

# When Churches Come Crashing Down

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Summary: In the conclusion to the author's "[Winner Takes All](#)" Lois and Clark are left to deal with the aftermath of the Daily Planet explosion and everything they lost that day. As they deal with their grief, a new head of Intergang begins to make a play for power just as a new face appears in Metropolis.

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Lois stared sadly at the empty space next to her. It had been eight weeks. Eight weeks since the attack on the Planet. Eight weeks since she had lost Jordan. She still refused to accept the fact that her child was gone. Her hand instinctively reached out to touch her abdomen; where she had last felt him growing inside her. Nothing.

The scar left from the incision was all that was left. She squinted back her tears as she gingerly touched the skin beneath her fingertips. How could life be so cruel? The Planet was supposed to be opening up its doors next week. There had been a time when she'd been happy with just her work. That had changed. Clark had changed her. Jordan had changed her. From the moment she'd first heard his heartbeat; felt him move inside her; she'd wanted to be his mother. True, she had been terrified at the prospect, but she trusted Clark. Together they had accomplished so much.

Together? She scoffed bitterly. Nothing had been the same for quite some time. The doctor had assured her that it would be okay for them to make love after six weeks, but it still hadn't happened. Cry for help after cry for help seemed to be getting in the way; along with his constant pulling back from her. She knew he was hurting, but he still refused to discuss Jordan. He wouldn't even say his name. It hurt. She could put up with other people tiptoeing around her, but not Clark. They had always been very open with one another; until Jordan. Everything had changed.

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Another Superman hate group. They seemed to be growing rapidly ever since Luthor's death. They blamed him for Luthor's death and kept bringing up the activities of his clone. Many believed the clone never existed. It amazed him to find so many people that were so easily swayed. He tried not to let the hateful words get to him, but it was hard.

After everything he'd been through with Lois... and Jordan. Everything was harder than it had been before. Holding Lois... It hurt. The incision where the doctors had cut their son out of her...

He shook his head in disgust. 'Don't go there.' He told himself. Everything that had come so naturally at one time was now so hard. Making love to Lois; holding her... tore him to the core now. It took everything he had not to break down every time he saw her. He had boxed up all of Jordan's things and put them away the week after Mr. Stern had bought the Planet. He'd caught Lois in there so many times; just staring at the bassinet. Staring at what could have been. She still insisted they investigate what had happened to their son. Maybe one day they would, but right now it was too painful.

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"There's going to be a new face on Intergang." Bill Church Jr. instructed his lackeys. "You all are used to the way things were done when my father was in charge; that's too bad. We are redefining the way Metropolis and the world see Intergang. If you don't like it; you know where the door is. Any questions?"

No one moved.

"Let's get to work." Bill Church Jr. smiled, puffing at his cigar.

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He couldn't go home. Everything reminded him of Jordan and he just couldn't deal with that right now. He'd never felt so alone. Just being in the same room as Lois was hard. The only thing that seemed to help was staying busy.

A call for help caught his attention. He soared down towards Southside where the old Metro Club was. He looked down and sighed. It was just some teenagers goofing off. He landed in the back alley behind the Metro Club and changed into a T-shirt and jeans as he headed into "Bibbo's Pub". He needed to clear his mind and stay nearby if Superman was needed.

"Long time no see," Bibbo said as he took a seat at the bar.

"Yeah," he sighed.

"What can I get ya?" Bibbo asked, motioning to the beers behind the bar.

"Beer."

"You got it," Bibbo said, handing him a cold beer from the cooler. "I heard the Planet's fixing to open back up. You must be excited."

"Yeah," Clark nodded. It would be good to have something to distract him from his own guilt and memories of what could have been. He took a sip of the beer and turned toward the band on stage, looking for something to focus on other than the memories that filled his mind. How he had let a man die. How he hadn't been able to do anything to save his son.

