

# Eggcellent Revenge

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Summary: First, Clark feared he would never become a father. Then, once Lois became pregnant, his fears took a whole new turn.

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Author's Note: Special thanks go to Val, Feli and Endelda, who inspired some of the ideas in this weird fic. Also, I have to tip the hat to Dean Cain himself for planting the seed (so to speak) for this story. At the 2018 New York ComicCon, he teased Teri about what Lois and Clark's lives might be like 25 years later. He mentioned that it was possible for them to have more than one kid, and then said that it could be 17, all at once. Lois would just lay eggs but she'd only have to be pregnant one time and have 17 kids. Of course, this inspired much joking between Val, Feli, E, and myself, and somehow, this story was born.

This is a sequel to "[Moving the Body](#)," in an indirect sort of way.

Special Thanks: Go out to Val for beta-reading this for me! Thanks, hon!

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Clark Kent felt on top of the world. Everything seemed to be going perfectly for him. He was a man very much in love and married to the most amazing woman in the entire world. Lois Lane lit up his life. She made each day worth living for, gave him a purpose, and grounded him in ways he couldn't even properly describe. And she accepted who he truly was – a super-powered alien on a mission to save lives and better the planet through the use of his extraordinary gifts. No longer was he an outsider, looking in on the world, wondering what it would be like to experience all the things normal men got to experience. Sure, he'd always had his parents, but the love of his mother and father paled in comparison to the love he shared with Lois. She was everything his heart had ever desired, even during those dark days of traveling the globe, when he'd never fully dared to hope he'd ever find someone to love. She was his heart and soul, his life and his home, his dreams and his reality.

But even with all of that, Clark still felt incomplete. Falling in love, getting married, buying a house to put down roots in...all of it was still missing something – something he'd longed to have for as long as he could remember. He didn't *just* want to be Lois' husband. He wanted to be a *father* too. All his life, he'd prayed he would find a woman to love and have a family with. Sons and daughters to love and cherish. To take to the park and swing on the swings with. To teach how to read and write. To tuck into bed each night, kissing their tiny foreheads and tickling them until they shrieked in laughter. To take to carnivals and ride the rides with. To spoil with birthday and Christmas gifts. To watch as they grew up and became smart, independent teens and adults.

To give Clark the one thing he'd never had – someone he shared blood ties with.

He'd been more than eager to start a family with Lois once they'd gotten married, despite their mutual agreement to just enjoy their marriage as a family of two for a little while before adding any tiny people into the mix. But after a scare where there had been a slight chance that Lois might have gotten pregnant, he'd been forcibly reminded that his alien genetics might not even allow for him to procreate with a human woman. So, with his entire body fighting down a blush, he'd flown to Dr. Klein's office and had – with no small amount of embarrassment – asked the man to perform some fertility testing on him. Clark *still* felt weird about having to isolate himself inside of that little room to provide a sample of his DNA. Not that he was new to such things; after all, in many ways, he was *exactly* the same as any other human male on the planet. But having Dr. Klein *know* what he was doing in that room had been humiliating. *Especially* since he was *Superman* – someone who most people would never think of as having the same urges and needs as a normal person.

The wait for the results had been excruciating and Clark had mentally fretted over what they would be, though he'd done his best to hide it from Lois. There had been no sense in getting *her* all worked up about them when neither one of them could do anything to hurry Dr. Klein's work along. And then, when Clark had gotten the results...all he could do was wish he had those uncertain days back. The look of sheer pain on Dr. Klein's face had confirmed Clark's worst fears before the man could even lower his gaze and mumble his apologies to the floor. The utter heartbreak Clark had felt in that moment had been worse than anything he'd ever experienced before. It had all seemed so *final*. It hadn't been like when Lois had lost her memory and he'd committed himself to helping her recover her identity. It hadn't been like his heavy-hearted departure for New Krypton, his pledge to find a way to come back home to Lois burning in his heart and at the forefront of his mind. This...there was *nothing* he could do to change his biology.

Telling Lois had been the hardest thing he'd ever done. He'd never seen the spark of hope die in her eyes before. And he *never* wanted to see it ever again. He *still* hated himself for having made her cry when he'd gently broken the news to her. But then, something miraculous had occurred. From the embers of her burnt-out hope, determination had flared into life and she'd left no stone unturned in her pursuit for not only a second opinion, but for *any shred* of hope that Dr. Klein had been wrong. But even her father hadn't been able to find fault with Dr. Klein's results.

Yet Lois was nothing if not a stubborn woman. She'd *refused* to believe that there was no chance of ever having a child with Clark. By mutual agreement, they'd stopped taking precautions and had embraced the "if it happens, it happens" mindset. For a year and a half, they'd gone about their lives, trying not to think about their chances of actually conceiving a baby.

And then, just a week ago, Lois had woken up and immediately rushed to the bathroom to throw up. Cautiously, Clark had suggested that she take a pregnancy test, not really anticipating a positive result, but wanting to rule out at least one potential reason for her illness. He'd listened with his super hearing, but had heard nothing out of the ordinary; just Lois' slightly elevated heartbeat from the force of her heaving. But he had also been acutely aware that it could have been too early to detect a fetal heartbeat.

Lois had agreed that a test was in order. Three minutes later, she'd emerged from the bathroom with a look on her face that would remain with Clark for the rest of his life. She'd literally looked like an angel – radiant and awestruck, serene and so full of hope, bursting with happiness and teary-eyed. She'd held up the test for Clark to see, appearing to be too choked up to speak, but he knew, from the moment she'd stepped out of the bathroom, what it would say. Disregarding the test, he'd swept her up in his arms and kissed her, floating them around the bedroom in his

ecstasy.

Clark smiled to himself as the elevator door opened into the bullpen. Lois noticed as she stepped out of the elevator car and favored him with a smile of her own.

“What?” she asked, her eyes twinkling.

“Oh, nothing,” he replied teasingly. “Just thinking about our baby.”

Lois laughed, but then shushed him. “Just don’t talk about it too loudly. We haven’t even seen the doctor yet to confirm it,” she reminded him.

“I know. I know,” he hastily acknowledged, lowering his voice. “But I just can’t help it! We’re going to be *parents*, Lois!”

She laughed again, touching his arm in the way she always did – steadying him and giving him strength and telling him how much she loved him. “I can hardly wait to tell our parents. But first, the doctor,” she reminded him again.

He nodded. “When do we go?”

“I called this morning and was able to get an appointment tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?” Clark stopped in his tracks, his face clearly showing his disappointment. “That’s an entire day away!”

“I know. I can read a calendar,” she teased, lightly patting his check in affection.

“But...it’s a long time to wait,” he pointed out, rocking back a bit on the balls of his feet, knowing his reaction was childish, but also feeling like they’d waited a long time for this moment and that waiting any longer bordered on cruelty.

“You know something?” she said, stepping back to observe him.

“Hmm?”

“You’re cute when you’re being petulant.”

Clark had to laugh at that as they started walking toward the ramp into the bullpen. “Petulant?” he mock-scoffed. “Lois, we’ve waited a *long* time for this.”

She shook her head, amused by his inability to wait. “It’s just one more day. It won’t kill you,” she teased him, toying with his tie.

Clark rolled his eyes good-naturedly. “Yeah, *sure* it won’t.”

Before Lois could make a retort, Jimmy came rushing over to them. He had a folded newspaper in one hand and he waved enthusiastically with it.

“Lois! CK! You’re back from vacation!” he grinned happily. “We’ve missed you guys around here. How was Cancun?”

“Heavenly,” Lois replied, a look of bliss on her face as she appeared to recall those wonderful, stress-free days without having to track down criminals or uncover scandals.

