look through it before he entered his own room. He sat on the end of the bed and turned the TV on, lackadaisically flipping through the channels for something to watch to pass the time until she called. He was still scrolling through the channel guide when his super-hearing kicked in.

“*Oh hey, Lex, it’s me,*” he heard through the shared wall between their rooms and groaned. He tuned her out and focused his attention back on the screen.

“*Oh, nothing much, just wrapping things up so I can come home tomorrow. Yeah, I miss you too.*”

This was just great. He’d gotten so used to listening for Lois’s cries for help that now he didn’t seem to be able to tune her out when he needed to!

Well, there was no way he was going to sit here and listen to her get all lovey-dovey with Luthor. He’d just have to find somewhere else to be. Somewhere far enough away not to overhear anything he didn’t want to know. He turned off the ringer on his room phone, then walked over to the window and slid it open, grateful to be on a low enough floor that the windows weren’t sealed.

I wonder what Lucifer’s up to, he thought as he looked around for possible observers then flung himself out the window once he was satisfied that the coast was clear.

Lucifer drove away from his therapist’s office, his mind on anything but the streets of LA.

I think you need to tell her.

Linda’s words kept running through his mind. Telling Chloe. He’d tried so many times, and yet always shied away from giving her the proof he knew she needed before she’d believe him. And he knew why.

He’d shown his Devil face countless times, using it to instill terror and belief in the hearts of miscreants and unbelievers, taking satisfaction in the knowledge that that mortal had received the punishment they richly deserved. And while that wasn’t an option now, any other method he chose to prove his identity to the detective would have the same effect.

Fear.

Could he really do that? Could he stand there and watch as terror flickered in her eyes? Terror... of him.

It had been bad enough when he’d revealed his true face to Linda. Watching her go the emotional gamut from exasperated anger to fear/terror/loathing of him. He’d been worried that he’d lose Linda as a friend. How much worse would it be, facing the possibility of losing Chloe so... so irrevocably?

He parked the convertible in the garage under Lux, using the elevator to bypass the club and go straight to the penthouse, making a beeline to the bar to kill the pain that seized his chest every time he thought of losing the detective.

“Lucifer?”

He spun, momentarily alarmed by the voice issuing from the darkness of the penthouse.

Clark stepped forward. “I’m sorry. Lois is on the phone to Luthor and I... I had to get out of there.”

Lucifer nodded, silently commiserating. It had only been a matter of weeks since he’d been doing the same thing.

“My escapes usually consist of alcohol and illicit drugs rather than breaking into another man’s home, but... to each their own.”

He poured a measure of whiskey into a glass and handed it to his unexpected visitor.

“You disappeared earlier,” Clark commented.

“Yes, I had an appointment with my therapist,” Lucifer responded absently.

“You have a therapist?” There was a note of amused surprise in the other man’s voice.

“Yes, I know, how very self-indulgent of me,” Lucifer snapped. “No, she helps me... see things differently.”

Lucifer lapsed into silence. Clark observed him curiously as he tossed back the contents of his glass and poured another drink.

This was a side he hadn't seen of Lucifer before. Salacious glee, thoughtless mischievousness, furious anger... but not this dark, brooding silence. He shifted, unsure of what to make of this troubled version of the Prince of Darkness.

"Clark, have you ever considered telling Lois about Superman?"

Clark tensed at the sudden question, half expecting the taunting he'd been getting from Lucifer on the subject to quickly follow. But this was different. The fallen angel's voice was sheared of its usual mocking tone.

"I've thought about it," he answered cautiously.

"What's stopping you? I mean, it seems to me like telling her would get you everything you desire. So why not just do it?"

"Because Superman isn't who I am," Clark replied simply.

"See, I don't understand that," Lucifer told him, puzzled. And he didn't. This Kryptonian didn't know how lucky he was. "If I could've just told—" He stopped himself, annoyed at how close he'd come to spilling his innermost feelings to a near-stranger.

He didn't know how good he had it. All Clark had to do was tell his prickly partner the truth about who he was, and he'd have all the greatest desires of his heart on a silver platter. If Lucifer told the detective the truth, he'd be left with nothing at all.

The Kryptonian was studying him. "You should tell Chloe how you feel."

"Yes, well. That requires her to believe me about the other thing, and my hidden side is a lot less heroic than yours." Lucifer's mouth twisted in bitter disdain, suddenly resentful.

"Why?"

"Why what?" He wished the other man would leave him be; take his earnestness and his soft puppy dog eyes elsewhere and go fetch some helpless kitten out of a tree. LA was an enormous city, surely Clark wouldn't have to go too far to locate some troubled feline.

"If Lucifer is who you really are—"

Lucifer cut him off, grimly amused at the other man's naïveté. "The Devil is part of me too. I can't ask her to accept me without knowing the truth."

"You may be the Devil—" Clark stopped himself at the other man's sharp look, then restarted. "All right, so you *are* the Devil. You seem to think that makes you a bad person, but I don't believe that's true."

Lucifer scoffed, but Clark didn't let him interrupt.

"No, I mean it. The things I've heard about you from Chloe and Ella, the way I've seen you use your abilities—Lucifer, *you saved Lois* when I couldn't. You're a good person, you just need to believe it and that Chloe will see that along with the rest of it."

"If only it were that simple."

Chloe picked up her daughter's school project, frowning at the sight of the white feather that was sticking out from the bottom of the pages. Carefully she flicked to the page it was stuck to, intending to move it back into place and tape it down more securely. Her frown deepened as she realised the feather wasn't loose as she'd assumed; it was enormous, far larger than any of the others they'd collected.

She turned to her daughter.

"Trixie, where did this big white feather in your bird project come from? I don't remember helping you gather it and I know we talked about hygiene and touching random feathers."

"I didn't find it, Mom, Lucifer gave it to me."

"Did he say what kind of bird it was from?" Chloe queried, unsure if she'd seen a feather that big before. It definitely hadn't come from any common bird species she could think of. Even the few species of eagle they got out here wouldn't have feathers that

size.

"I asked him and he told me it was one of his."

"One of his. Did he say anything else?"

Trixie shook her head and went back to packing her bag. Chloe handed her the project to take with her, silently fuming. There was only one type of bird she could think of that would have feathers as large as the one Lucifer had given Trixie, and that made it illegal.

"Okay." Chloe clamped down on her anger. She'd drop Trixie off for her sleepover, then go and talk to Lucifer. "Ready to go to Landa's?"

Lucifer sat in the darkness after Clark left, idly swirling the amber fluid in his glass as he brooded.

No matter how he approached it, he couldn't see how telling Chloe the truth wouldn't end badly. His conversation with Clark had only served to make that even more clear. After all, if the Man of Steel—surely the biggest goody two shoes on the planet—couldn't share his secret with the woman he loved, what hope was there for the Prince of Darkness? At least Clark was mostly human, the Kryptonians being one of his Father's many experiments with how his pet project fared under different coloured suns. If he ever stopped this wilful self-denial and told Lois the truth, he had that in his favour.

Lucifer had no such thing.

