

The Lingering Night (In Response to the EVIL Challenge)

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Rated: E for Evil. (Actually, rated G)

Submitted May, 2013

Summary: How do subsequent generations in an alternate universe perceive the events of Nightfall? Note: This story was in response to the EVIL challenge which was posted on a Lois and Clark message board.

Please be forewarned: This story is in response to Queen of the Capes' EVIL Challenge (http://www.lcfcmbbs.com/ubb/ultimatebb.php?ubb=get_topic:f=3;t=001113). There is no WAFF here, and it is not how a typical FoLC tale would usually go. Read at your own peril.

Some of the characters and plot points alluded to herein belong to Warner Brothers and DC Comics. Alexandra and the kids are mine, however. I just borrowed the other characters for a little twisted, not-for-profit fun.

No beta readers were harmed in the creation of this story.

Alexandra Kelly moved the curtain slightly to peek out at the full house. It looked like all of her students' friends and relatives had turned out to see this year's show. She then turned to her students to give them one last pep talk.

"I'm proud of all of you. You've worked hard to make this play really good, and I know the audience is going to enjoy it."

She turned to a boy who was dressed in a blue leotard with a red cape. "Vince, remember that the audience might boo when you go out on stage. You know that they are booing Superman, and not you, right?"

The little boy nodded, and she continued. "They all know you aren't really Superman, that you're only pretending, and that you really are a good lad." He nodded again; obviously, he was still displeased at being stuck in the rôle.

"All right, everybody. Let's get started!"

She walked out onto the stage, took a deep breath, and addressed the audience. "Thank you all for coming to the youth set's historical play. And thanks to everyone in the audience who helped the kids rehearse, who made costumes, and who encouraged the students to give their best performances. Without any further ado, we give you... 'THE LINGERING NIGHT.'"

She walked to a podium on the side of the stage and, with a grand gesture, opened a book. She began to read aloud, and children came onstage to mime the actions of which she spoke.

"It was another world. Many people lived all over the Earth — so many people that there were thousands and thousands of cities, each so large that no one person could know everyone who lived in even a single city. Buildings rose high — higher than a hundred people would be if they stood on each other's shoulders. Some things were the same as now, though. There was grass to walk on and a sky above them. There were stars in the sky...so many stars that one small, moving dot of light went unnoticed for a long time.

"People went about their lives. They ate, and slept, and the

children went to school. The adults went to work, often travelling far distances in wheeled boxes. And all the people came from Earth.

"All except one, that is. People called him, 'Superman.' He was so secretive that he wouldn't even tell anyone his real name.

"Now because Superman wasn't one of us, he could do things humans were never meant to do. He could uproot the largest tree with his bare hands, throw heavy objects and break sturdy ones. He could freeze people to death with his breath and set things on fire with his eyes. The people feared him.

"He was a proud man, and it was because of his pride that nearly all the people on Earth perished.

"One day, a scientist saw the moving dot in the sky. It wasn't a star; it was something called an 'asteroid.' And it was huge. It was so large that the scientists were afraid that if it hit the Earth, all life would be destroyed. The scientists could have exploded the asteroid by sending a rocket into it, but Superman in his pride and foolishness insisted that they not use a rocket; that he would move the asteroid away from Earth instead. He wanted to get the glory of saving the Earth, even if it meant risking the Earth to do so. The scientists were afraid to do anything against Superman's will, and so they let him try his plan.

"The scientists tried to tell him what he needed to do, but in his pride, he insisted that he knew what he had to do, and he took off, never to be seen again.

"No one knows what happened to him. Some people think that he died before he reached the asteroid; that had he just listened to the scientists, he and the rest of Earth's inhabitants might all have survived. Most people, however, think that he just decided to save his own skin — to fly away to find a new planet on which to live, and to let the people of Earth perish.

"And the people of Earth all would have perished, too, had it not been for Wise Lex. This man was the only one who saw through Superman's deceptions and cowardice. He was the only one with the foresight to build the Ark and to gather into it all the food and supplies our forefathers and foremothers would need to live for three years. He was wise enough to make sure that the people he invited into the Ark would all be able to help The Community: doctors and farmers and builders.

"And after three years, the people came out of the Ark. They saw the devastation wrought by Superman's cowardly inaction. But people could finally live on top of the dirt again. They sowed the seeds which Wise Lex had saved. They grew food, and made new homes above the ground.

"They lived their lives, and they had children. And those children had children. And so it went from generation to generation, right down to the present. And each generation learns anew what happened leading up to and following THE LINGERING NIGHT."

As the entire set came on stage and took their bows, the audience burst into applause. Alexandra was pleased with how the evening went, and it always did her heart good to teach her students about the important events in history.

THE END