*Oh, dear mother, I love you*

*I'm sorry, I wasn't good enough*

*Dear father, forgive me*

*'Cause in your eyes, I just never added up*

*In my heart, I know I failed you, but you left me here alone*

*If I could hold back the rain, would you numb the pain?*

*'Cause I remember everything.*

*If I could help you forget, would you take my regrets?*

*'Cause I remember everything.*

<<"I...I can't...">>

<<"I'm so sorry. We did everything we could, Mr. Kent...">>

*Oh, dear brother, just don't hate me*

*For never standing by you or being by your side*

*Dear sister, please don't blame me*

*I only did what I thought was truly right*

*It's a long and lonely road, when you know you walk alone*

*If I could hold back the rain, would you numb the pain?*

*'Cause I remember everything.*

*If I could help you forget, would you take my regrets?*

*'Cause I remember everything.*

<<"No no no no...Jordan...My baby...Where's my baby? Clark, where's our baby?">>

<<"He was cremated yesterday afternoon.">>

*I feel like running away*

*I'm still so far from home*

*You say that I'll never change*

*But what the fuck do you know?*

*I'll burn it all to the ground before I let you in*

*Please forgive me, I can't forgive you now.*

*I remember everything.*

*If I could hold back the rain, would you numb the pain?*

*'Cause I remember everything.*

*If I could help you forget, would you take my regrets?*

*'Cause I remember everything.*

<<“Jordan Lane Kent.” Lois mused. “Got a nice ring to it.”  
 “Jordan it is then.” Clark agreed.>>  
*It all went by so fast  
 I still can't change the past  
 I always will remember everything  
 If we could start again,  
 Would that have changed the end?  
 We remember everything, everything.*  
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Three Months Later...

Jimmy bounded down the steps, into the newly redesigned newsroom of the Daily Planet. A lot had changed since Luthor's downfall a few months ago. Lucy had buried herself in her work; so he didn't see her much anymore. Ever since her failed marriage attempt with Lex she'd been very stand-offish. Even Lois had had a hard time talking to her.

The Skins had finally been brought to trial for the fires they'd set in the Southside of Metropolis. Lucy had been working tirelessly with Mayson on bringing them to justice; especially after the attack on her Uncle Mike. Ever since Jimmy's pheromone-induced declaration of love, his and Lucy's relationship had been rocky.

“Morning, CK!” Jimmy said cheerfully when he saw his friend at his desk. Clark seemed to come and go more so than he had in the past. Jimmy was still trying to learn the ins and outs of being a reporter. The responsibility of chasing down sources and leads was unfamiliar to him. Clark would usually give Lois a signal with his hand; she would nod then he would be gone.

The inferno that had engulfed the both of them at the beginning of their relationship seemed to be long gone ever since they'd lost Jordan. Clark would sometimes catch Lois gazing at the sonogram print she had hidden in her desk. She didn't know he knew and he thought it best not to enlighten her. He tried his best to avoid any conversation regarding children or the events that had taken place so many months ago.

“Morning, Jimmy,” Clark replied in a monotone voice, looking through the files on his desk. Jimmy glanced at Lois' desk and noticed she wasn't in yet.

“You're in early.”

“Yeah, I'm trying to get a feel for all this Superman Hate propaganda that's been spreading...” Clark explained. “It doesn't make any sense.” He raked a hand through his hair.

Jimmy nodded, “Superman's done a lot of good for Metropolis. I was worried there for a while when he disappeared.”

“Yeah.” Clark nodded.

“So, where's Lois?” Jimmy asked casually.

Clark's body language seemed to stiffen at the mention of his wife's name. “She, uh, she'll be in later...” Clark said a little too quickly. The truth was he had been out on patrol since 3:00 am and had yet to go home.

“Ah.” Jimmy nodded, not quite believing him. “Well, I gotta run these prints down to copy,” Jimmy said gesturing to the folder in his hands.

“Yeah.” Clark nodded, not really paying him any attention.

“Right. I'll see you, CK.” Jimmy moved on his way.  
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Lois walked down the halls of Metropolis General Hospital, pacing nervously in front of the head of the Maternity Ward's Office. She had been over and over this in her mind repeatedly. Her plea to watch the security tapes and discover what had happened the fateful day she and Clark had been brought into the ER; the fateful day her son had been taken from her, had been denied.

She heard the quiet sobs and what sounded like singing coming from one of the rooms. The door was cracked. She looked in and saw a young woman holding the tiny hand of a baby that couldn't be bigger than a cantaloupe. The baby had wires and

cords hooked up to it. Lois could feel the tears overtaking her.