He sighed heavily. As much as he hated to admit it, Linda was right. Chloe deserved the truth. He had to take the gamble and give it to her—even if he was on the losing side.

The question was, how did he go about it? He'd tried telling her so many times; but the detective was pragmatic and sceptical. The only way she'd believe him would be if he offered her proof.

Something like injuring him was out of the question. Quite why she removed his invulnerability, he didn't really know, although he suspected that her own miraculous origins played a part. Likewise, he couldn't show her his Devil face.

He got up, refilling his drink at the bar and beginning to pace. Briefly he considered showing her the wings, and dismissed the idea just as quickly. They might be currently attached to him, but they weren't part of him. He'd left that portion of his life behind when he'd burned the pair that had been stolen from him.

He sighed in exasperation. This would've been so much easier if she'd just tested his blood after the whole fiasco with Malcolm. He shuddered, remembering the way his blood had pooled on the floor after the rogue detective had shot him, point-blank. Chloe had had ample opportunity to test it—so why hadn't she done it? Was she as afraid to get the truth as he was to give it?

Chloe burst into the penthouse, already in mid-shout as the elevator doors parted. "Dammit Lucifer, did you give Trixie a condor feather? You're aware that they're endangered, right? And that it's illegal for her to have one? You have to have all kinds of permits to have any part of an endangered animal, and I highly doubt that you bothered to get any of them!" Chloe fumed and got louder. "I'm trying to raise a responsible human being but it's hard when you're handing out illegal condor feathers like candy *which*, by the way, I'd appreciate if you *also* stopped giving my daughter all the damned time!" She sucked in a gasping breath. "Dammit Lucifer, there are fewer than five hundred condors *in the entire world!* Where the hell did you get it anyway?!"

"IT'S NOT FROM A BLOODY CON—" Lucifer's wings unfurled with a snap in a burst of sheer frustration after multiple attempts to get a word in edgewise. "—DOR... bollocks. Detective?"

Chloe stood there gaping at him, frozen in shock.

"Detective? You all right? Oh bloody hell, not you too." He furled his wings and stepped toward her, then stopped as he realized. "Detec... Chloe, are you smiling?"

Chloe stood rooted to the ground in awe as her brain tried to process what she'd just seen.

Wings.

Lucifer had wings.

And they were magnificent. Intensely, jaw-droppingly, heart-achingly, exquisitely beautiful. *Divinely* beautiful.

She'd only seen them for a moment or two, but she knew their radiance would remain seared across her mind forever.

Her awestruck smile began to fade as the import of the wings began to sink in.

Proof of divinity.

Lucifer—*Lucifer*—was living, breathing proof of divinity.

And he was standing in front of her with a concerned expression on his face.

Feeling as though she'd had the breath knocked out of her, she desperately tried to reconcile the Lucifer she knew with the sudden awareness that he was an angel. An *angel*.

Behind her, the elevator doors opened with an inappropriately cheerful 'ding'; spinning on her heel, she watched as Amenadiel stepped out.

"Luci!"

Amenadiel's voice broke the stunned silence that had fallen over the penthouse. Inwardly

Lucifer winced, knowing that the presence of a second celestial being right now would do more harm than good.

"Really not a good time, brother," Lucifer told him without taking his eyes off Chloe. She turned and looked at Amenadiel; what Lucifer could see of her face seemed to pale.

"No. Detective."

She shook her head and bolted for the elevator, sliding in between the doors as they closed.

"Detective!"

Cursing, he strode to the elevator, shouldering his brother aside, and slammed his palm down on the call button, hoping that the car hadn't started its descent. Instead the doors remained stubbornly closed.

Knowing it was futile, he boarded the elevator when it did arrive, getting out and scanning the crowded environs of Lux for a sign of her blonde hair before re-embarking and checking the parking garage.

But it was too late. She was gone.

"I'm sorry. I hope I didn't interrupt anything important with Chloe," Amenadiel apologised as Lucifer stepped out of the elevator and walked over to the bar.

"Don't worry, brother," Lucifer replied bitingly. "It's probably the last time you ever do. You see, just before you walked in, the detective saw my wings." He downed his drink and poured another. "What was so bloody urgent anyway, brother?"

"You showed Chloe your wings?" Amenadiel repeated in amazement.

Lucifer nodded tightly, unwilling to show his older brother just how disturbed he was by the whole situation.

"Why aren't you going after her!?"

"What, so I can scare her even more than I have already? I don't think so, brother." He poured a measure of Scotch into a clean glass and handed it to Amenadiel. "Now. What brought you rushing over here?"

"Luci, you can't just pretend like this never happened! You have to deal with—"

"And I will! I will talk to the detective. But first, I need you to tell me what it is so you don't interrupt another bloody conversation!"

"I wasn't trying to interrupt anything, Luci. I came here—"

"With your usual appalling timing," Lucifer interjected,

looking over the rim of his glass.

"—to share something with you."

Lucifer ignored his elder brother's glare, gesturing for him to continue.

"I've been helping Charlotte try to redeem herself, and it hit me. Ultimately, the humans decide what their fates are. They decide whether they deserve to go to Hell, or to the Silver City. Luci, what if it's the same for us?"

"What?"

"We do it to ourselves, Luci. I lost my wings and my powers because I felt that I wasn't worthy of them. And you—you are as you are before you were cast out. Because maybe you feel like you weren't worthy of your punishment anymore."

"I was never worthy of what our Father did to me," Lucifer snapped.

"It makes sense, Luci," Amenadiel persisted.

"No. No, it doesn't. If you could've gotten your powers back all this time, then why haven't you?"

"Because I don't deserve to," his brother replied simply.

"Right." Lucifer raised an eyebrow, surveying his brother with amused disbelief. "Let me know how that goes, won't you? Now, if you'll excuse me—" he gestured towards the lift, clearly indicating that Amenadiel should leave.

"Oh. Yeah. Right, I'll let you—"

Lucifer turned away, leaving his brother in midsentence as he unlocked his phone.

Lucifer was the Devil.

Every time Chloe closed her eyes, she could see the enormous white wings appearing as if from nowhere, sprouting from his back like it was an everyday occurrence for your partner to grow wings in front of your eyes.

He'd told her he was the Devil more times than she could remember, and she'd always dismissed it, writing the things he said off as some kind of crazy metaphor; but it was true.

It was all true.

She'd never believed any of that biblical stuff; but now she had no choice but to accept it. God existed. And He was *Lucifer's Father*. Her head started to spin, causing her to grip the edge of the counter. If God was Lucifer's Father, who was his Mother? The Bible was curiously silent on the matter, as she remembered it. But Lucifer had definitely referred to Her on multiple occasions. So what had happened to Her?

And Lucifer... he was exactly what he'd always claimed to be. A fallen angel.

The Devil.

She'd worked with him, been friends with him, hugged him, danced with him, even kissed him.

And he was the Devil.

No. Stop thinking about our personal relationship, she told herself fiercely. Think about our professional one.

