

Zebedee's Sons

by Anne Spear

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Author's Notes: I wrote this as a response to LabRat's challenge (on the Fanfic Messageboards at <http://www.lcficmbs.com/>) to write a story with a title that begins with "Z". Unfortunately, I set it aside for a while and someone else beat me to the punch, but that's no reason to not send it to the archive anyway...right?

I'd like to thank my GE, Lynn for all her help. Please send all questions, comments, or criticism to raggedyanne7@yahoo.com

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Lois Lane stood on the dock with the other reporters and television cameras. Checking her watch, she saw that it was almost 10:00 as she pulled her wool coat tighter against the bitter February wind. She moved closer to the front of the crowd and turned on her micro tape recorder as Police Commissioner Maggie Smith raised her hands for attention.

"So far," Commissioner Smith began, "we've learned that two teens, John Housman and his girlfriend, Jamie Burke, rented a sailboat at 5:00 this evening and were last seen sailing out into the lake. Emergency Services received a 30-second call from a cell phone at 6:27 that we believe may have been John Housman. Unfortunately, rescue teams were not dispatched at that time because there just wasn't enough information given before the call was cut off. A tape and transcript of that call will be released shortly. As of 9:30, the sailboat has been found, but there is still no sign of the missing youth."

The reporters all raised their hands vying for the Commissioner's attention as a collective group. The commissioner's gaze traveled through the crowd until she chose one reporter. "Mr. Grey."

"How old are these kids?" Harold Grey from the Tribune asked, pad and pen in hand.

"John is 18-years-old and Jamie is 17. They are both seniors at Steven McBride High School. Next question, Ms. Lane."

"Where was the sailboat found, exactly?" Lois asked.

"Approximately two miles from the north shore."

"And how wide is the entire lake?" Lois continued.

"Five miles across at its largest," the commissioner supplied as the reporters' hands raised again. "Ms. Abrahms."

"Has Superman been helping with the rescue efforts?" Roz Abrahms from Channel 7 questioned.

"Yes," Commissioner Smith verified. "His help has been invaluable since he is able to stay under the frigid water much longer than the police divers can."

"And yet, the teens still have not been found?"

"No, they have not. Thank you, no more questions." With that, the commissioner turned her back on the reporters who were still trying to get her attention and walked back to the area that had been taped off by the police.

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Back home, Lois quickly typed the story and e-mailed it to the Night Shift Editor to make sure it got into the morning edition. She had hoped that Clark would be home in time to give her an exclusive "Superman" quote, but that could be saved for the follow up. After sending the story, she moved to the

sofa, found the television remote, and started flipping through channels. None of the news programs had any new information, so she just picked one to settle on.

Not much later, Superman flew in through the living room window and found Lois asleep on the sofa, while "The Tonight Show" played on the TV. He spun back into the sweatpants and T-shirt Clark had been wearing when he found out about the search and turned off the TV.

'She looks so peaceful,' he thought, gazing down at his wife. He thought back on the whirlwind life they'd shared so far. Only one thing could make everything perfect. 'No,' he told himself, 'I promised myself I wouldn't live in regrets.'

It had been nearly two years since he'd told Lois that being a family of two was enough. Then, they'd thought they would have a baby, but that happiness had been taken away so abruptly. At least now he knew exactly how his mother had felt before his parents had found him, especially considering his and Lois's infertility was all his fault. The fact that he was an alien was the reason they couldn't have children. Only the assurance from H.G. Wells that Utopia would be founded by Superman's descendants was enough to give him faith anymore.

As he continued to gaze lovingly at his wife, he noticed a small smile starting to form on her face and realized that she was really awake and knew he was there. Without a word, he scooped her off the sofa and headed for the stairs. Her eyes flew open in mock terror, and she playfully struggled in his arms.

"Hey," she exclaimed. "What do you think you're doing?"

"I'm taking you upstairs to make love to you until your toes curl."

"Oh, okay," she smiled, settling her arms around his neck. "But you'd better hurry. My husband will be home any minute now."