*Two months is too little  
 They let him go  
 They had no sudden healing  
 To think that providence  
 Would take a child from his mother  
 While she prays, is appalling  
 Who told us we'd be rescued  
 What has changed and  
 Why should we be saved from nightmares  
 We're asking why this happens to us*

Lois turned away, listening quietly to the soft lullaby the young mother was singing to her baby. Cruel. Life was so cruel. She empathized with the woman. She knew how she felt... but she was never able to confirm her son's death. She was never able to wrap her head around why they had cremated him when both parents were unconscious... when...

*Who have died to live, it's unfair  
 This is what it means to be held  
 How it feels, when the sacred is torn from your life  
 And you survive  
 This is what it is to be loved and to know  
 That the promise was that when everything fell  
 We'd be held*

They claimed Jordan had been stillborn. No matter how she looked at it; she couldn't accept that. She had felt Jordan move inside her that morning. That morning they had announced his name to their friends and colleagues, making the wonderful news of Jordan's upcoming arrival more real.

<<“A boy?” Lois asked in a light whisper. Tears escaped from the corners of her eyes. She looked down at her goo-covered abdomen and smiled.

“I love you so much, sweetheart,” Clark whispered in her ear. She turned to face him, capturing his mouth with a passionate kiss.>>

*This hand is bitterness  
 We want to taste it and  
 Let the hatred numb our sorrows  
 The wise hand opens slowly  
 To lilies of the valley and tomorrow  
 This is what it means to be held  
 How it feels, when the sacred is torn from your life  
 And you survive  
 This is what it is to be loved and to know  
 That the promise was that when everything fell  
 We'd be held*

<<She leaned down to pick up the small pillow that lay in the bassinet. “Yours? This was your bassinet?” She asked in awe. The pillow was engraved with the monogram ‘CK.’ “It's so perfect...”

“Hey, don't cry...” He pulled her into his arms.

“I can't help it. It's just so beautiful. The baby will love it.”>>

<<“Jordan Lane Kent.” Lois mused. “Got a nice ring to it.”

“Jordan it is then.” Clark agreed.>>

Why was life so cruel?

*If hope is born of suffering  
 If this is only the beginning  
 Can we not wait, for one hour  
 Watching for our savior  
 This is what it means to be held  
 How it feels, when the sacred is torn from your life  
 And you survive  
 This is what it is to be loved and to know  
 That the promise was that when everything fell  
 We'd be held*

“Mrs. Kent?” A large woman in her mid-fifties opened the door to the office.

Lois stopped in mid-pace. “Yes?”

"I'm Bertha Richards, head of the Maternity Ward. The receptionist said you needed to speak with me?"

Lois took a shuddered breath before she spoke. This was the moment of truth. The moment she needed to tell this woman her suspicions. It didn't matter who thought she was crazy. She knew in her heart that something horrible had happened and it had nothing to do with her child being stillborn. She knew she was right, even if Clark didn't believe her.

"I need to talk to you," Lois said shakily.

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Lucy Lane stared blankly at the jury box as she awaited the jury's return to the courtroom. They had deliberated for eight hours. Eight long hours she'd waited patiently for the verdict to come back. This was her first case. She'd argued alongside Mayson; going toe to toe with Sheldon Bender, one of Metropolis' most acclaimed defense attorneys. She'd more than gotten her feet wet on this case.

This case had been good for her. After Lex's suicide and her failed wedding, she'd needed the distraction. Work had been the automatic solution for her. She had poured her blood and sweat into this case; determined to make the criminals that had attacked her uncle and so many other innocents in the Southside pay for what they'd done.

"All rise!" The bailiff announced. Judge Stevens as he stepped onto the bench. "For the honorable Judge Robert Stevens!"

Judge Stevens nodded at the courtroom then took his seat. Lucy watched in anticipation as she saw the door leading to the jury deliberation room open. The moment of truth was finally upon them. She would find out if the months of hard work had paid off.

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Clark looked up when he heard his wife's heartbeat enter the room. She held an armful of file folders and walked determined towards the conference room. He glanced at the clock. It was almost eleven. Lois never came in this late.

Concerned, he got up from his desk and followed her into the conference room. He opened the door and closed it behind him. "Hi, you're in late."

"I had an errand to run." She said briskly. Her tone was sharp and curt.