Flashes of memory raced through her mind. Benny Choi. Lindsay Jolson. Rennie. Jimmy Barnes. All of those suspects, screaming in terror after a few seemingly innocuous words from Lucifer.

What had they seen?

His attempt to show her something, after he'd been kidnapped. That strange flickered reflection in the warehouse, right before she'd shot him. Is that what they'd seen?

Her phone buzzed, breaking her train of thought; picking it up, she saw Lucifer's name on the screen and pressed the button to silence it. She couldn't deal with him right now. Not until she'd gotten her head around his identity and everything it meant.

Maybe not ever again.

"Damn," Lucifer cursed as he got the detective's voicemail. She always answered her phone unless there was a good reason

not to.

Why had Amenadiel had to pick that exact moment to walk into the penthouse? How did a being who up until recently could control time have such terrible timing? The detective had been reacting so well to his inadvertent revelation before Amenadiel had arrived.

He tried calling her again, once again getting her voicemail. And now she wasn't answering his calls. He locked his phone, sliding it back into the inside pocket of his jacket.

The detective finding out his true identity was always going to be difficult. He'd known that for a long time. And the closer they got, the more he needed for her to know his Devilish side—and the harder it was for him to tell her.

Now she knew.

His instinct was to find her. She was probably at her apartment; he could go there and let her take her feelings—probably fury, if he knew the detective—out on him.

But.

She'd been scared enough to run from him. He clenched his jaw against the pain that that thought carried with it. She'd been terrified... of him.

Clark wandered aimlessly down Hollywood Boulevard, letting the sounds of the city wash over him. This part of the famous boulevard was lined with nightclubs and trendy restaurants, none of which seemed to draw a bigger crowd than Lux. Reaching a cross street, he turned away from the loud and brightly lit area in search of quieter environs. Walking from Lux back to the hotel was out of the question; flying would only take a few moments, but right now he didn't want to deal with another potential argument with Lois.

Spotting a small, homey-looking diner nestled in between two darkened buildings, he crossed the street and pulled open the door, settling onto a stool at the counter and smiling at the welcoming decor. It reminded him a little of Maisie's Diner, back home in Smallville. At this time of night, the booths were sparsely populated; the middle-aged waitress slid a menu in front of him with a warm smile and a friendly greeting. He returned the greeting, opting for coffee and a wedge of apple pie, served a la mode.

The Devil is part of me too. I can't ask her to accept me without knowing the truth.

Lucifer's words haunted Clark. The Devil-turned-nightclub owner and civilian consultant was perhaps the one person that understood the struggles of a dual identity even better than Clark did. Was Lucifer right? Was Clark wrong to want Lois to want him for Clark before he told her the truth?

Ever since he'd first donned the Spandex and debuted Superman to the world, he'd reminded himself that Clark was who he was; Superman was what he could do. It had been the only way he could avoid losing himself to the superhero. He was Clark Kent. He'd been raised and lived his entire life as Clark Kent. He nodded his thanks as the matronly waitress refilled his coffee cup, retreating back into his thoughts.

And yet... he'd created Superman to fulfil his innate desire to help. To do good. Which argued that Superman was simply another part of his personality, rather than the separate being Clark had tried to pretend he was.

Was that what it was like for Lucifer? Was the Devil simply another facet of his personality? Did his innate desire for justice drive him in both his guises?

If so, they weren't so different.

Clark shook his head. Lucifer had literally had aeons to assimilate the Devil into his personality. Aeons spent as the custodian of the worst humanity had to offer. Being forced into that role had to change a person. Clark had only been Superman for a few months; and he'd chosen to do what he did. Superman

wasn't part of him the way the Devil was part of Lucifer.

Was he?

Getting up, he tucked bills under his empty pie plate, making sure to leave a generous tip for the friendly waitress. It was late; he should find a quiet alley and go back to the hotel.

Hell really existed. It wasn't merely a deterrent, a way of scaring people into good behaviour like Chloe had always thought.

It really existed.

And Lucifer—*Lucifer*—had ruled over it.

It was hard to imagine handsome, debonair, charming Lucifer as the Lord of Hell—but then it was hard to imagine him with wings as well, and Chloe had seen that with her own eyes.

She made a strangled, overwhelmed noise.

If Hell really existed, then so did Heaven.

Who decided who went where? Had that been part of Lucifer's... job? And if he was here, in LA, who ruled over Hell now? Amenadiel? Another one of Lucifer's brothers?

If Lucifer was the Devil, that meant Amenadiel was... an angel.

An *angel*.

She rubbed her temples.

Which made Maze... a demon.

She'd been living with a *demon*.

Oh god, Maze had been looking after Trixie!

Chloe shook her head, dismissing that thought. Instinctively she knew that Maze was no more a threat to Trixie than Lucifer was to herself.

No wonder Maze had hated her so much when they'd first met. She'd gotten between the Devil and the demon who'd literally followed him out of Hell.

And Charlotte... what was Charlotte? How did a human get to be *the Devil's stepmother*? Was Charlotte even human? And did Dan know?

No. While Dan definitely wasn't a big fan of Lucifer, she didn't think it was because of Lucifer's identity. So should she tell Dan? For a moment she tried to imagine that conversation before shaking her head. No matter how she phrased it, it would sound insane. Just as Lucifer's repeated attempts to tell her the truth had always sounded.

Lois hung up the phone after saying goodnight to Lex, still feeling the tight band of frustrated tension across her shoulders from her argument with Clark.

She'd said at the outset that this trip to California was a waste of time, and she'd been right.

Perry had sent them across the country in a time of budget cuts, and they had nothing to show for it. Bringing down The Boss was never going to be a quick story, sure, but they didn't even have any solid leads. Lois had little faith in Jimmy's ability to track that bank account they'd come across, and while Detective Decker had promised to update them if the LAPD had more luck, Lois wasn't going to hold her breath.

They'd needed concrete proof; and instead they'd got nothing. Nothing except for questions about Detective Decker and her weirdo partner. Mentally she tagged Lucifer Morningstar as a possible subject for a future story, and then sighed. She wanted a long, hot bath; but first she'd call the *Planet* travel office and organise the earliest possible flight home.

Lucifer picked up the glass that Jeff deposited in front of him, gesturing for the bartender to leave the bottle of Scotch behind.

The sounds of Lux washed over him... the loud music, clinking of glasses, people having fun. Usually being in his club cheered him up, but not tonight.

He'd thought that being down here would be better than sitting in solitude upstairs, but he was wrong. He felt even more alone

here, surrounded by people.

He should've known it wouldn't work. It hadn't worked while the detective had been engaged to Pierce, either. Because the one person he actually wanted to see wasn't going to be walking down those stairs tonight. *Or maybe ever again*, a tiny voice inside chimed in. He gulped the rest of the Scotch in his glass, trying to drown the insidious inner voice.

It was no more than he deserved. As special as the detective was, she was still human. He couldn't expect her to accept his Devilishness with open arms. He'd been extraordinarily lucky that Linda had maintained their friendship—and Charlotte too. Although when it came to Charlotte, he rather thought finding out his identity had come as a relief, proving for once and for all that she wasn't crazy.