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When Lois and Clark exited the elevator into the newsroom the next morning, they were still discussing the missing youth.

"There's no way," Clark was telling Lois, "that those kids drowned in that lake. 'Superman' checked every inch of that water, and they just weren't there."

"Maybe their bodies got tangled up in the weeds at the bottom," she suggested.

Clark shook his head. "'Superman' even x-rayed the sand. There's just no way."

"What condition was the sailboat when they found it?"

"It was upside-down in the water, but otherwise there wasn't a scratch on it."

"So, if the boat capsized but they didn't drown, where are they?"

"That is the sixty-four thousand dollar question," he replied. "Maybe we should interview the parents to try and get a better idea of what may have happened."

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"Thank you for seeing us, Mrs. Housman," Clark said to the older woman as he shook her hand. "I realize how difficult this must be for you."

"I've read your work, Mr. Kent, and I know that you and Ms. Lane have actually solved quite a few cases yourselves. That's the only reason I agreed to talk with you." Ruth Housman was petite and had dark hair, cut to just above her shoulders. The large curls bounced around her neck as she turned to look at Lois then back at Clark. She appeared to be in her mid-forties, and she nervously wrung a handkerchief as she spoke.

"So, you don't believe John and Jamie drowned?" Lois verified.

Mrs. Housman turned to look back at Lois again. "Do you have any children, Ms. Lane? I know you and Mr. Kent are married."

Lois took a deep breath before answering. She glanced over at Clark who was staring down at his hands. The miscarriage had been just over a year ago, yet the emotional pain for both of them was still very fresh. "No, we don't," she answered simply.

"Well, someday I hope you'll understand when I tell you that if my son were really dead, I'd know

it."

Clark considered telling her that Superman had been unable to find the bodies, but decided not to raise her hopes. "Was John an only child?" he asked.

"Yes," the distraught mother replied. "He's my whole life. I probably spoiled him terribly, but it didn't matter. He's such a good boy. Did you know he's an honor student?"

"Had he ever been sailing before?" Clark continued.

"Oh, many times. He and Jamie went out nearly every day last summer. If that boat really did capsize, I doubt it was anything they did or didn't do."

"What do you think happened?" Lois asked.

The old woman closed her eyes and shook her head sadly. "I just don't know."

Abruptly, all three were startled by the slamming of a door. Mrs. Housman stood and wrung her handkerchief even more nervously, if that were possible. A large man in his early fifties, probably 6'4" with broader shoulders than Clark, entered from the kitchen.

"This is my husband, Benjamin," Mrs. Housman introduced them quickly. "Dear, this is Clark Kent and Lois Lane. You know, from the Daily Planet."

Mr. Housman ignored the young couple as they rose and looked directly at his wife. "Dammit, Ruth. I told you no reporters," he snapped at her.

"But, Ben. They may be able to find out where John is."

"Mr. Housman," Clark started, hoping to diffuse the man's apparent anger. "We just want to help."

"You can help by leaving us alone," the larger man bellowed. "My son and his uppity girlfriend are dead, and the sooner my wife accepts that, the better."

"Ben, please," Mrs. Housman pleaded.

Mr. Housman turned back to face his wife. "No. I'm tired of this. Now, get rid of them." With that, he stormed out of the room and slammed another door.

"I'm sorry," Mrs. Housman said to Lois and Clark with teary eyes. "My husband."

"It's all right," Lois interrupted her. "Just one more thing and then we'll go," Clark promised. "Did John and his father fight a lot?"

"Well, what teenager doesn't fight with his parents?" Mrs. Housman asked, defensively.

"And were most of the arguments about Jamie?"

"Yes," she admitted. "Ben felt that Jamie thought she was better than us, but it simply isn't so. She's such a kind person. Please Ms. Lane, Mr. Kent, if you find my son, please tell him how much I miss him."