“Better than we ever could have dreamed,” Clark added, thinking of those long, hot days laying on the beach, discussing potential baby names with Lois, reading up on pregnancy and birth, daydreaming about who this little person busily growing inside his wife would turn out to be.

“Well, you guys look *tan*,” Jimmy observed, jealousy tinting the edges of his words. “Lois, did you even go inside at all? You’re practically *glowing*. Man, it makes me wish *I* was booking a week at the beach.”

Clark bit back a snicker. *No vacation in the world will give you a glow like she has*, he thought, entertained by how Jimmy had chalked up Lois’ radiant appearance to a week off and some sunshine, rather than the pregnancy that had taken them both by surprise. *Just wait until you find out the real reason why, Uncle Jimmy.*

Lois patted Jimmy’s shoulder in a friendly way. “You know something, Jimmy? You are *completely* overdue for a vacation. I say, go for it.”

Jimmy shrugged. “Maybe. With my current rent though...”

Clark smiled. “You know what, Jimmy? I’ll talk to Superman for you, see if he can maybe help you save on the flights.”

“You’d do that for me? CK! My man!” Jimmy practically crowed.

“Absolutely,” Clark confirmed with a nod. He pointed to the paper Jimmy had in his hand. “The morning edition?”

Jimmy shook his head. “No. Something else. I, uh, thought you two should see it. Since you’re Superman’s friends and all.”

“So are you,” Lois pointed out.

Jimmy shook his head again. “Not in quite the same way. But, uh, the bullpen is *not* the best place for me to show you this.”

“The conference room,” Clark suggested.

“My thought exactly,” their younger friend said with a grave nod. He gestured for them to take the lead.

Clark reached the conference room half a second before Lois did, so he pulled the door open and held it while they entered. Then he shut the behind them. Jimmy was busy pulling the blinds in the room, to obscure them from their co-workers’ curious gazes. Only when there was no way anyone could eavesdrop on them did the man turn around and hand Clark the paper he held.

Clark unfolded the paper. “The Dirt Digger?” he scoffed. “Really?”

The word half died on his tongue in the middle of him speaking it. His eyes lit upon the front page. There, in big, bold print was the most humiliating headline he’d ever seen.

**SUPERMAN SEEKS MATE TO IMPREGNATE! PLANS TO BUILD ARMY OF ALIEN CHILDREN!**

“What the hell?” Lois asked, peering over Clark’s shoulder.

“CK? You’re shaking,” Jimmy observed in alarm.

“What is this?” Clark managed to croak out.

Clark skimmed the article with his speed-reading ability while Jimmy began to explain.

“Well,” Jimmy stammered, pointing at the text on the page.

“Apparently, like a year and a half or so ago, Superman went to S.T.A.R. Labs and requested some fertility testing. Someone hacked their system – don’t ask me how – and found out about it. I guess they went to the Dirt Digger with the information. Did...did Superman *really* have fertility testing done?”

“Whatever Superman may or may not have discussed with his doctors, it’s none of our business,” Clark gently said, shaking his head.

“Apparently it’s *everyone’s* business now,” Lois said with disgust.

“Anyway,” Jimmy said, steering the topic back to the paper, “they didn’t leak the results, whatever they were. Or it didn’t fit the Digger’s narrative. But check out the Op Ed.” He reached over and flipped the pages for Clark until he found the article in question.

Clark once again skimmed the words, speaking key phrases aloud in his absolute disbelief. “Potential to be super virile... impregnate women by the thousands...perhaps Kryptonians breed in litters...in less than three decades his offspring could overrun the planet...for all we know, Kryptonians lay eggs...super powered babies...” He looked up from the paper, knowing he was green with nausea. “I think I’m gonna be sick,” he whispered.

“Yeah,” Jimmy nodded in agreement. “You think Superman has seen this yet?”

“Well, we haven’t gotten any word that...” Lois peered closer at the Op Ed to read the author’s name, “Fred Walters is dead so... I’m going with ‘no’ on that.”

“You’ve heard of this guy?” Clark asked dubiously.

Jimmy paled. “You think Superman would...mess this guy up?” He swallowed hard in fear.

Clark shook his head, choosing his words carefully. “Kill, no. Teach him a lesson about the dangers of printing such libelous things...probably.”

“You don’t think it’s at least a *little* funny?” Jimmy asked. “I mean, *really*. Superman causing women to...lay clutches of little Kryptonian baby eggs?” He scoffed. “Sounds like a really *bad* sci-

fi movie to me.”

But the image of Lois laying in a hospital bed pushing out egg after egg played more like a horror movie in Clark’s mind. He shook his head again, hoping to dislodge the thought, but it was persistent and would not leave.

“Fred Walters,” he said thoughtfully. “I’ve never heard of his guy before. Jimmy, run a background check on him, would you? See what you can dig up.”

“I’ll see what I can do, CK,” Jimmy assured him. “It could take me a few days though. The Chief just laid a whole bunch of stuff on my plate this morning, and all of it *way* more urgent.”

“We understand,” Lois let the younger man know. “In the meantime, let’s keep this to ourselves, okay? Not many of us here read filth like the Dirt Digger, so the rest of the bullpen may not have even heard about this...ugly accusation against Superman.”

“My lips are sealed,” Jimmy promised, miming zipping his lips shut. He took the paper from Clark’s hands. “I’ll dispose of this,” he told them, rolling it up so no one else could see it. In the next moment he was off, heading to the darkroom.

Clark watched him go, hoping Jimmy had some kind of chemicals in the room that would destroy the paper beyond recognition. Then he turned to Lois. She frowned at him.

“I know that look,” she said, putting her hands on her hips.

“What look?” He tried to retain an innocent air to himself, but he knew he could never fool his wife.

“*That* look,” she said, pointing accusingly at him. “The ‘I’m going to rush off and do something rash’ look.”

Clark laughed. “Honey, I think you’re confusing me with *yourself*,” he ribbed her.

But Lois appeared to find no humor in his words. “You’re going to rush off to the Dirt Digger to meet with this Fred Walters guy, aren’t you?”

“I...” He was going to try to deny her accusation. But he’d long ago sworn never to lie to her again, once she’d discovered how he’d deceived her about Superman. He sighed heavily, sticking his hands into his pockets like a chastened school boy. “I was thinking of *maybe* having a little chat with him. See if I can’t persuade him to print a retraction,” he admitted in halting tones.

Her eyes widened and she shook her head emphatically. She almost looked a little scared, if Clark didn’t know any better. He frowned.

“What’s the matter?” he asked gently, pulling his hands out of his pockets again and lightly placing them on her shoulders. “It’s not like I’m going to *hurt* him or anything. You know me better than that.”

Lois gently placed a restraining hand on his bicep. “No. Don’t do it.”

“Why not??”

“Think about it, Clark,” she told him in soft, measured tones. “If you go over there, it lets them know Superman is reading their work. Which, if you think about it, almost makes them a legitimate publication.”

Clark raised his eyebrow at her, surprised by her reaction. “I don’t really see it that way,” he hedged, not wanting to argue with her.

“Trust me,” she purred in a way that never failed to make him melt.

He rolled his eyes as he succumbed to her charms. “Fine. I guess I *could* wait a few days and see if they print a retraction on their own. But I should probably touch base with Dr. Klein at least. If someone was able to hack into the S.T.A.R. Labs’ system and get information on me, who knows what else might be vulnerable?”

“Isn’t Dr. Klein out this week?” Lois asked, shaking her head.

“I don’t think so,” Clark replied, thinking hard to try and remember if Dr. Klein had said anything about taking some time

off. He scratched his chin as he scanned his memories.