He winced. Her tone cut him to the core. Everything had changed in the past few months. They seemed to be drifting further and further apart. It had been five months since Jordan's death; five months since their lives had been shattered in one horrific second.

"What do you have there?" He asked, pointing to the files in front of her.

"If you're so curious why don't you just scan them; like you always do?" Lois asked. She was mad. Great.

"Lois..." Clark took a seat next to her. "That's not fair."

"Right." Lois turned to face him. He was a bit surprised to see tears in her eyes. "Fair? What is that? I don't think it's fair that I'm the only one..."

His head fell when he realized where she was headed with this. "Lois, please..."

"What?" Lois snapped angrily at him. "Please what? Continue to play pretend? I'm sorry, but I can't just as easily brush off what happened. I know I'm right. Something horrible happened in that hospital, but Jordan did not..."

"Stop it, Lois! Just stop it! I am not going to keep having this argument with you... God, why do you insist on doing this to yourself?"

"Because you don't care enough to help me!" she cried.

Clark's face darkened at her accusation. "You think I don't care?" He hissed. "You have no idea..."

"You're right. I have no idea, Clark, because you won't talk to me."

"How am I supposed to talk to you when all you want to discuss is these insane notions that Jordan was kidnapped?" He snapped back. "Lois, you have got to let this go."

Lois stared darkly back at him, shaking her head in disgust. "How can you give up so easily on him?"

"Give up? Do you think this is easy for me? For the past five months, I have been racking my brain trying to figure out what I could have done differently to have protected you and Jordan..."

"Clark..."

"No, let me finish. For once, just hear me out." He snapped irritated. "You act like you're the only one that's lost something. We both lost something... someONE... that day, but this..." He gestured to the pile of files on the table in front of her, "isn't going to bring him back. Nothing you or I do is going to bring him back. You have to let this go." He felt the heat from the tears in the corner of his eyes burn as he pleaded with her. She was quiet for a moment then she turned back to the file in front of her.

"I spoke with the woman in charge of the Maternity Ward at the hospital today." She said quietly.

Clark shook his head in disgust. "Did you hear a word I just said?"

Lois shook her head adamantly. "They LIED!!" She grabbed a tape from her purse and slammed it against his chest.

He took the tape from her, uncertain what she was talking about. She paced around the room angrily. "For five months I have been trying to figure out what happened." She shook her head in disgust. "Do you know how hard it was for me to go to that hospital... alone? Because you wouldn't go with me? I had to watch the footage of the doctors performing the Caesarean on me... alone. Just like I've had to do everything else... alone." Clark just stared blankly back at her, uncertain what to say. "Our son was not stillborn." She hissed vehemently. "Now I have the proof. So now are you going to quit walking on eggshells around me and help me figure out what happened to our son?"

"You don't know what happened after the Caesarean," Clark argued. "He could have died afterward."

"He cried!" Lois turned to face him. "He cried." She said more softly. Clark looked back and forth between his grief-stricken wife and the videotape cassette that sat in his hand. Could Lois be right? Could their son possibly be out there somewhere? If so who would kidnap their son from them? What could they possibly have to gain from doing so?

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"Such a good baby..." The young mother crooned as she fed the five-month-old baby in her arms.

She watched with a tender smile as she rocked her baby; holding him securely against her chest. She had always dreamed of being a mother. Sure there had been complications, but she had risen above them. Her son was the key to everything. She had the baby she'd always wanted.

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Mike Rogers impatiently tapped his fingers against his desk. It had been a stressful year. What with having his most celebrated reporter thrown in jail for murder; having the Daily Planet's competition rise to the point of possibly put them out of business and making matters worse, his star reporter continuing to call out with strange excuses, he'd never seen anything like it. He shook his head in disgust. "I should have been a fireman." He muttered.

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"How does it feel to have won your first case?" Mayson asked, pouring a glass of wine and handing it to Lucy.

"Good." Lucy nodded. "It feels incredible; liberating."

"Well, after the crazy few months you've had..." Mayson cleared her throat, noticing the expression that had fallen over Lucy's face. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have..."

"It's okay." Lucy nodded. "I'm fine." She smiled weakly at Mayson.