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As Lois sat in the Burkes' living room, she understood why Mr. Housman might resent Jamie so much. She had definitely come from money. Although, she also knew that social status had very little to do with love. She and Clark were the perfect example - her father was a doctor and his was a farmer - yet they had been married for over two years now and knew they could overcome anything to stay together forever.

"Our daughter was an excellent swimmer," Mrs. Burke was telling Clark. She was a tall blonde in her early forties but could easily pass for much younger. Her husband was sitting beside her holding her hand. He was average in height and stature.

"Both our girls had a private swim coach. I insisted on it when we got the pool in the back yard," she continued. "I just don't understand how something like this could happen to my baby." Mrs. Burke sobbed openly while her husband tried to comfort her with his free hand.

"I understand that John and Jamie usually sailed during the summer," Lois started. "Do you have any idea why they went out yesterday?"

"Because it was Valentine's Day. John thought it would be romantic to watch the sunset from the middle of the lake," Mr. Burke answered with a sneer. "If that no-good kid had any sense at all, my daughter would still be alive."

Clark's next question was interrupted by the telephone ringing. Mr. Burke excused himself to answer it. As the others waited for him to return, they could easily hear his half of the conversation.

"Yes, this is he. No, that's my daughter's account. Why would we? No. No. All right, fine. I'll be there this afternoon."

Mrs. Burke dried her eyes, excused herself as well, and rose to join her husband in the hallway.

"Did you empty Jamie's savings account?" he asked his wife.

"No," she answered. "Why?"

"That was the bank informing us that they will be closing the account because someone came in on Saturday and withdrew everything in it. You don't think Jamie would do that, do you?"

"Now why would Jamie need \$3,500 just to rent one lousy sailboat? I swear, if you had a brain you'd be dangerous," Mrs. Burke insisted.

Lois and Clark sat uncomfortably as they heard the entire conversation, followed by Mrs. Burke storming off in the opposite direction. Mr. Burke returned to the living room to inform the reporters that his wife was too distraught to finish the interview at this time.

Outside, Lois and Clark were just about to get into their Jeep when Clark saw a ten or eleven-year-old girl riding her bike up the driveway. He looked over at Lois and indicated the girl with a tilt of his head. Lois understood his meaning and followed him to the garage where the girl was putting her bike away.

"Are you Jamie's sister?" Lois asked her.

"Maybe," she shrugged.

Clark squatted down in front of the girl so she was now taller than he. "I'm Clark Kent," he started with a hand on his chest, then continued by waving toward Lois. "And this is Lois Lane. We're reporters for the Daily Planet."

"I'm Rachel," the girl said timidly.

"It's nice to meet you, Rachel," Clark said. He held his hand out and waited for Rachel to shake it, which she did. Lois was still amazed at how quickly Clark could put children at ease, even without his "other" suit. Realizing that Rachel now trusted him, Lois hung back and let Clark ask the questions.

"Did Jamie and your parents fight a lot?" he asked, getting right to the point.

"Well, yeah," she admitted, still a little timid.

"And were the arguments mostly about John?"

Rachel nodded. "Daddy thought John was dating Jamie because of our money."

"What do you think?"

Rachel shrugged. "I liked John. He was always nice to me."

"Thanks for your help, Rachel." Clark stood up and followed Lois back to the car.

Once inside, Lois turned the car on. "I'm starting to form a theory," she told Clark, turning to look behind them as she backed out of the driveway. "But there's one more thing I need to check out."

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Their next stop was Steven McBride High School. In the front office, Lois introduced herself and Clark to the secretary.

"I know who you are, Ms. Lane, and I wish I could help, but as I told all the reporters who've called, we aren't able to give out any information on John or Jamie."

"We're not looking for personal info on them," Lois assured her. "We were wondering if you could check the curriculum and tell us what their English class is studying."

The secretary looked rather confused. "I...suppose that's all right." She walked around a corner and returned with a large loose-leaf notebook. She flipped to the middle of the book then turned a few more pages until she found what she was looking for. "It looks like they just finished reading 'Romeo and Juliet'. Does that help?" she asked, looking up at Lois.