“He did,” Lois asserted. “I’m sure of it.”

“Well, he’s not the only one I could warn. Someone over there *has* to have seen that...vile article by now,” he gently pressed.

Lois shook her head again and put her hands gently on his shoulders. “I don’t trust anyone but Dr. Klein. Even if someone else *did* read the article, it’s all speculation. Don’t let them know the tests were real.”

“I don’t know, Lois. This is a *big* deal, if their system can be hacked,” Clark said, shaking his head in turn. “It won’t hurt if I just...buzz by and see if Dr. Klein is around. It’s not uncommon for Superman to pop in, unannounced.”

“No. Clark, think about it. Dr. Klein would have called for you by now if he was around,” she assured him. “Give it time. Let’s see how this pans out.”

“I’m not sure I’m really comfortable with that, Lois. It’s my *private* medical information out there, mixed with a *lot* of lies and *horrible* speculation.” He rocked on the balls of his feet, too jittery and worked up about the article to stand still.

“Clark, no one in their right mind reads that rag,” she said dismissively, kissing his cheek to calm him down. “At least give it another day or two. See if the public even reacts to it. Come on. Let’s not stress about it too much. We have our ultrasound to look forward to. Let’s not ruin the excitement because one idiot at a publication that *barely* passes for a paper wrote a bunch of asinine lies?” It came out as a nearly pleading question.

“I don’t know, Lois...” he almost whined.

She went up on her tiptoes and gave his lips a gentle, light kiss. He groaned as he responded, deepening the kiss just a little, mindful that they were at work, regardless of the fact that the conference room blinds were drawn tight, shielding them from prying eyes. He was breathless just the same when she eventually pulled away.

“Okay, okay,” he relented, albeit with great effort. “I’ll hold off for today. No promises about tomorrow though.”

She laughed a little and patted his cheek affectionately. “Don’t worry, Clark. I promise, this whole thing will blow over without much of public reaction.”

He arched a skeptical eyebrow. “You sound oddly confident about that.”

She shrugged and smiled at him, that wonderfully bright, tender smile she reserved only for him. “I’ve been around the newsroom long enough to have seen stuff like this before. Sensational headlines and stories about how Elvis is alive and impregnated a sixty-two year old grandma of four. Or how Walt Disney’s cryogenically frozen head woke up and gave the animators the idea for Aladdin...despite how often the frozen head thing has been debunked. Or how aliens abducted the local baseball team and implanted them with microchips so they can play better. Trust me, honey, *no one* is going to pay this article any mind, other than to maybe use in housebreaking their new puppy.”

Clark thought it over carefully, nervously biting his lower lip as he did so. “Okay, maybe you’re right. I’ll leave it be for the time being. But if this thing becomes a problem...” He deliberately left the implications hanging unvoiced in the air.

“I agree,” Lois was quick to add, nodding her head. “At the first sign of this becoming a problem, you fly right over to the Digger and force them to set the record straight.”

“I still think I should follow up with Dr. Klein,” he added thoughtfully.

“When he’s back, sure,” Lois agreed again. “Now, before Perry comes looking for us, we should probably get to our desks and get started for the day.”

He rolled his eyes and groaned, knowing Lois was right, but hating to have to back away from things. Ill at ease didn’t even scratch the surface of how he was feeling. The article had a cold shiver of fear running up his spine, his stomach in painful knots,

and his heart racing faster than a Kentucky Derby horse. He felt as trapped as he had on all those occasions where his dual identities had come so close to being revealed to the world. He knew he would not be sleeping well that night, if at all, but he'd promised Lois he wouldn't act just yet. He had to respect that vow. "No more lies," he'd sworn to her, once she'd learned that he was Superman. There was no way he was ever going to break that promise, not when he knew how lucky he was that she'd given him a second chance when his lies about Superman had come to light.

"Yeah, okay," he finally allowed, dropping his shoulders in defeat.

A knock sounded at the door to the conference room. Half a second later, Jimmy's head poked back in.

"Hey, guys? Bobby Bigmouth is on the phone for you."

Lois grinned at him. "Come on. Maybe Bobby has a lead on those dead hookers."

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"Okay, Mrs. Kent, let's take a peek at that baby of yours," the friendly ultrasound technician said with a huge, welcoming smile Clark knew had been perfected to set her patients at ease.

"I can't wait," Lois said, beaming with joy and pride at the child she was carrying. Her hand protectively caressed the small bump of her stomach.

Clark took a double take. When had Lois' pregnancy begun to show, even as slight and easy-to-miss as it was? He was so focused on Lois' stomach that he barely noticed the doctor as she swirled into the room in a blur of motion and pleasant greetings.

"Just hop on up onto the table here and lift your shirt," the technician pleasantly instructed.

Had she introduced herself? What was her name? Why couldn't Clark remember it? Was he truly *that* nervous over this first ultrasound? He tried to focus his hearing in on Lois, trying to locate their son or daughter's heartbeat, knowing it was still early enough into the pregnancy that he might not find one just yet. He easily found his wife's soothing heartbeat, but, try as he might, he couldn't locate the rapid, fluttering, minuscule heartbeat that belonged to his child. He tried not to panic, reminding himself *again* that Lois was barely six weeks pregnant, based on their calculations.

"Ready?" the technician asked, looking first to the doctor, then to Lois.

"Ready," Lois breathed in anticipation.

"Okay, just a little bit of warm gel on your tummy here," the technician said, squirting a generous dollop of mostly clear gel that looked ever so slightly tinted blue onto the middle of Lois' stomach.

Then she switched on the machine and got the wand ready, pressing it right into the center of the pile of gel. She gently rubbed the head of the transceiver into the gel, spreading it around Lois' skin. But her eyes never left the ultrasound screen as she searched for the amniotic sack and developing baby within. Clark saw her frown as she searched and his heart nearly stopped beating. A sense of foreboding stole over him, making his stomach flip into knots. The metallic taste of bile crept up into his throat as he imagined the worst.

"Doctor?" the technician asked, a wobble in her voice.

"That's not..." the doctor began, gulping hard.

"It's not possible," the technician finished for her.

"What? What's wrong with my baby?" Lois asked in a panicked voice.

Clark wanted to voice his concerns, but his mouth had gone bone dry and he found no words could make it past the lump of terror in his throat.

"Is that...?" the technician asked, pointing to something on the screen that Clark couldn't make out.

"I'm not sure," the doctor replied gravely.

"It almost looks like..." the tech began, shaking her head, making her amber hair bounce a little with the movement.

"Like what?" Lois demanded, her voice high and pinched in her fear.

"I'm not sure yet," the doctor replied, turning to Lois, her face ashen. "It might be nothing. But..."

"But what?" Clark managed to finally squeak out, demanding answers.

"It could be tumors," the doctor finally replied. "Lois? We're going to need to perform an emergency, exploratory surgery."

"But...but..." Lois stammered.

"No way!" Clark said in firm defiance. "You're not risking Lois' life! *Or* that of my baby."

"Mr. Kent, I *know* you're concerned, but if we don't take care of this right now, both your wife and child could be in serious trouble," the doctor told him stonily as she pressed a red button on the wall.

As if from nowhere, a medical team appeared and surrounded Lois. She was bundled up onto a gurney and whisked down the hall to an operating room at breakneck speed. The doctor was trying to offer assurances to Clark but he didn't hear a word. All he wanted was Lois and to know *exactly* what was going on. But no one would tell him. Faster than a speeding bullet, he was left all alone in a cold, half-dark hallway, waiting for someone – *anyone* – to tell him what was happening. Paralyzing terror gripped him, rooting him to the spot. He was unable to sit down on the hard, wooden bench in the hall, nor could he bring himself to pace the white tile floor either.