A knock on the office door brought her attention towards a familiar face. “Hey, Lucy, I wanted to see if you’d be up to a night on the town?” Jimmy asked shyly. “I know you won your first case and...” Jimmy looked down shyly. “I wanted to take you out to celebrate.” He held up his notebook, “And maybe get a few quotes for the Planet.”

Lucy looked at Mayson who shrugged. It appeared Lucy was free. “Sure. Why not?”

“Great.” Jimmy smiled happily.

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“This is insane,” Clark muttered.

“It’s no crazier than anything else that’s been going on.” Lois snapped back angrily. “Why? Why is it so hard for you to believe that just ...just maybe I might be right about this?”

Clark stared at her a moment then left; heading straight for the stairwell on the other side of the newsroom. Lois shook her head in disgust. “Great.” She rolled her eyes then turned back to the screenshots in front of her.

It hurt. She tried not to let it get to her, but sometimes the pain was just unbearable. Who she and Clark had been five months ago and who they were now was a difference of night and day. Clark was more closed off with her and refused to let her in. They had been avoiding one another for months now because every conversation came back to the same thing: Jordan. He didn’t believe her. That hurt more than anything.

He seemed to be using Superman to avoid talking to her. The last time they had even attempted to make love was almost two months ago. Things would be fine one minute then the next he’d pull away from her. It hurt. She’d never felt so undesirable. Jordan weighed heavily on both of their minds whether they discussed him or not.

Clark believed the story the doctors had told them.

He believed their son was dead.

She couldn’t.

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Bill Church Jr. opened the door to the luxurious office of Diana Stride. She looked up from her desk; arching her eyebrow at him as he strode inside. “Something I can help you with, Bill?” She asked.

Bill Church Jr. smiled, taking a cigar out of his coat pocket as he took a seat across from her. “I’m looking into a possible business venture...”

“Business venture?” Diana asked.

Bill Church Jr. nodded. “Yes, the subliminal messages being printed in the Metropolis Star are a start in pushing Superman out of Metropolis, but we need to move him out all the way. I don’t have the patience to wait for the people of Metropolis to turn on him; I need some results now. I have several operations I’m trying to move into Metropolis.”

“Slow down, Billy, that’s how your father ended up with heart problems,” Diana said. “Being overly ambitious.”

“Well, I have youth on my side,” Bill replied with a smile.

“That you do.” Diana retorted. “So, what do you want me to do? I can’t exactly kill Superman; he’s invulnerable.”

“Maybe not. There’s some talk about a meteorite that Lex Luthor got his hands on. The word is that it’s lethal to him.”

“And you want me to use it to kill him?” Diana asked.

“Yes, but I want you to do it with your usual pizzazz that you always use in your work.”

“That can be arranged. Get me the meteorite and we’ll talk.”

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Nothing. From the moment she’d watched Clark race towards the stairwell to the time she’d arrived home and continued to search through the files; she’d come up with nothing. Her mind was in a haze as she fought to bury herself in her work. She couldn’t focus. The events from the past months were beginning to get to her.

She sat in the middle of the living room, holding the baby blanket Martha had given them for Jordan. The tears began to overtake her as she whimpered against the blue fabric.

<<“This is a very special blanket.” Martha explained, pulling it out from an old suitcase beneath her bed. She held it against her chest with a sentimental smile. “This is the blanket we found Clark bundled in so many years ago. Whether your baby is a boy or a girl, he or she will appreciate the heritage of this blanket.”

Lois smiled, gingerly taking the blanket from her mother-in-law. “I don’t know what to say.”

“There’s nothing to say,” Martha reassured her. “I’m simply passing it from one Kent to another.” She placed a hand on Lois’ growing abdomen. Lois smiled up at her and nodded.

“Careful, the baby’s got quite a kick.”

“Just means the baby’s happy. It’s a good sign.” Martha reassured her. >>

Somewhere in the tears, Lois had fallen asleep, clutching the baby blanket to her. The feeling of being lifted from the couch awoke her and she glanced up at Clark who still donned the Superman suit as he carried her upstairs. “Clar...” She mumbled against his chest half-heartedly.

“Shhh, go back to sleep.” He whispered, laying her down on the soft mattress of their bed. She sleepily nodded. Her unconscious registered the sound of him changing and climbing into bed with her. “I’m sorry.” He whispered against her neck. “I’m so sorry.”