Lois smiled at her. "Yes, very much. Thank you."

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Back in the car again, Lois pulled out into traffic and headed for the Daily Planet.

"You don't really think..." Clark began.

"Yes, I do," Lois interrupted him. "Think back to when you were 18. Well, maybe not you, but a normal 18-year-old. They're frustrated with having no control over their own lives. Tired of being told what to do, how to think, who to see."

"Yeah, but do you really think they'd do something so stupid?"

"Again, we're talking about teenagers. Add raging hormones to the mix and they really would do something so stupid. You'd be surprised how many stupid stunts I pulled at that age."

"Oh, really?" Clark asked. "Do tell."

"Never you mind."

Clark chuckled. "So, they rented the boat, cast off at the dock in front of witnesses, then sailed to the north shore and capsized the boat."

"That's the theory," she confirmed.

"Okay. Once we get back to the office, you check on bus schedules and I'll call the taxi companies," he suggested.

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Lois sat at her desk and turned on her computer. She realized that Clark was right. John and Jamie's plan to fake their own deaths really was stupid. She figured they wanted to hurt their fathers, but didn't they think about what this would do to their mothers? She knew how painful it was to lose an unborn child; she could only imagine loving a child for eighteen years and then losing it. It must be like losing an arm, or worse. The more Lois thought about it, the angrier she got at these two kids and their thoughtlessness.

"Lois?"

Lois looked up to see a woman from research holding a small bundle. "Grace, hi!" she greeted with a smile, her dark mood temporarily forgotten. "I thought you extended your maternity leave?"

"I did. HR needed me to sign some forms, so I figured I'd bring Steven for his first visit."

Lois stood to look at the tiny angelic face nestled in the blanket. "He's so adorable," she gushed.

"Would you like to hold him?"

"Oh, could I?"

"Sure." Grace gently laid the newborn into Lois' arms then took a step back. The baby fussed for a second, but settled back to sleep quickly.

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At his desk, Clark happened to look up to see Lois holding a baby and swaying. He saw Grace Robinson standing there and knew who's baby it was, but for just a moment he let himself imagine how it would feel to see Lois holding their own child. He saw those images again, the same ones he'd created before the miscarriage. Images of Lois feeding the baby, giving it a bath and rocking it in the rocking chair his parents had given them when they had moved into the townhouse - the same chair that his mother had sat in to rock him. Lois singing to the baby in the bassinet.

Eventually, he let the fantasy dissolve as he watched Lois give the baby back to Grace and wave goodbye. The rocking chair and the bassinet were still up in the attic, and they were still a family of two.

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After checking both bus lines, Lois walked over to Clark's desk and sat in her usual chair. He was still on the phone.

"So, you couldn't be sure it was them? Okay, thank you." He hung up and looked expectantly at Lois.

"Neither bus line went anywhere near the north shore Sunday night," she supplied. "What about cabs?"

"I only found one who picked up two people last night, but I did manage to talk with the driver.

He said they were definitely a guy and a girl, but she had a scarf wrapped around her lower face and he wore a hood. The driver really couldn't tell me anything about them. He did say he dropped them off at the - " Clark checked his notes. "- Stumble Inn Motor Lodge on Reynolds Drive."

"That place is a dive ," Lois insisted. "Jamie's mother would have a fit if she knew that her daughter was there."

"We can't let the police or the parents know where they are," Clark agreed. "Mrs. Burke is likely to have John arrested for kidnapping. Let's head over there and see if we can convince them to go home on their own."

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At the motel, Lois insisted that the desk clerk would never tell them which room was the right one, so Clark agreed to take a quick peek at each one until he found the teenagers. There were a few rooms whose occupants made him blush, but he finally found them in an upstairs room.

As they made their way to the correct room, Clark asked, "How are we going to get them to open the door?"

"Let's try knocking," Lois replied sarcastically.

"No, seriously. These kids are smart enough to ask who it is before opening the door, especially in this neighborhood."