A prayer of sorts entered his mind, but it was more a chanting plea in his petrified brain.

*Please, let Lois be okay. Please, let my baby be okay. Please, someone, tell me everything is going to be okay. I can't lose them. I can't lose either one of them.*

For how long those words looped around in his mind, he didn't know. Finally, a different doctor approached him – a tall, bearded, Middle Eastern man. The doctor's scrubs were splattered with blood. *Lois' blood*, Clark instinctively knew as he recoiled in horror. He felt sick and the world seemed to spin around him crazily, like a scene from a horror movie. He felt a sense of vertigo and wasn't sure how it didn't send him crashing to his knees.

"Mr. Kent?" came the lightly accented voice.

Clark licked his lips, trying to impart enough moisture to them to pry them apart so he could speak.

"Yes?" he tremulously replied. "Lois? How is she?"

How he managed so many words without his voice cracking, he wasn't sure.

"Resting and recovering," the doctor said, putting a gentle, friendly hand on Clark's shoulder. "Come. Follow me so we can talk in private."

"Is something wrong?" Clark asked as he followed the man down the hallway, which now seemed to stretch on into eternity, despite how many steps they took.

The doctor opened a door to the left side, into an empty examination room. He gestured for Clark to sit in the pale blue plastic chair, while he himself perched on a round, rolling stool. He squared his shoulders, just looking at Clark for a moment, appearing to be at a loss as to how to begin.

"Whatever it is...just tell me," Clark pleaded in a small, worried voice.

"Well, Mr. Kent, the thing is...this isn't easy to explain. In fact, I have *no* explanation for it, and I've been doing this job for a long time now," the doctor said in halting tones. "What we thought might be tumors, based on the ultrasound..." His voice trailed off as he cleared his throat and tugged at the collar of his shirt in unease.

Clark felt his stomach bottom out. Did Lois have cancer, or some other, equally terrible, disease?

“Ah...what we found,” the doctor began again, looking queasy, “were...eggs.”

The word slapped Clark in the face like a brick. He blinked in shock, barely comprehending what the man had just said. His mouth worked but not a single sound made it out of his throat.

“Mr. Kent? Are you alright?”

“E...eggs?” he finally squeaked out.

The doctor nodded. “Seventeen of them, to be exact.”

“Wh...what kind of...eggs?” Clark pressed, his hands shaking and every cell of this body telling him to get Lois and flee somewhere where no one could find them, *before* anyone could connect the dots and determine that Clark wasn't a mere human.

“We're trying to determine that,” the doctor said with a shrug. “We've got a team working on it. All the eggs are in an incubator for the time being. But, between you and me, they don't look like anything I've *ever* seen before. They look almost...alien in nature, if I didn't know better.”

*Alien.*

Clark wanted to throw up.

“Are you...sure?” he squeaked out, fighting down the bubble of sheer panic in his chest.

The doctor shook his head helplessly. “We can't be sure of anything right now. May I ask a personal question? Your wife. She's...*close* with Superman, isn't she?” the doctor steamrolled through, without waiting for Clark's permission to ask such an intimate question.

“Why?” Clark asked guardedly, through gritted teeth.

“Well...” The doctor blushed and scratched the side of his neck. “If she and he...”

“No.” Clark's voice was like a piece of granite falling from a cliffside to strike the hard-packed earth beneath. “My wife doesn't cheat.”

“It *would* make sense though,” the man continued, though not unkindly. “We know nothing of his unique body. Perhaps Kryptonians don't, ah, *breed* in quite the same way as humans. For all we know, he could have...deposited...a clutch of eggs into her womb. Perhaps that's how his race of beings reproduces.”

“You're insane,” Clark accused, his heart jackhammering in his chest. He felt so exposed, like any minute now, the doctor would figure out his secret.

“Doctor!?”

Both the doctor and Clark's heads snapped in the direction of the door, where a blonde, ponytailed nurse skidded to a halt in the doorway. She gulped, out of breath from her sprint.

“Yes?” the man asked calmly.

“The eggs! They're hatching!”

Without a word, Clark jumped up and ran after the woman as she led him through the maze of halls to the nursery. The doctor was right behind him, his sneakered feet pounding on the tile floor as he ran. After what seemed like navigating a labyrinth, Clark finally found himself in the nursery. An incubator was right in the center of the room, a team of curious doctors and nurses hovering around, watching as the eggs within shifted and cracked. Clark counted swiftly.

Seventeen.

All of them were roughly the size of a chicken's egg. All of them were in various stages of hatching. As he watched, one of the eggs fully cracked and a tiny, humanoid child emerged, squalling and red faced from the struggle of breaking through the egg's thick shell. It was a boy; Clark could see that easily. As soon as the baby was free of his egg, he started to grow in size, until he was the size of a normal newborn. Clark watched in equal parts fear and awe as a male nurse scooped the baby up and checked him over.

“Six pounds, nine ounces, eighteen inches long,” the man announced. “Healthy as can be.” He turned with a smile to Clark. “Want to hold him, Dad?”

“I...yeah, of course,” Clark replied, swallowing hard around

the lump that had formed in his throat, though this one wasn't born out of his joy of becoming a father. He was terrified someone would figure out he was Superman and that he was the one who'd done this to Lois.

“Here you go,” the nurse said, guiding Clark to a hard, wooden rocking chair and placing the bundled up little boy in his waiting arms.

Clark looked down at the peaceful face of his first-born son and couldn't believe the surge of love that rose in his chest. He was in absolute awe of that perfect face, those tiny fingers, that button nose. But the moment was short lived. Within the next few minutes, the rest of the eggs hatched. Before Clark knew it, he was the proud new father of ten girls and seven boys. His head was swirling from the knowledge that he had so many children to care for at one time. He'd never been opposed to having a large family, but seventeen was a bit more than he'd bargained for, and he'd certainly never anticipated more than one at a time. He was vaguely aware of the congratulations that came his way; he was more concerned about Lois getting to see their babies.

“Wow,” he managed to hear one of the nurses say to the other. “So many adorable babies. But I'm glad it's not me. Imagine trying to afford all that?”

“I know,” the other nurse said with a grave nod. “The diapers alone are going to cost a *fortune*.”

*I'm going to need another job, Clark realized with a jolt. No... I'm going to need multiple second jobs. I'm...there's no way I can...Superman is going to have to vanish. I won't have time to make rescues anymore. Not with extra jobs for the income we're going to need. Oh, God, how much extra income will we need?*

He started to form a list in his mind, trying to tally up a ballpark figure for what it would cost to raise seventeen babies at once.

*Diapers. Formula. Wipes. Clothing. Nurses or some kind of extra hands to help out. Probably a bus to get everyone around town. Cribs. Oh, God, we're gonna need a new house. There isn't enough room for everyone. Maybe I can convince Lois to move to a farm in Kansas...I can grow our own food. Maybe Mom can teach her how to make clothing...*

He sighed and closed his eyes for half a second. *But leaving Metropolis...leaving the Daily Planet...will kill her.*

He looked down at the baby girl in his arms and couldn't help the dreamy smile that slowly spread across his features. But when had he switched children? He couldn't remember having his son taken from his arms to be replaced by this tiny little girl.

*You're all more than worth the logistical issues. For now, we need to focus on naming you all.*

“Mr. Kent?” a different nurse asked, approaching him timidly.

“Yes?” he asked, looking up.

The woman took the swaddled newborn from him and placed her in her crib. Then she handed him a thick stack of papers. He gave her a confused look as he warily took them.

“What's all this?”

“Your bill, sir.”