Maybe that was all he got. Those two people to accept him, Devil face and all.

He finished the last of his drink, pulling his phone out of his inside pocket and sending the detective yet another message that he knew she wouldn't answer. He needed sleep.

Chloe had thought he was living in a fantasy world. That Lucifer had constructed this system of elaborate metaphors to help him make sense of the world around him. But she'd been wrong.

Everything he'd told her about his life... it had all been true. What did that do to someone?

Another flash of memory... Lucifer, standing next to her on the beach and telling her he wasn't worth it. Was that really how he saw himself? Not worth it?

Was that why he bounced from meaningless sexual encounter to meaningless sexual encounter, never forming a relationship? Not because he didn't want to, but because he felt he didn't deserve to?

What kind of parent did that? Tore apart their child's self-confidence so thoroughly that they saw themselves as unlovable? And yet that wasn't even the worst thing they'd done.

They'd destroyed him. Made him into a monster; the figure held out to all of humanity as being responsible for every malicious act or idea that occurred to them. How many times had she heard him speak painfully about being demonised by his own parents?

She'd dismissed that along with everything else Lucifer had told her about being the Devil; but now it wasn't an abstract. This had really happened to him. She didn't really know what he'd been cast out of Heaven for, but surely nothing could merit what his parents had done in return?

Her phone screen lit up again with another message from Lucifer. She flipped it over, leaving it face down on the countertop. It was all too much to take in. Amenadiel walking in scant seconds after Lucifer's revelation had been the last straw; suddenly confronted with two angels, she'd panicked. And she'd fled. But as much as she wanted to talk to Lucifer about all of this, she couldn't. Not until it stopped being so overwhelming.

Lucifer awoke, feeling as though he hadn't slept at all. What little rest he had managed to get had been broken and filled with nightmares. Even now, a low-level dread coursed through him.

The detective knew.

Abruptly he sat up, reaching for his phone where it lay on the nightstand and flipping it over so he could see the screen.

Nothing.

She hadn't replied to his calls or his texts. He closed his eyes against the surge of despair that ran through him. He thought he'd royally screwed things up when he'd refused to tell the detective how he felt about her on the night she'd become engaged to Pierce, but this was worse.

She was avoiding his calls; but surely she wouldn't avoid work? Throwing back the covers, he slid out of bed. The station.

Surely she'd be at the station.

Lucifer strode purposefully through the doors of the station, looking for Chloe. He couldn't force her to answer his calls or reply to his messages, she may even tell him to leave, but at least if he saw her he'd know how she was reacting to his identity and this suffocating uncertainty would be over.

He rounded the corner towards her desk and stopped.

Her desk was empty.

Turning, he scanned the area, looking for any sign of her. Finding none, he took the stairs up to the mezzanine for a better vantage point, leaning his hands on the railing and searching for any trace of her blonde hair.

Nothing.

Seeing a familiar figure, he took the stairs back to the main level at a near jog and interrupted Dan's conversation with one of his fellow detectives.

"Daniel?" Lucifer asked, ignoring the presence of the other officer.

"You looking for Chloe?"

"Yes, have you seen her? Her desk is empty."

"Yeah, she took a personal day."

"A personal day?" Lucifer repeated, surprised. "But she never takes the day off."

"I don't know what to tell you, man, that's all I know." Dan paused, giving Lucifer a suspicious look. "What did you say to her?"

"I didn't say anything to her," Lucifer defended himself with a touch of exasperation.

"Yeah. Right." Dan walked away, shaking his head.

"Damn."

This was worse than Lucifer had thought. When she'd smiled at the sight of his wings the night before, he'd thought that maybe this would be easy. That maybe she knew him well enough not to be terrified or upset by the knowledge that he was exactly what he'd always claimed to be. But then Amenadiel had walked in and by the time Lucifer had gotten rid of his brother, the detective had fled.

He'd known she was avoiding him when she started ignoring his phone calls and text messages, but going to the extreme of taking a day off work just to escape seeing him was beyond bad. The detective practically defined the term 'workaholic'.

Knowing it was futile, he pulled out his phone and called the detective's number again, hanging up when he heard the beginning of her voicemail message for what felt like the thousandth time in the last twelve hours.

She was going to do it. Exactly as he'd feared, she was going to dissolve their partnership.

It was all over.

So much of his life had become centred around seeking justice for the victims of the crimes they investigated. And he'd come to enjoy it. Seeking out and punishing evildoers. It went beyond simply getting to work alongside the detective.

It had become his purpose.

And it was about to be taken from him. Could he really go back to what he'd been before meeting her? Go back to simply running Lux?

Did he have a choice?

No; but he could extract one last piece of punishment before the means were lost to him.

Lois woke up the next morning gritty-eyed after a restless night's sleep. She'd tried to call Clark about watching a movie after her call with Lex ended, but he hadn't picked up and she'd assumed he must have done what he said he would: turned off his ringer and gone to sleep.

She crawled out of bed and stumbled over to the counter that

held her tiny in-room coffee maker, thankful that she'd thought to set it up the night before, then headed into the bathroom to wash her face and brush her hair. Her teeth could wait until after coffee.

A few minutes later she was pouring the blessed liquid into a paper cup and taking her first careful sip of the day. She waited for the fog to lift, but the day still seemed unaccountably gloomy as she carried the coffee back into the bathroom with her to finish while she did her hair and makeup.

She tried to focus on what she was doing since she didn't want to have to redo her face, but Lex's words kept coming back to her. *'I'm glad you have such a good partner, my dear,'* he'd said, *'but do you think it's good for Kent to rely on you personally so much?'* She'd argued that Clark wasn't just her partner, he was her friend. Lex had said he understood, but asked her if she thought it was fair to Clark to be spending so much of his free time with a woman who was dating another man. Then he suggested that Clark might be happier if he broadened his social circle just a bit. He hadn't come right out and said so, but Lois wasn't stupid. She knew Lex was implying that Clark needed a girlfriend.

It had sounded so reasonable at the time—*no, it still sounds reasonable*, she told herself—but the thought of Clark with another woman—*no, not another woman, with a girlfriend*—upset her for reasons that she preferred not to examine too closely. She blotted her lipstick and finished the last of the coffee, then walked back out into the room to pour herself another cup and dress for the day.

She was just tucking her blouse into her skirt when someone knocked on the door. "Who is it?" she called as she picked up her purse and made sure nothing had fallen out onto the nightstand.

"It's Clark. I was wondering if you wanted to get some breakfast downstairs."

Lois twitched, her hand tightening on her bag for a moment, then forced herself to relax. "Sure, I'll be right there!" She picked her jacket up off the bed, then slipped it on and buttoned it as she walked toward the door. *There's no reason to be jumpy, it's just Clark*, she reminded herself as she crossed the room and opened the door.

There he stood, looking handsome as always and smiling that killer smile at her. "Good morning, partner!"