"See, that's just it. They're *book* smart, not *street* smart. I have a funny feeling we won't have a problem." That said, Lois knocked on the door and was not surprised when it was opened by Jamie Burke.

"You're very overdressed for delivering pizza," Jamie commented.

"My name is Lois Lane, and this is my partner, Clark Kent," Lois announced, holding up her press ID. Realizing they'd been found, Jamie tried to shut the door again, but Clark blocked it. "Please let us in, Jamie," Lois implored. "We need to talk to you and John."

"NO!" Jamie insisted. "We're not going back and you can't make us, so you might as well just leave."

"We're not going anywhere until we've talked," Clark told her.

"I'll call the cops," Jamie threatened.

"Go ahead," Lois called her bluff. "I dare ya!."

Reluctantly, Jamie backed away from the door, allowing Lois and Clark entrance. Clark shut the door behind him as John came out of the bathroom and went directly to Jamie's side. Clark, knowing they'd get further by treating them like adults, introduced himself and Lois, shaking John's hand.

"You're wasting your time, Mr. Kent," John told him. "We won't go back on our own. Once we go to Delaware and get married, no one will be able to tell us what to do ever again."

"Okay," Clark started calmly. "After you're married, then what?"

John and Jamie sat down on the end of the bed, and John put his arm around Jamie. "What do you mean?" he asked.

Clark dragged the only two chairs in the room over to face the bed, and he and Lois sat in them.

"What do you plan to do after you're married?" Clark clarified.

"We are going to go to college," Jamie insisted.

"Part time?" Clark asked. "Do you realize how long it will take you to get a degree that way?"

"Then we'll go to school full-time," John stated.

"Which means you'll have to work part-time," Lois pointed out. "How are you going to afford an apartment, at least one car and two tuitions on a Wal-Mart salary?" She was trying very hard to control her temper. If she yelled at these kids and told them to just grow up, like she wanted to, she knew they'd never listen.

"We'll make it work somehow," Jamie answered, fighting back the tears.

Lois suddenly remembered how it felt to be eighteen and in love and her heart melted. She leaned forward toward Jamie, looking directly into the girl's eyes. "I know what you're feeling," Lois told her.

"I thought I was in love when I was your age, too. In fact, I thought I was in love three times before I met the right guy."

"We are in love," Jamie insisted.

"I know, but real love will wait. You know, 'love is patient and kind.' If your love is real, and I'm not saying it isn't, then don't you think it's better to wait until you've finished college to get married?"

Jamie broke eye contact with Lois and hung her head, finally letting the tears fall. "But my father is making me go to Princeton, and John's going to be stuck here at Met U."

"So? Princeton isn't that far. There's still e-mail, weekends and holidays," Lois suggested. "It's not like you'll never see each other again."

"Long distance relationships never work," John pointed out.

"Any relationship works if you work at it," Clark told him. He looked over at Lois. They both knew they'd said all they could. Whatever happened next was up to John and Jamie. "We're going to wait outside," Clark continued, rising from his chair, "and let you talk alone."

Lois also rose but stopped before following Clark to the door. "Just one more thing," she began. "I almost forgot to give John a message. Your mother asked us to tell you how much she misses you."

John was shocked. "But, we saw the news last night. If everyone thinks we're dead, why would she say that?"

"Because she doesn't believe you're gone," Lois explained. "Without proof, she refuses to give up hope. I understand why you'd want to hurt your father, but did you ever stop to consider how your plan would effect your mother?"

That said, she turned and walked out the door being held open by Clark. Clark followed her out then quietly shut the door behind them.

"That last bit of guilt was worthy of your own mother," Clark told Lois, shaking his head.

Lois closed her eyes and held her hand in the air, palm toward Clark. "Please, I feel bad enough already." She lowered her hand and looked at him. "But they needed to hear it."

Clark comforted her with an arm around her shoulders while Lois rested her forehead against his for a moment. "So, how long do you think we should wait?"