Clark looked down and, as he caught sight of the impossibly huge “Total Due” line, he was thankful he no longer held any of his children. His eyes rolled up into his head and he passed out.

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As Clark fell out of his chair in his dream, he rolled right out of bed in real life. He hit the floor with a loud *thud*, knocking into his bedside table and sending the lamp crashing to the floor in the process. The base and the lightbulb itself shattered, sending sharp shards of glass and ceramic everywhere, jarring Clark into full and immediate wakefulness. Unfortunately, it also woke up Lois as well. With a muffled cry of surprise, she sat straight up in bed and fumbled for the lamp on her own nightstand.

“Clark?” she called out, half-yawning his name. “What happened?”

"I, uh...fell out of bed," he explained with a blush, rubbing the back of his neck in embarrassment, just as Lois' questing fingers finally found the switch to turn the lamp on.

"Fell out of...?" she questioned, bewildered. "How?"

"I was dreaming," he slightly elaborated.

"That must have been *some* dream," she sleepily acknowledged, raising an eyebrow. "You usually wind up floating during vivid dreams." She frowned at that and scrunched up her brow. "Are you okay?"

"I...it wasn't so much a dream as it was a nightmare," Clark confessed, pushing himself up off the floor. In a whirlwind of motion, he cleaned up the mess he'd made, carefully ensuring that there were no more shards of glass or ceramic that might accidentally cut Lois' feet.

He slid back into his still-warm spot in the bed and laid back on his pillows, breathing deeply to try and shake off the remnants of the bizarre nightmare he'd been trapped in. Lois, however, was sitting straight up, alert and peering at him with a look he knew all too well. She wanted him to tell her all the details of his dream, even if he himself wasn't too eager to relive it all in his mind. But Lois was nothing if not persistent, and he knew she'd never just let it go and let him try to get back to sleep. He sighed and raked a hand through his hair, which was damp from a sweat he hadn't even realized he'd broken as the walls of his dreamworld had come crashing in around him.

"I...it was..." he stammered, shaking his head.

"Hey, it's okay. It was just a dream," Lois said, putting a comforting hand on his chest.

"It was terrifying," he corrected, seeing that huge clutch of eggs in the incubators all over again.

"Was it...Superman related?" Lois asked carefully.

Clark almost managed a smile. Almost. Lois was always so careful and considerate when asking if some rescue he'd made as Superman had impacted him deeply enough to haunt his dreams. And they did, sometimes. Not as often as they had during his first year as the caped hero, but some scenes he came across were just too horrific not to scar his mind and heart.

"No...at least...not in the way you're thinking," he clarified. "It...it was that *article*," he said, stressing the word like it was a curse.

"Article?" Lois questioned, fighting a yawn and losing.

"You know. The *article*. The one Jimmy showed us."

Lois laughed a short, tired laugh. "You're *still* obsessing over that? The Dirt Digger isn't even a real news outlet."

"Doesn't matter." He shook his head again, his gaze not leaving the ceiling as he tried to will his racing heart to beat more slowly.

"Why don't you tell me about it?" she asked, stroking his forehead, brushing the few wayward locks of his black hair off his damp brow.

"We had seventeen children," he said with a gulp.

Lois blinked in surprise. "Wow. Was there ever a time I *wasn't* pregnant in your dream?" she joked.

"No," he said, dragging his eyes away from the ceiling to look at her. "That's not what I meant. We went to the doctor for our ultrasound and they performed surgery on you to remove *seventeen* eggs from you. They looked like chicken eggs. But then they hatched and grew into normal-sized babies." He shook his head as she tried to suppress a laugh. *Lois* might find the scenario funny, but Clark couldn't find any humor in it at all.

"The doctors...they *knew* Superman must have...deposited the eggs inside of you," he continued. "Then the nurses were talking about how expensive it would be to care for that many newborns and they handed me the hospital bill and...I guess when I passed out in my sleep I also rolled out of bed." He knew his eyes were wide with the panic he still felt bubbling up inside of his chest.

Instead of looking horrified, the way he'd vaguely imagined

she would, Lois laughed. Hard. And were those...*tears*...in her eyes that she was wiping at as she laughed?

"I'm so glad this amuses you," he teased, still feeling flustered from his nightmare.

"I'm sorry, honey," Lois got out in between bursts of laughter. "But you *have* to admit, that's hysterical."

"No," he said, shaking his head. "It wasn't. It was *horrible*."

"I thought you *wanted* more than one kid," she teased, finally controlling her giggles. Her eyes were sparkling with amusement and her hand instinctively covered her stomach, rubbing the area over their baby gently.

"Well...yeah, of course I do. Just not *seventeen* of them. And certainly not all at one time," Clark replied, finally mustering up a slight smile.

"You know, if we're being honest here, I had nightmares about insane amounts of newborns too."

"You did?" Clark raised his eyebrows in interest. "When?"

"Sure," she said, nodding. "It was when we first started thinking about having kids. Suddenly, I found myself having these nightmares about having so many kids that I couldn't keep up. I felt so...inadequate, in those dreams. But whether we have one baby or seventeen of them, I *do* know one thing for certain." She stroked his arm again, reassuring him.

"What's that?"

"You are going to be a *great* dad."

"Thanks." This time, his smile was bigger and more genuine. "But the thing is...having seventeen newborns...that didn't bother me, in my dream. Yeah, okay, I *knew* it would be difficult, caring for so many at once. But it was the idea of being able to *afford* everything we'd need that really agitated me. I *knew* I'd need multiple other jobs. And Superman?" He shrugged. "Forget it. He'd have to retire. There's no way I could work, be a father, *and* keep up the Superman charade."

There was an emptiness in his heart as he thought about needing to hang up the cape for good. While Superman had never been who Clark truly was, the superhero was a part of him nonetheless. The costumed avatar of his powers was the only way he could use his abilities to help people and still be safe from those who would do his family harm. Clark wasn't entirely convinced he could ever be okay with getting rid of his alter ego.

"I mean," he continued after a moment's thought, "I already know I'm going to have to cut back a bit when our baby is born. I know I can't be Superman all the time. I'm going to have to prioritize better. But the idea of giving up being Superman, while I'm still capable of helping people?" He shook his head sadly. "I don't know if I can do that."

"Clark," Lois said gently, kissing his forehead. "It was *just* a dream. If you were...expelling eggs from your body, Dr. Klein would have told you when he conducted your fertility tests."

"What if he missed something though?" Clark argued gently. "I mean, he also said there was *no chance* Superman and an Earth woman could create new life. Clearly, he was wrong," he continued, smiling a little and placing a loving hand on Lois' stomach. He kissed the side of Lois' head.

"And I'm grateful he was mistaken about that. But, Clark, it's one thing to assume a diagnosis of incompatible DNA. It's a completely different thing to miss something as odd as a man leaving eggs in his...genetic sample," she said firmly but sympathetically.

Clark sighed and looked back up to the ceiling. "I guess," he reluctantly agreed. He ran the palm of his hand over his disheveled hair, then lightly chuckled. "Do I sound as paranoid and stupid as I think I do?"

Lois laughed. "A little bit, yeah."

"I'm sorry, honey," he apologized after a moment. "I guess...between the article, the ultrasound coming up, being so afraid of something going wrong after we've waited all this time to become

parents...I'm a little on edge. I want everything to be perfect, that's all."

"And it will be," Lois said confidently. "Clark, we've already beaten the odds. You've always been the one to remind me to look on the bright side of things, to see the silver lining, to have faith that everything will work out the way it's supposed to. Find that faith now. I promise, everything will be okay."

He smiled brightly. "Yeah," he agreed, starting to feel like maybe Lois was right.