She smiled weakly at him, but didn't say anything. *Oh my God, what is wrong with me today? Lex said Clark needs more friends, not that he shouldn't be friends with me!*

His smile faltered a little, but he shored it up quickly. "Since they have that free hot breakfast bar downstairs and we were in too much of a hurry to take advantage of it before, I thought we could try it this morning. Sound good to you?"

She stared at him blankly for a moment, then seemed to gather herself. "Sure, sure that sounds fine. We ought to try everything"—she summoned up a smile from somewhere—"that way if all else fails we can write a travel piece."

Clark's grin widened and she tensed against it. "Sounds good to me! Shall we?" He extended his arm and gestured for her to precede him down the hall toward the elevators. He glanced at her from the corner of his eye as he pressed the call button and she shifted from foot to foot while they waited for the car to reach their floor. "You sleep all right?"

"Fine," she answered tersely, "and you? Did you sleep well? You got an early start."

Was she mad that he hadn't waited up for her call? Was that what was wrong this morning? "I was pretty tired after all that running around yesterday."

"M'hmm."

He sighed quietly in relief as the elevator dinged and the doors slid open, then reached out to place his customary hand on the small of her back as Lois stepped in. She tensed under his touch and he dropped his hand like she'd burned him, then stepped stiffly into the elevator with her.

"Lois, are you sure you're okay?" he asked awkwardly, trying not to provoke her unnecessarily.

"I'm fine, Clark," she said in a flat tone; then she softened a little. "I'm probably just grumpy because I haven't eaten yet. I'll be okay once I have some breakfast in me." She worked up a tiny smile for him.

Clark didn't believe it for a minute, knowing that she usually barely thought to grab a slice of dry toast in the mornings, but in the interest of peace he decided to let it go and nodded agreeably.

Clark reached out to steady her as the elevator came to a bouncier-than-usual stop at the ground floor, then he remembered her earlier reaction and withdrew his hand before it made contact. Instead, he put one hand to the edge of the doors to hold them open and gestured for her to precede him again with the other. "After you, miss!" he said with false but hearty cheer.

Lois rolled her eyes and stepped out of the compartment, heading for the breakfast bar. She selected two slices of buttered toast and filled the rest of her plate with some fruit, then headed for the coffee service and a table while Clark shook his head behind her. *Sure, Lois, it's your blood sugar. Better make sure you get that huge breakfast you're used to.*

He was more than smart enough not to say anything though. He got a plate for himself and filled it with scrambled eggs, sausage, bacon, hash browns, and toast, then got a glass of juice and took the seat across from her. He studiously applied himself to emptying his plate and not comment on what she was or wasn't having.

Lois wasn't so restrained about his choices. "Good grief, Clark, between the Twinkies, the Ding Dongs, that mess you ate last night, and *this* smorgasbord, how are you even still walking around? You're like a walking advertisement for cholesterol medication!" A small fleck of toast flew off her fork as she gestured vigorously at his plate.

Clark intended to tease her a bit, but accidentally snarked back a little harder than he'd meant to. "Well, I'd hate for my blood sugar to drop and make me grumpy."

Lois narrowed her eyes at him and set her coffee cup down with a thump. Maybe Lex was right and she *should* be encouraging Clark to get out more, for his own good. Clearly she was starting to rub off on him too much.

"Right. I'm going to go get my stuff so we can get back to Metropolis. Maybe Perry will have a nice dog show for us to cover." Lois stood up, shoving her chair back in under the table.

Clark sighed. She'd been borderline snappy with him all morning; and to be honest, Clark was disappointed with their lack of progress in LA as well. He'd hoped that they'd find something more. Something with a definite link to Luthor. Something that would make Lois start to see through the public persona of the philanthropic billionaire and finally believe what Clark had been trying to tell her.

But it had backfired. Not only had they not found what he'd wished for, but their argument last night had driven a further wedge between them. He'd thought they resolved things before they parted in the hallway the night before; maybe Luthor had said something during their call that put her hackles up at Clark.

"Maybe Jimmy will have some luck tracing that numbered account," he commented.

"Clark, has Jimmy ever managed to trace a numbered account?"

"There's always a first time."

"Let's face it Clark, we've hit a dead end." Lois picked up her purse and walked towards her room.

Lucifer looked around, making sure no one was watching as he sidled into the evidence lockup. While he could go most places within the station with relative impunity, there were certain areas

that his civilian status rendered out of bounds—the evidence room being one of them. He raised an eyebrow, momentarily disoriented by the dizzying array of seemingly identical boxes before consulting the file number he'd taken note of and figuring out roughly where the evidence he was looking for should be stored.

Working quickly, he located the box he wanted, copying down the account number from the file and slipping the dagger into the inner pocket of his jacket. Though the case was closed, the police frowned on things being removed from evidence before the all-clear was given.

He couldn't wait for that to happen. By then, the detective would have severed their partnership and any access he had at the station would be lost to him.

Even the detective had little confidence in the Financial Investigations Unit's ability to figure out who was behind Cox's murder; but he had resources that weren't available to the LAPD.

Lucifer adjusted one cufflink as the elevator slowed and came to a smooth stop. The doors slid open with a muted ding, exposing an incredible panoramic view of the city through the expanse of glass behind the reception desk. He quirked an eyebrow. The favour he'd granted Mr Evans had certainly paid off.

Approaching the reception desk, he leaned one elbow on the edge of the gleaming marble surface and pasted on his most charming grin.

"Hello."

The receptionist glanced up, her eyes going suddenly wide behind her glasses.

"I'd very much like to see Mr Evans."

Lucifer was privately amused to see the young, blonde receptionist come to her feet with such alacrity that she stumbled slightly.

"Right this way, Mr..."

"Oh sorry, where are my manners? Lucifer. Morningstar," he supplied.

"Right this way, Mr Morningstar," she repeated a shade breathlessly, leading him down a short hallway and tapping on her boss's door.

"Thank you," he murmured, watching as a blush crept across her cheeks and she turned, a shade unsteadily, back towards her desk at the entrance.

Lucifer closed the door behind him, noting that the panoramic views continued in this office as well.

"Mr Morningstar!" his debtor exclaimed in surprise.

"Hello, Chad." Lucifer settled into one of the leather chairs in front of Evans's desk. "You seem to be doing well for yourself."

Evans shifted uncomfortably, avoiding making eye contact while he stammered disjointed excuses before finally getting to the point. "What can I do for you?"

"Well, it's a small matter really. Remember when you lost all of your clients' money in a risky investment venture and came to me for a favour?"

"Ye-yes," the suddenly harried-looking investment advisor replied with a wary look at his office door.

"I'm calling in my IOU."

The buzzing of her phone against the countertop woke Chloe from where she'd finally slumped in an exhausted sleep. Blinking the blariness from her eyes, she checked the screen, knowing it would be Lucifer.

It was.

Yet again, she hit the button to silence the ringing before standing and stretching to try and work out some of the kinks. She'd been unable to sleep the night before; her body had been tired, but her mind simply wouldn't stop turning over all the ramifications of Lucifer's revelation. The last thing she consciously remembered doing was calling the station and taking

an emergency personal day; she'd sat back down at the breakfast bar to try and figure out what to do and then... nothing.