Before Clark could answer, the motel door behind them opened, revealing Jamie, with John standing behind her. Each was holding a small packed bag.

"We're ready to go home," Jamie announced, drying her eyes with her free hand.

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Back at the office, Lois and Clark presented Perry with the exclusive story of how the missing teens were found alive and well to be tearfully reunited with their parents. As usual, the editor-in-chief didn't ask why they felt the need to investigate so deeply; he was just very glad they had.

As they were shutting down their computers and preparing to leave for the day, Lois' cell phone rang.

"Lois Lane. Oh, hi! Okay, we'll be right there."

"Who was that?" Clark asked as he helped Lois into her coat.

"Dr. Klein. He says he has some news for us and asked if we could meet him at Star Labs."

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Once they were inside his office, Dr. Klein shut the door. "This room is sound-proof, so we can speak freely in here," he assured them. "Please have a seat."

"Lois said you had news," Clark started. "Did you finish your research?"

A year and a half ago, when Lois realized she was pregnant, she and Clark decided to tell Dr. Klein the truth, so he would be able to monitor the baby's progress. Unfortunately, three months later, Lois miscarried the baby, and Dr. Klein had been researching why ever since.

Dr. Klein sat behind his desk and smiled. "Yes," he answered. "After eliminating all the...uh...maybe I should just get to the point. I've finally found a way for you to have a baby together."

"That's wonderful. But how?" Lois asked.

"Well, I was able to prove that the reason you lost the first baby was the fetus was...too strong, so your body rejected it. At first, I focused on trying to change the baby. Unfortunately, that seems to be impossible."

"Then how?" Lois asked again, impatiently.

"Right. The answer is so simple, I'm surprised I didn't think of it sooner. We just have to make Lois and the baby more compatible. Since we can't make the baby all human, we have to make Lois seem half- Kryptonian."

Lois rubbed her eyes. "I thought you were getting to the point," she muttered to herself.

Clark took Lois' free hand and lightly rubbed her thumb across her palm. "Bernard, how can you possibly make that happen?"

"By giving her monthly transfusions of your blood."

"There is no way we're the same blood type," Lois stated.

"No," Dr. Klein admitted, "but like our type O, Clark's is a universal donor. We've tested samples and saw the change under a microscope."

"That...could actually work," Clark admitted.

"How are we supposed to get blood out of you when no needle can pierce your skin?" Lois pointed out.

"There is one way to weaken me enough..." Clark suggested.

"No," Lois insisted, catching his meaning.

"Lois..." Clark started.

"No," she interrupted him. "I won't let you put yourself in danger. It's not worth it."

"Yes, it is," Clark answered calmly. "Sweetie, I know I said I'd be happy just being a family of two, but I'm starting to realize that it's not enough anymore. I am willing to take any risk so we can have children."

"There would be very little risk," Dr. Klein assured Lois. "Clark would only need to be exposed to the Kryptonite for a few seconds, and I would be right here the whole time."

"I understand you're worried," Clark told her, "but I want to do this. However, I won't if you really don't want me to."

Lois chewed her bottom lip, looking from her husband to his doctor and back again. She knew how much she really wanted a baby. Holding Steven Robinson earlier today just reinforced those feelings. But she didn't want just any baby - she wanted to have Clark's baby. She hadn't realized until now just how much Clark wanted kids too. Yet, he was putting their entire future in her hands to decide.

"Well..." She looked back to Dr. Klein. "If you promise to keep the exposure to a minimum..."

Clark's face broke into a grin and he nearly leapt out of his seat, lifting Lois into a bear hug in the process. "Let's go straight home and begin this procedure right away," he whispered with a playful leer.

"Actually...I think Stage One may already be in progress."

Clark put Lois down and held her at arm's length, waiting for her to continue.

Lois rolled her eyes. "I didn't say anything because I didn't want get our hopes up."

"Well, then," Dr. Klein took charge again. "Let's get a pregnancy test for Lois and that little bit of home for Clark, shall we?"

The End