Before he could say anything else, Lois leaned over and captured his lips in a kiss. All thought fled him as he kissed her back, pulling her to him, his body already responding to her. It didn't matter that it was the middle of the night or that he was only awake thanks to his terrifying nightmare. All he was aware of was his wife and the emotions she awoke within him.

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"Today's the day!" Lois chirped happily as she woke the next morning.

"Finally! We'll get the first glimpse of our son or daughter," Clark replied, a grin spreading over his features as he finished dressing, pulling his suit jacket on over his pale-yellow dress shirt.

"I can't wait," Lois agreed dreamily, slipping out of bed and collecting the discarded clothing she'd left on the floor from their middle-of-the-night lovemaking.

Clark checked the clock on Lois' nightstand. "What time do we have to be there?"

"Nine," Lois replied, stuffing everything into the hamper and going to her dresser.

"Perfect. That's early enough to let us get into work without raising too many eyebrows," Clark commented, straightening his tie as he checked his appearance in the mirror.

Lois said something in return, but Clark's attention was snapped away from her by a passing car's radio. He froze in place, listening intently, frowning at the news. Once he'd heard enough, he severed the connection and looked at Lois, who sat unmoving on the edge of the bed, watching him.

"What?" she asked in concern.

"Wildfires. In Australia," he replied gravely. "Bad ones."

"Well, what are you waiting for? Go," she urged, trying hard to hide her disappointment.

"The ultrasound though," he weakly protested, torn. He didn't want to miss the first peek they would ever get at their child. But he knew he had to leave. People's lives were at stake.

"I'll be fine. Our baby won't be much more than a blob on the screen anyway," she tried to assure him. "A blob and a flicker, if the heart is beating yet."

"But..."

"Clark, go. I'll be fine," she told him in a soft voice. "People need you."

"You need me too."

She smiled tenderly at him. "Not as much as they do. I'll be fine. I promise. Just...be safe, okay? And I'll see you when you get back home."

He nodded with great effort. It was killing him inside to have to leave *now*, of all times. But he forced himself to move, giving Lois a kiss on her soft lips before spinning into Superman's iconic blue, red, and yellow uniform. He stood in front of Lois and placed his hands on her shoulders, steadying himself and drawing strength from her love.

"I'll be back as soon as I can," he vowed.

"I know you will. Be careful and do your best," she said softly.

"Always," he promised with a solemn nod. "I love you, Lois."

"I love you too. Now go on. Those people over there need you."

"If *anything* happens..." Clark began in a loving warning.

Lois cut him off. "Nothing's going to happen. But yes, I'll figure out some way of getting your attention."

Clark nodded once more. "Okay. I'll be back soon."

Then, before his heart had another chance to plead with him to stay home, he bolted out through the windows, rocketing away from Lois faster than any human eye could follow, yet not so fast as to create a sonic boom. He reserved his maximum speed until he was nearly at the city limits, then he tore apart the sky with his urgency to get to the fires. But all the while, until Australia was firmly in his view, his mind strayed ever back to Lois. And then, the billowing smoke reached his field of vision, and he set his focus squarely on the job ahead of him. Lois was right. People's lives were on the line, and he was determined to save all of them, if he could.

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Clark spent the better part of that day and into the wee hours of the next morning – Metropolis time – working nonstop to rescue people, animals, and whatever personal property he could, all while helping the firefighters contain and battle the blaze. Despite their combined forces and their best efforts, twenty-two people, three dogs, eight cats, and a slew of random wildlife had perished in the inferno. Several houses had also been lost, but many, many more had been saved as Clark had used his icy, gale-force breath to help extinguish the flames.

Still, despite the losses, Clark had to admit that things could have been much, much worse. He was infinitely glad the loss of life – particularly human life – had been kept to a minimum. His heart grieved for the dead – human and animal alike – but he knew nothing else could have been done for them. At least twelve of the people who'd died had been caught in the fire well before he'd arrived. He'd found their charred remains in areas where the flames had already swept through and turned the landscape into ash and cinder. The others...

Clark sighed to himself.

Superpowers or not, Clark was still only one man. While he could access areas too dangerous for the firefighters to enter, he could only pull so many people out at a time. His record was a family of five. He'd hoisted the father up over his left shoulder, the mother over his right shoulder, each of them carrying the youngest children – one an infant and the other a tiny toddler. The older daughter had clung to him, her arms encircling his neck as he flew them out of the blaze. But moving two or three – even five – people at a time hadn't been enough. Clark had still been too late to save some of those trapped by the flames.

That was the worst part of any disaster – choosing who to save first, trying to decide in a split second who was in more danger, knowing that whoever he left behind might not live long enough for him to come back to get them.

Finally, there was nothing else left for Clark to do. He was more than ready to go home, recharge, and find out how Lois' first ultrasound had gone. Yet, as much as he couldn't wait to get back to Lois, the exertion of the day – coupled with how little sleep he'd gotten the night before thanks to his recurring nightmares, despite Lois' reassurances and love – had him fatigued. The fire-related deaths weighed him down too; his heart felt heavy as a mountain and his mood was somber. It all added up to a much slower flight home than the lightning-quick trip out to Australia had been.

It was the middle of the night when he finally stepped foot inside his house. All the lights were out and he didn't even need to check with his super abilities to know that Lois was fast asleep. He headed straight for the shower, stripping out of his Superman uniform as he crept quickly and quietly through the house. Tossing the Spandex to the bathroom floor, Clark turned on the water as hot as it could go, then he simply stood under the relaxing torrent of water. For several long minutes, he did nothing except stand under the showerhead, letting the flowing water rinse away the layers of caked on dirt, grime, blood, mud, smoke, ash, and other bodily fluids from the people and animals he'd rescued. For how

long the water ran black with filth, Clark didn't know. He only knew he was happy to be free of it all.

When the water swirling around the drain was finally clear again, he soaped up every last inch of his body and hair and thoroughly cleaned away any remaining residue and smell from himself. Finally, even his super powered nose couldn't detect any trace of the foul odors that had clung to him like a morbid second skin. He rinsed off one more time, just for good measure, then turned off the water. Stepping out of the shower, he towel-dried his body using a fraction of his super speed, then he dressed in a thin grey shirt and a pair of soft maroon sleep shorts. He finger-combed his damp hair as he dried it using a thin beam of his heat vision, bounced off the mirror.

"Hmm," he hummed to himself thoughtfully, rubbing a hand over the sparse, barely-there stubble on his chin.

Clark shook his head. That could wait until the morning. At least he'd be freshly shaven for work that way. Besides, he still had one final task before he could finally climb into bed and get a well-earned night's rest. He bent down, picked up his heavily soiled uniform, and took it to the washing machine. Measuring out enough detergent and some baking soda to kill the odors trapped in the fabric, he started the wash cycle, then meandered to the kitchen, his stomach rumbling. He shuffled tiredly over to the refrigerator and opened the door, unsure of what he wanted and what might be inside. After having been away on vacation, he knew that they needed to make a run to the grocery store soon.

But, as the door opened, he was greeted with stocked shelves. Lois had, apparently, found some time to go shopping. He smiled as he fought down a yawn. She'd picked up a lot of his favorite things. And while Lois wasn't much of a cook, he enjoyed cooking meals for them to enjoy together. But not right now. Right now, he just wanted something premade that he could just stick in the microwave for a minute or two. Quickly, he scanned the contents of the fridge, involuntarily shuddering as he saw the two big cartons of eggs.

"Not a chance," he whispered to himself, his crazy dream of having deposited eggs in Lois' womb turning his stomach.