“It’s not your fault.” She mumbled incoherently. “I miss this.” She murmured, turning her face to look at him.

His arms tightened around her, pulling her closer to him. “I know.”

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“What do you mean you’ll work from home today? Lana, this is getting ridiculous. You need to come into work or you’ll end up fired.” Irritated, Lucy slammed the phone down.

“Problem?” Jimmy asked, gesturing to the phone.

“I just have a colleague that’s incompetent,” Lucy explained irritated. “What are you doing here?”

“I just wanted to stop by and say hey. I had a very nice time at dinner last night.”

“Well, thanks, Jimmy. You were great company.” Lucy smiled up at him.

“Glad to be of service.”

“So, what’s your real reason for stopping by?”

“Um, I was wondering if you could give me the gist of what’s going on in the courts today. That way if CK asks I already have it.”

“Well, what about Lois? I thought she’d be riding your butt more than Clark.”

“Well, she doesn’t really do that anymore,” Jimmy explained.

“Why not?”

“All she focuses on is Jordan.”

“What?”

“She’s convinced he was kidnapped. No proof. No nothing.”

“Well, a lot of people find that day very hazy...Anything’s possible.” Lucy reasoned.

“I guess.”

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“Well, this is a surprise.” She murmured, swinging her legs over the side of the bed. “You’re usually gone by the time I get up. What’s the occasion?”

Clark’s face fell with remorse. “I’m sorry about that. I know it feels like I’ve been ignoring you lately... I really wasn’t trying to run away yesterday. There was an electrical storm in Traverse City, Michigan. I had to help the plane land...” He explained.

“I know.” She said quietly, walking toward the closet to get ready. “It was on the news.”

She called over her shoulder.

“Yeah.” He followed her into the closet, resting his back against the door frame with his arms crossed over his chest, staring down at the floor.

“Was everyone all right?” She asked cautiously, noticing the solemn look on his face.

“Yeah, everyone was fine. It was just... It’s hard.”

“People still hounding you about Lex Luthor?” Lois asked, carrying the blouse and skirt she’d picked out into the bedroom to begin getting dressed.

“Yeah.” Clark nodded, following her back into the bedroom. He was quiet a moment, watching her get dressed in silence before he blurted out, “Lois, we can’t keep doing this.”

“Doing what?” Lois asked defensively.

“This.” He gestured between them. “Do you realize this is the first time we’ve had a normal conversation with each other without fighting in months? We are tearing each other apart...”

Lois wiped at the tears that began to glisten in the corners of her eyes. “So, what?” She shrugged, turning to face him, “What do you want to do?”

“We can’t keep arguing about what happened to Jordan.”

“Then quit *fighting* me on it!” Lois snapped, her face flickering with anger.

“Lois, do you realize you have yet to have worked on any of the investigative assignments since the Planet reopened? You are so consumed with getting to the bottom of what may or may not have happened to Jordan that you’ve come obsessed with it. You can’t keep doing this.”

“What am I supposed to do, Clark? Pretend everything’s okay and ignore the fact that Jordan is out there somewhere?” She mentally blanched at the thought. There was no way she could stop looking into her son’s death.

“We don’t know that for sure, Lois. Have you found *any* proof? Anything solid to prove Jordan was kidnapped?” He asked.

Lois’ face fell and he had his answer. “I haven’t found anything yet. All I know is the story I was told wasn’t what happened.”

“It was a hectic day, Lois. The doctors and nurses were having a hard time keeping up with everyone.”

“See? That’s just it! What if Jordan was switched with someone else’s baby? What if...?”

“Lois...Please...You’re missing the point.”

“Then what is the point?” Lois snapped.

“The point is it’s been *five months*...”

Lois’ face fell. “So?”

“Lois, you can’t keep obsessing over this...It’s not healthy... It’s not *normal*...”

“*Normal*? I’m sorry if I’m not handling having my child cut out of me while I was unconscious well enough for you, but this is how I deal with things...There are too many pieces that don’t add up...I am never going to be able to be ‘*normal*’ after losing Jordan.” Lois fumed angrily.

“Lois...”

“Don’t take that tone with me.”

“Fine. You know what, Lois? Do what you want,” He fumed angrily, walking toward the door.

“Fine, I will!” She called after him. She was furious.