She checked the time and was appalled to see that that was nearly five hours ago. Strangely, she did feel calmer.

Lucifer stepped out onto the street, tucking the papers Evans had given him securely away with the dagger he was still carrying. Lexel Investments.

The name linked to the account meant little to him, beyond the ubiquity of Luthor's name on everything he touched and Clark's conviction that Luthor was The Boss.

As much as he wanted to be the one that brought Lex Luthor down, to terrify him with the knowledge that his miserable soul would spend eternity torturing itself in Hell, he didn't think he had the contacts to do it.

But he knew someone who did. And his thirst for justice was just as strong as Lucifer's.

He pulled his phone out and unlocked it, dialling one of his more recent contacts.

"Clark? It's Lucifer. Can you meet me at Lux in?"—he checked the time—"about fifteen minutes?"

"Yes I know you've got a flight to catch, but trust me, this is important."

Chloe turned the water on, adjusting the temperature before climbing into the shower and letting the water cascade down her back. She rotated her shoulders, trying to work out some of the stiffness left over from her unorthodox sleeping position while her mind returned to Lucifer.

This wasn't the first time she'd stood under the shower and tried to puzzle out Lucifer's identity. The first time had been when she was beginning to believe that he actually was the Devil, right before she'd shot him in that warehouse. That one gunshot had halted her falling for his hocus-pocus, as she'd put it to him; but now that she knew the truth, it raised more questions.

Why had she been able to shoot him at all?

He was the Devil; historically immortal, invincible; and he'd made that point himself several times. So why had she been able to harm him?

How had knowing the truth about his identity raised more questions than it answered?

Lucifer was the Devil, Amenadiel was an angel, Maze was a demon, and Marcus was an immortal murderer. What was next? Vampires? Werewolves?

Was ANYTHING she believed real?

And Marcus... she'd never really known him, had she? She'd been naive to think you could get to know someone well enough to build a life together in just a few short weeks. She'd thought Dan hiding his role in the Palmetto case was bad enough, but this?

Lucifer's been hiding just as much from you, her inner voice pointed out. So why aren't you angry with him?

That's different, Chloe told herself. And it was. Lucifer had told her time and time again that he was the Devil. She'd just never believed him.

And Lucifer... the evidence that there was something strange, something not human about him had been there since their very first case together. How he'd survived being shot multiple times by Jimmy Barnes. How he'd thrown that sleazy agent through the glass wall like he weighed nothing at all. His desire trick. Even his nonexistent background.

She'd started off questioning everything about him; then as she got to know him, she'd dismissed all the crazy things he could do.

She'd been wilfully blind to the truth; but then, when the truth was as unbelievable as him being the Devil, who could blame her?

Lucifer sat at the bar, a glass in front of him. At this time of

day, Lux was nearly deserted, with only the manager, Leonard, getting things ready for the night's trade. Even the music was muted, making it the perfect place to talk uninterrupted.

He looked up, pausing in the act of lifting his drink as Clark walked in.

"Right on time, I see," he commented as the Kryptonian approached the bar. He poured a measure of Scotch into a glass and handed it to Clark, who promptly set it down on the bar.

"Lucifer. What's so urgent? I'm supposed to be on my way to the airport."

"I told you, this is important," Lucifer said. "Besides, I'm sure you can always... make up for lost time. You know, use a little of that superspeed." He gave Clark a knowing look. "You can't tell me you only use your powers when you're wearing those garish tights of yours." His grin widened as the part-time superhero looked away uncomfortably.

Lucifer waited until the other man had seated himself before sliding the dagger and the papers along the glossy surface of the bar.

"Where did you get this? This is evidence!" Clark looked up in horror from the plastic packet he'd just picked up.

"Not anymore. The case was closed, remember? Incontrovertible proof that Stephens and Cox were responsible for each other's deaths and all that? You recognised it. I saw it in your eyes. And it's my bet that it's somehow linked to our mutual ah... friend."

"Does Chloe know about this?"

"No, the detective and I aren't on speaking terms at the moment."

"Why? What happened?"

"Well, she saw these feathery nuisances of mine and she's not exactly taking it well."

"You showed her your wings?"

"Not deliberately. I don't always have perfect control over them—this isn't the point!"

"She's not talking to you?"

"No, and considering she took time off work to avoid me, I'm not certain she'll be talking to me again in the future either. Now, I called in a favour and had the number on the account traced. Does Lexel Investments ring a bell at all?"

Clark shook his head, his brow furrowing. "I haven't come across any references to it yet, but it sounds like something of Luthor's," he commented. "Why are you giving this to me?"

"Well it's very simple, isn't it? You save your lady love and I get revenge on the only human ever to welsh on a deal. It's a win-win."

"Yes, but why?"

"Oh, so I owe you an explanation now, do I?"

"You don't owe me anything, Lucifer."

He sighed. "All right, fine. A short time ago, the detective became engaged to a man that I abhor. The immortal version of your Lex Luthor."

"I thought Chloe was engaged to Lieutenant Pierce."

"Pierce is just a cover. His real name is Cain. The world's first murderer."

"As in Cain and Abel?"

"Mm." Lucifer nodded, taking a sip of his drink. "He has another name too. The Sinnerman."

"Sinnerman?"

"The head of a criminal syndicate that stretches from here to Chicago."

"Does Chloe know all this?"

"I tried to warn her. But, well, the detective is a woman who requires proof, and it's my word against his." *Not that she's taking my word about anything right now*, he continued internally.

"Tell me about it," Clark commented sourly.

"Exactly." He took another swig of his drink, trying to ward

off the pain that threatened to engulf him when he thought about the detective's brief engagement to Cain.

Clark looked down at the dagger in its plastic bag, then looked back up at Lucifer. "Thanks, Lucifer. And... Chloe cares about you. I'm sure she'll come around."

Lucifer scoffed. "Right."

Everything Chloe knew about the Devil—that he was Evil incarnate, responsible for every sin, every atrocity known to man—none of that sounded like the Lucifer she knew.

The Lucifer she knew wasn't evil. She'd said as much to Lois—was it really only two days ago?

So who was he really? Was the public persona of the Devil the truth? Or was it the man she'd worked alongside all this time? She'd seen him near tears at crime scenes before, heard the tremble of anger in his voice, even seen that anger unleashed against the guilty. Surely he couldn't fake such raw emotion so well just to cover his inner, evil, self?

No. No, she didn't believe that.

She'd held the proof she needed of his origins in her hand two years ago—the sample taken from the pool of blood when he'd been shot by Malcolm Graham. But she'd chosen to throw it away. Why? Because she hadn't wanted to know the truth? Or because she'd known instinctively that Lucifer wasn't evil, no matter what the test results said?

It was time to stop focussing on what she thought she knew about the Devil, and focus on what she did know about Lucifer.

Clark settled himself against the back of the seat, angling his shoulders so they didn't brush against his seat mates and wondering yet again why airplane seats couldn't be made to accommodate people with his build.

His hands gripped the armrests as the plane completed its takeoff roll; he hated flying with someone else in control, trapped in a pressurised metal tube for hours on end.