Luckily, the feeling was short lived as he caught sight of a tin foil container. He recognized it as being from Greg's Deli. He carefully extracted it and peered inside the clear plastic lid. His mouth began to water as soon as he saw the fried chicken breasts within. He grabbed a can of Coke as well, then shut the door. As he did so, he noticed a note scribbled on the dry erase board that he hadn't seen before, informing him that there was a container of chicken for him if he was hungry.

Safe in the knowledge that his pregnant wife wouldn't kill him for eating leftovers she'd reserved for herself, Clark heated up the food and devoured it in record time. It was good; so very good. He wished he could find the self-restraint needed to slow down and really savor each bite. But he was hungry and tired and more than ready to fall asleep, so he didn't try and check his speed at all. Once he was finished, he washed his plate and gulped down the last few sips of his drink. Then he headed back upstairs, brushed his teeth, used the toilet, and finally slipped into bed next to Lois.

She'd shifted in her sleep and was now facing his side of the bed. Clark took a moment just to admire how peaceful she looked as she slept. All the usual lines of worry or concentration or determination had fallen away. The sparkle in her eyes couldn't be seen. The smile and laughter she reserved for him alone were absent. She was, in a way, a blank slate; an ocean of potential bubbling just below the surface that Clark knew would spring to life as soon as she awoke. Then she would laugh and scowl and swear and smile and chew her lower lip in thought. And he would love every moment of it. But for now, sleep was calling to him. He felt like the Sandman had knocked him over the head with his mythical bag of sand. He laid down, closed his eyes, and was asleep within seconds.

For most of the night, he floated in a dreamless black void, where nothing disturbed him and his body recharged from the exertion of his rescues. But as morning approached and his body was replenished, he drifted into a dreamscape. At first, it was quite pleasant. He was back in Kansas, with his father, fishing at their favorite spot. Suddenly, a dark-haired little girl of maybe five wandered up to him and tugged on his sleeve until he looked at her.

"Teach me to fish?" she asked sweetly.

In that instant, Clark knew she was his daughter.

"Yeah, sure, sweetheart," Clark told her with a smile, encircling an arm around her tiny shoulders. "Come stand here. Put your hands on the fishing rod like this," he gently instructed her.

"My turn next?" a little boy of the same age asked, appearing as if from thin air.

"I'll show him," Jonathan told Clark, an amused twinkle in his eye.

"Thanks, Dad," Clark replied as he repositioned his daughter's hands on the rod and reel.

"And me!" another little boy demanded.

"And me!" said another little girl.

"What about me?" pouted yet another five-year-old girl.

"It's my turn!" a boy fumed.

Before Clark knew it, he was surrounded by nearly twenty squabbling children, all of them the same age and looking to him to make their world right again. All of them were his children, as evidenced by the fact that they all looked like the spitting image of either himself or Lois, not to mention the fact that all of them were chanting "Dad" at him to grab his attention. He tried his best to maintain his patience and give each child at least a few minutes of his undivided attention, but by the end of the day, he was exhausted.

Scooping up two children at a time, he flew them back home to Metropolis. Lois was sitting there, on the couch in the living room, folding a mountain of laundry that was piled to the ceiling. Over and over again, he flew back to Kansas to ferry more children home, until, at last, all of them were in the living room. Clark nodded to Lois.

"I'll finish the laundry," he told her, a second before using his super speed to fold every last tiny article of clothing, including matching the multitude of socks.

Then he helped Lois herd their army of five-year-olds up the steps to begin the process of bathing them, brushing their teeth, getting them into pajamas, and tucking them into bed. Only, when Clark stepped into their bedroom, it wasn't quite what he expected. Instead of finding a gaggle of bunk beds waiting for little bodies to occupy them, in the center of the room was one giant, circular nest with a random assortment of fleece blankets mounded up in the middle for each child to snuggle under. A scream of horror bubbled up in his throat...

Clark woke with a start, though this time he managed not to roll off the bed or break anything. He was breathing heavily, the scream from his dreamscape still lodged like a stone in his throat. It took him several long moments, some deep breathing, and a lot of hard swallowing to finally get back to feeling normal. By then, it was close to when his alarm would go off, so he got out of bed, turned off the alarm, and dressed for the day. Quietly, so as not to wake Lois, he left the bedroom and went down into the kitchen to prepare breakfast for them both.

Eggs still left him feeling panicked, so he dismissed that idea immediately, choosing instead to make a batch of pancakes using the box of instant mix he found in the cupboard. He was just finishing flipping the last couple of silver dollar pancakes when Lois came down into the kitchen, smiling brightly at him.

"Hey," she greeted him. "Good to see you back home."

"It's good to *be* home," he told her, giving her a peck on the

lips as she came closer. “I made pancakes.” He grinned impishly. “Mmm, sounds and *smells* heavenly.” She closed her eyes as she inhaled deeply. Then, opening her eyes again, “How was the fire?”

“Bad. *Really* bad,” he said with a heavy sigh. “But it could have been a *lot* worse,” he acknowledged in the next breath.

She kissed him again. “I know you did your best.”

He nodded. “Yeah.” He snapped his fingers as a thought occurred to him. “That reminds me, I need to throw the suit in the dryer. But before I do, how did the ultrasound go?”

“Everything looks great,” Lois replied, her eyes sparkling. “Go. Put your suit in the dryer and then I can fill you in on all the details.”

Clark nodded. “Are you sure? It can wait you know.”

“I’m sure,” she said, making a shooing motion with her hands.

Clark opened his mouth to argue the point, but then shook his head and swallowed down his rebuttal. There was no sense in arguing with Lois; not about something so trivial. Wordlessly, he obeyed, moving off to the laundry room. He knew Lois would give him a hard time if he used his powers to get it done in a heartbeat, so he deliberately kept his speed at a normal, human pace. Pulling the suit from the wash, he carefully inspected it to make sure all the evidence of the fire and random bodily fluids was completely gone, then he threw the still damp garment into the dryer, rather than blast it with his heat vision.

Unbidden, memories of being in the midst of the wildfire flooded his mind. All those helpless animals that had died. All those poor people he hadn’t been able to save. All the personal property that had been devoured by the flames as Clark and the brave firefighters had battled to contain and finally extinguish the blaze. A shudder wracked his body as his heart gave out a pang of regret. He shook his head, forcing the images out of his mind. Now was not the time for that. He started the dryer and watched for a moment as the drum began to rotate, tumbling the blue, red, and yellow suit around and around.

A scream from Lois snapped his attention a few seconds later. She sounded scared and in pain. In a flash, Clark was back in the kitchen, but Lois wasn’t there. Another cry for his help told him she was in the living room. Clark rushed to her, but stopped short as he entered the room. Lois was sitting on the floor, a blanket thrown over her lower body. Her knees were spread and bent and she was breathing heavily, almost like Clark had seen women in labor do. Before her, on the carpet, a scattering of eggs lay, all of them pink or blue in color.

“Clark!” Lois gasped as another pink egg rolled out from beneath the blanket.

“Lois? What...?” He couldn’t voice the rest of his question as his nightmare came all too true in front of his waking eyes.

“Oh, God!” Lois moaned, squeezing her eyes shut as he cautiously approached, carefully side stepping around each egg.

“What can I do?” he asked.

Funny, when it was other women in labor, he’d never once hesitated. He took charge of the situation and knew exactly what to do. But with Lois? And with her delivering *eggs*? He was lost and frozen to the spot.

“The eggs! Get...ahhhh!” she cried as a blue egg rolled out from the edge of the blanket.