It was always the same. Fight after fight. They’d never fought like this before. They’d also never spoken to one another like this. It was like they forgot how to talk to one another and just be with one another.

“I just don’t get how you can let this go so easy!”

He stopped at the door, turning to face her. The look on his face told her she’d hit a nerve but she was too angry to care. He stopped at the dresser, unwilling to close the gap between them as he fumed, “I am not letting anything go. Don’t you think I’m angry too? I am *pissed*! In one moment...” He pinched the bridge of his nose, trying to hold in the tears that were threatening to

escape.

She stopped, letting go of her anger when she saw the same pain in his eyes—the same pain that she’d been carrying around for the past few months. “Clark...”

“Every time you mention his name...it’s like a knife...” he said hoarsely. “I can’t...”

Lois felt the lump in her throat. “Clark, I can’t...” She shook her head. It hurt to talk about Jordan, but she couldn’t do what he was asking her to do. She hated seeing him like this. She walked toward him, closing the distance between them, reaching up to wrap her arms around him, holding him close.

He let out a shuddered breath against her, resting his chin on her head. “I know...” he murmured, brushing his lips against her hair. She let out a shaky breath against his chest. He tilted her chin up with his thumb, brushing his lips against hers.

One kiss became two, then four until she lost count. Determined not to lose contact, she wrapped her arms around him, deepening the kiss. He groaned his approval against her lips as she ran her palms up and down his back.

Five months. It had been five months since they had made love. Five months since he had... Maybe he just needed some encouragement.

She ran her hands up and down the front of his shirt, feeling the powerful muscles beneath the cotton of his dress shirt. She molded her body against his, feeling him begin to respond to her caresses.

His hand fingered the back of her head, slowly breaking off the kiss. He looked at her through his passion-filled eyes, silently asking for permission. She nodded mutely, unable to voice the demands her body was screaming at her. She was still a bit angry with him, but it had been *so* long and angry sex was a lot better than what they had been doing.

*‘Five months.’*

A split-second later his lips were on hers. Both of his hands cupped her face, outlining it as his mouth found hers, desperately seeking her taste as his hands moved up and down her sides. She nodded mutely and he lifted her up, allowing her to wrap her legs around his torso. Her hands trembled as she fumbled with the buttons to his shirt. Soon, the cotton garment fell open. They fell back against the bed and she gasped in surprise as he rolled on top of her.

*‘Five months.’*

His hands found themselves underneath her blouse, exploring the smoothness of her back. It was so hot. So very, very hot all of a sudden. She felt like her blouse was suffocating her. She couldn’t seem to get the buttons unfastened fast enough. She couldn’t...

“Oh, God...” she moaned against him as he nibbled at the sensitive flesh of her neck, grazing his teeth against it. He moved down the front of her blouse, tugging each button open one by one and layering her chest with heated kisses.

*‘Five months.’*

She could feel the effect their embrace had on him as he pressed against her. “Please...”

“I love you...” he whispered, inching his way down her body, nibbling at the sensitive flesh beneath her cotton white bra.

“I love you too, Clark.” The tears fell at their own accord, “Please make love to me, Clark...”

She felt him stiffen in her arms, lifting his head up with that familiar expression on his face. *‘Dear God, not now,’* she thought to herself.

She didn’t have to wait long to realize what had happened. The voice of the LNN announcer reached her ecstasy-filled mind. She looked down at the mattress and noticed what had happened. In their frenzy, they had turned the television on; so right when they were about to end their almost five-month dry spell. Superman was needed. A raging fire was out of control on the

outskirts of Metropolis.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” Lois muttered.

She felt the chill in the air at the loss of contact. They’d been so close... She did her best not to react as she watched him struggle to regain control – recalling how hard he’d been pressed against her just moments ago.

*‘Five Months.’*

She could feel the goosebumps rising on her chest and pulled the sides of her blouse closed, hurriedly fumbling with the buttons. They’d been *so* close.

*‘Five Months.’*

When had the television gotten turned on? She looked behind her and noticed the remote behind her. In their frenzy, she must have rolled on the remote and turned the television on—right when they were about to end the five-month dry spell in their marriage. Superman was needed. Superman was always needed these days. A raging fire was out of control on the outskirts of Metropolis.