Beside him, Lois snorted in amusement. She'd discovered his dislike of airplanes when they'd made the trip to Smallville and she'd never let him live it down.

As the plane leveled off, he relaxed and let himself think about the evidence Lucifer had given him, now safely stowed in his checked baggage.

Using it—the dagger and the account information—was a gamble. Right now, the only link he had between the account and Luthor was Luthor's self-aggrandising habit of putting his name on everything he touched. He needed more information.

Turning his head, he surveyed the woman sitting next to him. Lois wouldn't want to investigate something so close to Luthor, especially after their argument the night before. No, he wouldn't ask her for help. He'd enlist Perry, and Jimmy, and Jack instead. If they built up enough of a case, maybe they could get Mrs Cox to flip on Luthor—provided, of course, that she hadn't been the one to order the hit on her ex-husband.

There was a lot to do, Clark acknowledged. But at least now he had a starting point.

Linda Martin sat behind her desk in the gathering dusk, transcribing and expanding the notes she'd taken in the day's sessions into her patients' files.

An insistent tap on the door followed swiftly by the door's opening broke her concentration.

She looked up, surprised to see Lucifer step into the room.

"Lucifer? We don't have an appointment."

She took stock of the tall, dark figure standing hesitantly in front of the door. He seemed distressed, far more troubled than when he'd sought her out the day before.

"I know. And I'm sorry to barge in on you like this—and for the second day in a row, no less—but..." He paused, seemingly

struggling for words.

She stood, gesturing for him to take a seat on the couch and switching her own chair for the one in front of him.

“What’s wrong?”

“The detective knows the truth.”

“Oh! You finally told her?”

“No. No, I didn’t.”

“O-kay.”

“The detective—she came to the penthouse, and she was shouting at me about the feather, and I lost control of these blasted things—”

As happened so often when it came to the various celestials she knew, Linda’s mind started reeling. She seized on the most important part of his disjointed narrative.

“You showed Chloe your wings?”

“Not deliberately, Doctor, keep up will you?”

“Okay. What feather?”

“The one I gave the detective’s offspring, of course.”

“You gave Trixie a feather?”

“Yes!” he said exasperatedly. “Her offspring was collecting feathers for some school project or another and I gave her one of mine.”

“One of yours.”

“Yes, one of the smaller ones.”

Linda took a deep breath. “And then what happened?”

“Well the detective found it, of course. Do you know, she thought it was from a bloody condor? I mean, how can you mistake one of my feathers for one from some pestilential bird?”

“Ahh.”

“Ahh... what?”

“Well, I think that subconsciously, you meant for Chloe to find that feather.”

“What?”

“You knew that she would check her daughter’s school project. And you knew that she would see the feather—and that she’d question where her daughter got it from.” She paused. “I think you reached a turning point in your relationship with Chloe. Whether you admit it or not, I think you realised that you had to make the decision to let her see all of you—to choose to let her into your life—so that your relationship could move forward. I think you finally reached a point where your fear of losing Chloe was stronger than your fear of her rejecting you once she found out your true nature.”

“So you’re saying I swapped one fear for another.”

“In a way. But that’s healthy, Lucifer. Relationships—meaningful relationships—require taking risks. And fear is a natural consequence of those risks.” She paused again, letting her insights sink in. “How is Chloe taking it?”

“Badly. Well I think she is, it’s hard to tell right now. I haven’t heard from her since.”

Linda nodded. When she’d found out the truth about Lucifer—and by extension, Maze and Amenadiel—she’d avoided them for days. Even after Maze had talked some sense into her, it had taken a further week to be able to focus on anything but Lucifer’s identity. And she wasn’t as close, emotionally, as Chloe was to Lucifer.

“So what do I do now?”

“The only thing you can do. Be patient. You need to give her the time she needs to sort through everything she just learned.”

Underneath everything—the wings, the Devil, the fact that he wasn’t actually human—he was still just... Lucifer.

She’d been indefinably connected to him from the start. She’d let her guard down around Lucifer in ways she’d never even considered doing around Dan, and she’d done it without a moment’s thought. That connection, everything they’d been through, everything they’d done... did she really want to throw all

that away because of what he was? Because of what he’d been forced to be?

No.

She couldn’t do that to him. She couldn’t do what the rest of the world did and judge him on his reputation. Not when she knew the man underneath that reputation.

The real Lucifer.

The real Lucifer was warm, empathetic and a little insecure. Someone who was passionate about seeking justice. About fairness. He cared about people—about the victims of the crimes they investigated, about the few family members that chose to recognise him, about his friends.

About her.

And she cared about him. She always had. When she’d thought he was sleeping with Ella, when he’d run off to Vegas and come home with a ditzzy bimbo on his arm, even when she’d agreed to marry Marcus, she still cared for Lucifer.

Loved him, you mean, her inner voice piped up. That’s why you let your guard down so easily around him. Why you were so upset when he disappeared on your birthday. Why you’re not angry with him over the Devil thing. Why you accepted Marcus’s proposal when Lucifer wouldn’t tell you how he felt. You’re in love with Lucifer.

She let out a small chuckle of amazement as the weight of her realisation hit her.

She had made the safe choice—or what she thought was the safe choice—with Marcus. She hadn’t loved him, and so he couldn’t hurt her. Not the way Lucifer could.

But sometimes the safe choice—the sensible choice—wasn’t the right choice.

She hadn’t loved Marcus, but she did love Lucifer. His sense of humour, his intelligence, his occasional bouts of breathtaking vulnerability, his passion, his loyalty... all of it. And yet, what had she done to him? She’d dismissed everything he’d ever told her about his family, his parents, the role he’d been forced into, even about having Maze sever his wings... oh god, the wings, no wonder he’d been so desperate to find them, Carmen had been auctioning off *part* of Lucifer...

Even now, what was she doing? He’d shown her his biggest secret and she’d run. Treated him like the monster his parents had forced him to be.

Turning abruptly, she scrubbed the tears she hadn’t even noticed from her eyes with the sleeve of her sweater and headed for the door, scooping up her keys as she exited.

Lucifer leant on the balcony railing, staring unseeing out over the city lights. Was Linda right? Had he subconsciously *tried* to show the detective the truth when he gave her offspring that feather? If so, it was one hell of a gamble.

And it had failed.

He had to face it.

He’d lost.

But then, did he have any right to expect anything different? He was the Devil. And as much as he wished it otherwise, three years of the detective knowing the real man wasn’t enough to break through the lifetime of indoctrination. Wasn’t enough for her to accept the man under the distorted image his parents had forced on him.

He glanced up at the sky, an expression of pure hatred on his face. Was this all just another part of the unending punishment meted out by his Father? Put the detective in his path, knowing that he’d fall for her, and yet make it completely impossible for her to accept him?

Wasn’t the vilification enough without making him feel this... this agony?

Or was the plan to make him choose a different path? To return to reign over Hell willingly, with wounds as fresh as the day

he'd been cast out?

He wouldn't give his Father the satisfaction.