“Right,” Clark gulped in a panic, scrambling to collect the eggs. He counted as he went. “One...two...three...” Looking around frantically, he spotted a decorative wicker basket on the side table that looked like it might be big enough to safely contain each precious egg. He grabbed it with his free hand and carefully placed the eggs inside before kneeling back down on the floor to get the rest.

“Ten...eleven...twelve...” he counted less than half a minute later. He was getting queasy now that he was a dozen eggs into things.

Lois moaned. “Careful with them,” she panted.

“I know,” he quietly assured her. “Are you okay?”

“I...I’m not sure,” she replied hesitantly. “How...how many?”

Clark scooped up the last few eggs from the floor and fought the urge to vomit. “S...” He gulped hard, trying to fight down his nausea and fear. He tried again. “Seventeen.”

“Seven...but...”

“It’s just like my nightmare,” Clark said, torn between lamenting the fact that his dream had been prophetic in a way and just being thankful to have a family at all. He realized his hands were shaking, so he put the basket down, lest he drop his precious family.

“Yeah,” Lois said, not making eye contact.

“I...I’m sorry, Lois,” he apologized, moving to be next to her. “This is all my fault. If I were a regular, human man, this never would have happened.”

“Clark?”

“No, let me get this out,” he interrupted gently. “Dr. Klein warned me about how different my DNA is.” He shook his head. “I just...I believed him when he said we couldn’t have kids. It never once crossed my mind that something like this would happen.”

“Clark?”

“Please, Lois, forgive me. I’ll find other jobs to bring in more money. I’ll hang up the cape for good. I’ll figure out some way to have help come in to give us an extra bit of support in taking care of so many children at one time. I know you might hate the idea, but we could move to Kansas, buy a farm, grow our own food to help keep everyone’s stomach full.”

“Clark!” Lois said sharply, cutting off his apology and grabbing his full attention.

“Yeah?”

“Remember the paper Jimmy showed us?” she asked.

“Huh? Yeah, of course. That’s what caused me to have nightmares about this exact scenario,” Clark replied cautiously.

“Remember what day he gave it to you?”

“Um...Monday?” Clark ventured, confused.

“And Monday was...?”

“Two days ago?”

Lois rolled her eyes. “The date?”

“Oh, um...the first,” Clark said, thinking quickly.

“Not just *the* first, but *April* First,” Lois corrected, a grin spreading over her features. “Happy April Fools Day, Clark.” She threw off the blanket, sat up straighter, and patted his cheek affectionately.

Clark blinked and his mouth opened to hang slack. “Wait... what?”

“I *finally* got you back from that ‘murder set up’ you and Jimmy got me on a few years ago,” she practically crowed.

“So...all of this...?”

“Is the best prank I could come up with. Sure, it took me a while, but I *finally* figured out a way to get my revenge.” She was clearly biting back a laugh.

“You think this is funny?” Clark asked incredulous that she found such humor in his discomfiture.

“Oh yeah,” she said, a roar of a laugh finally bursting through.

“But the paper...”

“Oh, I had Jimmy doctor that up while we were away,” Lois explained casually, wiping tears of laughter from her eyes.

“Wait...” Clark said slowly as sudden realization crashed into him. “Does Jimmy...know? About me?”

Lois nodded. “He figured it out a couple of years ago, during the mess we had with Lex Luthor’s demented video game freak of a son.”

“Jaxon,” Clark said with a nod of remembrance.

“Or, well, he *says* that’s when it clicked into place for him,” Lois amended. “He asked me about it...oh...I guess it was just

after Zara and Ching swung by to kidnap you.”

“Hey!” Clark corrected her playfully. “They never *kidnapped* me. I went with them of my own free will.”

“You were under duress as far as I’m concerned,” she quipped perhaps more harshly than she’d meant to. But Clark knew that, as much as Lois had come to understand and even befriend – to a certain degree – Zara and Ching, she still didn’t completely forgive them for trying to spirit him away to another planet. “Anyway, Jimmy was shaken up by everything he’d seen in Smallville with Superman trying to blend in as a normal guy to get the drop on Nor. After the Kryptonians packed up and left for home, he approached me. I think he was afraid to let you know that he knew. He said he knew how important it was for you to keep your secret. But, lately, he’s been thinking about letting you know that he knows.” Lois shrugged innocently. “I think it’s killing him to keep the secret from you.”

“So you admitted to him that I’m Superman?” Clark raised a playful eyebrow at her, letting her know he wasn’t upset.

“I figured it wouldn’t bother you. You two are as close as brothers,” she said with another shrug. “But with him in the know, I knew I could count on him to help me pull off my prank.”

“You know I’ve had *two* nightmares now about having an entire *brood* of children all at once,” Clark chuckled, unable to hold his amusement in check. He’d meant the words to come out as mildly irritated, but he was putty in Lois’ presence and even faking anger with her was completely outside of his realm of abilities.

Lois laughed again. “It worked better than I thought. Good thing I told him to nix the news segment he was going to doctor up and give you on tape. As it is, I’m lucky I was able to squeeze in this final prank,” she said, gesturing to the basket of eggs.

Clark shook his head. “That *may* have killed me,” he admitted with another laugh. It took him a few minutes to regain his composure. He removed his glasses and ran a hand over his face, wiping away the tears of laughter in his eyes. “Oh, man. I guess we should invite Jimmy over for dinner. It seems like I’ve got a lot to talk to him about.”

“Are you...okay? With him knowing?” Lois asked, placing a hand on his bicep.

Clark nodded. “Yeah. A part of me always knew I’d probably have to tell him one day. Well...Jimmy *and* Perry. But, between you and me, I’m not convinced Perry doesn’t know already...or at least have his suspicions.”

He knew his eyes were twinkling. He was honestly surprised his boss hadn’t ever approached Clark about his secret. And Clark was almost certain that Perry knew. The man had dropped enough veiled hints over the years. Things that Clark had very carefully pretended to be oblivious to.

“You know, I’ve often wondered the same thing myself,” Lois mused. “Anyway, let me get these eggs back in the fridge where they belong.”

“Okay.” Clark stood, offered his hand to her, and helped her off the floor. “And *then* can we please talk about your ultrasound? You *must* have a couple of print outs I can see.”

“I do. They’re in my purse. I’ll get them in a minute,” Lois said with a nod, picking up the bowl of eggs and heading for the kitchen. “You know, you really don’t have to worry.”

“Who said I’m worried?” Clark asked, smiling as he trailed behind her.

“That little wrinkle in the middle of your forehead,” Lois replied, turning briefly to flash him a smile as she opened the fridge and replaced the eggs into the Styrofoam cartons within.

“Wrinkle?” Clark playfully scoffed.

“Yep,” she casually remarked. “It’s pretty distinctive.”

Without a conscious thought to do so, Clark reached up and rubbed the middle of his forehead. “Should I be worried about that?” he weakly joked.

“No. It’s adorable.” She flashed him another brilliant smile.

“Go sit. I’ll grab the ultrasound photos.”

“Alright,” Clark agreed, moving to the breakfast nook. He started to pile some of the cooling silver dollar pancakes he’d made onto his plate, giving them a blast of his heat vision to warm them until they were steaming. “So, since you seem pretty calm about the whole thing, I take it we’re having just *one* healthy baby, rather than an entire town’s worth of babies all in one shot?” he asked, watching as Lois dug around in her purse, which was on the edge of the counter.

She didn’t answer right away, choosing, instead to cross the room, the photos in her hand. Setting the print outs on the table before Clark, she smiled in a way that he wasn’t sure he liked.

“Of course not,” she told him, as his eyes swept down to the grainy black and white images she’d placed before him. “It’s twins.”

As Clark’s mind registered the two gestational sacs in the photos, he promptly passed out.

THE END