Going back inside, he poured a fresh drink and picked up the file he'd left on the bar, setting them both down on the lid of the piano and flipping open the thick manila folder.

He'd had these papers for months now, and yet the only time he'd been close to a decision on the expansion of Lux had been those dreadful few weeks when the detective had been engaged to Pierce. Sardonicly it amused him that he, who'd spent most of his immortal existence avoiding emotional entanglements and indulging his carnal desires, was now pinning much of his future on one mortal woman.

How she'd changed him indeed.

Unable to concentrate on the paperwork, Lucifer let the folder fall back onto the lid of the piano, uncaring that the papers inside slid and scattered across the glossy surface as he sank heavily onto the piano bench. Lifting the fall board, he began to play, trying to push all extraneous thoughts out of his mind and just focus on the music. Music had so often been his solace, especially since he'd met Chloe and started feeling all these rather pesky emotions, but tonight all it served to do was remind him of her.

He picked his glass up off the lid, swallowing some of the amber liquid inside and setting it back down with an angry click against the wood. He wouldn't let himself think of her. Not now. Returning his hand to the keyboard, he picked up the melody line of the song once again and closed his eyes, concentrating solely on the movement of his fingers across the keys.

"Hi."

His eyes flew open, startled by the sound of her voice. He hadn't even heard the elevator arrive, and yet she was standing next to the piano.

"Detective!"

"I'm sorry, were you busy with... what is all this?" Chloe picked the proposed building plans up off the piano and started leafing through them.

"Possible future expansion of Lux," he answered slowly, confused by her presence. What was she doing here? He'd never expected to see her again. Had she come to say goodbye?

"I'm just not used to seeing you surrounded by paperwork."

"Owning Lux isn't all partying, Detective," he informed her, unnerved by how—how normally she was treating him. Had she not fully grasped what the wings meant? Had she somehow mistaken him for one of his angelic brothers? It was possible, he supposed. Few people associated angel wings with the Devil, despite his status as a fallen angel.

The detective looked up at him, making eye contact fleetingly. "I know." She laid the folder back down. "So where is this expansion? Vegas?"

Lucifer shook his head. "Metropolis. Detective, why are you here?" he asked, unable to take the surreality of their conversation any longer.

She ignored his question. "Metropolis? So... you're leaving LA?"

"I haven't made a decision yet," he told her, painfully aware of how much his decision relied on her.

"But if it goes ahead?" she pressed.

Is that what she wanted? For him to leave Los Angeles?

"If I decide to take up my option, then I'd be gone for... well, for several months, I'd imagine, getting the place set up, and then I'd be splitting my time between here and there. You'd have to look for a new partner, but you'd be doing that anyway, I expect," he said, trying to keep the hurt out of his voice.

This time she looked up and met his eyes squarely. "Why would I be doing that?"

"Well, because—"

"Because you're the Devil," she completed his thought, sitting

down on the bench beside him. He looked down at her, nonplussed.

"What?"

"This isn't how I thought you'd react," he commented slowly. "I was worried that I'd never see you again."

"Lucifer, no."

"Most people that know the truth can't wait to get away from me." His eyes searched hers, looking for a hint that she was about to flee; she held his gaze, smiling faintly at him.

"Most people don't know you, Lucifer. You're not evil. And you're not a monster, either." She looked him in the eyes as she reached up and touched his cheek, causing his heart rate to skyrocket. "I know you better than that."

Her gaze flickered down to his mouth, then back up to meet his eyes. His heart went from thundering in his chest to nearly stopped as she leaned toward him slowly. The tip of Chloe's tongue darted out to moisten her lips and his heart lurched back into motion as he subconsciously swayed toward her on the piano bench.

Chloe's hand slipped across his cheek and into his hair, cupping the back of his head and pulling him toward her when he didn't sway close enough to suit her on his own. A small smile turned the corners of her mouth up moments before their lips met.

Lucifer froze for a moment in sheer shock as sparks of joy shot through him like fireworks. The detective was kissing him. *Chloe was kissing him!* She knew who he was, and she was kissing him! They'd kissed before, of course, on one rather memorable occasion, but this time she was kissing **him**—not just Lucifer Morningstar, but Samael the Lightbringer, Abaddon, fallen angel and Heaven's reject. He was dizzy with delighted surprise as her lips slid across his.

Chloe fisted her hands in his hair, humming with quiet satisfaction as she breathed in his clean, slightly spicy masculine scent. She scooted closer to him on the bench and parted her lips slightly, tasting his top lip with the tip of her tongue. When Lucifer gasped in surprise, she slid forward a tiny bit further and touched the tip of her tongue to his.

He came alive at the contact, leaning hard into her and wrapping a possessive arm around her waist. He moved to wrap his other arm around her as well, and swept his glass off the piano with a smash. They leapt apart like startled deer at the noise and stared at each other, breathing hard. After what felt like hours of frozen staring, Chloe's lips began to twitch.

Lucifer caught his breath and closed his slightly gaping jaw, then grinned at her, "Well. That *definitely* wasn't the reaction I was expecting."

Chloe burst out laughing, too happy to contain it any longer. Once she got herself somewhat under control, she wiped her eyes and reached out to take his hand. "I hope it's one you can get used to, though."

His grin curved into something warmer and more intimate as he gently pulled her closer. "It might take a little practice."

Epilogue

Clark looked around the newsroom from his new desk. He and Lois were back on speaking terms, Luthor was dead (and thanks to a timely word to a powerful friend, certain to stay that way no matter who'd stolen his remains from the morgue), the *Daily Planet* was back on the newsstands, and Superman was back in the sky where he belonged. Everything was back to normal, and he couldn't be happier.

He'd been getting to know Lucifer better over the past six weeks, too. It was refreshing to have another man around who knew what it was like to deal with greater-than-human abilities and having the world either not know about or not acknowledge the challenges of inhumanity. Between a few surreptitious flights when Lois and Chloe were busy and a series of increasingly

frequent texts, Clark felt like they were building a solid friendship.

He spotted Lois from the corner of his eye as she stepped into Perry's office and sighed, barely remembering not to blow all the papers off his desk. Fine, so maybe he *could* be happier. On the other hand, he could ruin everything and never be happy again. He thought back over the past few months and his painful separation from Lois during the whole fiasco of her engagement to Luthor and everything that had followed.

As much as he wanted to tell her everything and finally let her all the way in, his terror of risking losing her in a more permanent fashion froze him like a bug in amber. He was so paralysed in his agony of indecision that he flinched when his phone chirped to signal an incoming message. Grateful for the reprieve from raking himself over the coals, he fished it out of his pocket and looked at the screen.

It was from Lucifer—a picture and a short message. The picture was a selfie of Lucifer looking as relaxed as Clark had ever seen him. Chloe was visible over his shoulder, dressed in pyjamas and scowling at the camera from under unkempt hair as she ate her breakfast. The message was short and to the point.

I swear you won't regret it

Clark stared at the image as a grin slowly spread across his face, then got out of his chair to go find Lois.

He had important things to tell her.

THE END