“I’m sorry, honey. You have no idea how sorry...” he shook his head in disgust as he stood up, walking toward the television to examine the scene. She crossed her arms over her chest, tucking her knees beneath her elbows as she watched him change into his Superman suit.

“I’m sorry, honey. You have no idea how sorry...” he shook his head in disgust as he withdrew from her arms. She crossed her arms over her chest, tucking her knees beneath her elbows as she watched him change into his Superman suit.

She gazed at him in concern when she noticed the effect their embrace had had on him was still very much evident. “Are you going to be okay?” She asked.

“I’m so sorry, honey. I’ll make this up to you. I promise.” He leaned in to kiss her quickly on the cheek before leaving to tend to the fire.

“Promises, promises.” She muttered in disgust.

\*\*\*

“No...” Clark whispered as he approached the fire that had averted his attention from his wife earlier. It was a small orphanage on the outskirts of Metropolis. The screams of young children stabbed through his consciousness. The entire building was engulfed in flames; the wind was heavy, fanning the flames as the fire department fought to keep the fire contained.

More cries...

He swallowed hard as he began to slowly attempt to contain the fire. He lightly blew his freezing breath over the flames, careful not to fan the flames as he did so. He lowered himself towards the building to fight the fire at a better angle. He landed in the main level of the orphanage. He was in a room that looked like a large nursery. There were cribs all along the walls. Ash residue covered cribs. He scanned the room looking for a sign of the source to any of the cries for help he’d heard upon his arrival. He stopped when he approached a crib in the corner.

The blood.

The body of a small baby covered from head to toe in blood and ashy residue lay motionless inside the crib.

“No...” He shook his head adamantly, gingerly lifting up the small child and taking him into his arms. The baby couldn’t have been more than three months old. He scanned the baby once more. Him. He lay motionless against his chest. Why did life have to be so cruel?

The sound of the fire chief’s voice penetrated his consciousness. “Superman? Superman? Are you all right?”

“No.” He repeated vehemently.

\*\*\*

“James Olsen, Daily Planet,” Jimmy answered the phone on his desk. The voice on the other end of the phone was that of a very frantic Dr. Bernard Klein.

“I...I need to talk to Clark Kent...”

“Uh, Mr. Kent isn’t in right now...” Jimmy began. He watched as Lois took a seat at Clark’s desk; sifting through the files he had laid there for Clark to go through. Could Mad Dog Lane be peeking through?

“Is Ms. Lane around?”

“Uh, yeah,” Jimmy said. “Let me transfer you.” He placed Dr. Klein on hold. “Lois, you’ve got a call on line two.”

“Thanks, Jimmy.” Lois nodded, picking up the phone. “Lois Lane.”

“Ms. Lane, thank God! Someone’s taken it!”

“Taken what?”

“The Kryptonite!” Dr. Klein hissed into the phone.

“What are you talking about?” Lois asked, confused.

“The Kryptonite we got from Smallville last month.” Dr. Klein said exasperatedly. “Didn’t Clark tell you?”

“No,” Lois muttered bitterly.

“It’s been stolen. I don’t know what to do. I can’t tell the police. Then everyone would know about it... What do I do, Ms. Lane?”

\*\*\*

Bill Church Jr. stared at the red glowing meteorite before him suspiciously. “It’s red...” He commented suspiciously.

“It was exactly where you told us it would be, Mr. Church. I had the guys at the lab test it. It matches all the statistics Lex Labs had on that Kryptonite found in Smallville.” Gene Newtrich replied coolly.

“But it’s supposed to be green,” Bill argued.

Gene shrugged. “Minor difference.”

“The green kryptonite was supposed to be lethal to Superman. Will this...red kryptonite do the same thing?” Bill Church asked curiously.

“I don’t know.”

“Well, then we need to find that out. Get some men out on the field. Call up Diana. I’m sure she can come up with the perfect plan of action.”

“Yes. Mr. Church.”

\*\*\*

Clark stared at the paperwork in front of him. It was a copy of a certificate of death. Every child with the exception of a few lucky ones that had escaped with major burns would be issued one. It seemed so unfair. He read the name on the certificate in front of him. ‘Jordan Lane Kent.’ He kept the certificate in his desk; along with the rest of the paperwork they’d been given by the hospital. Lois had run across the certificate shortly after Jordan’s death and freaked. She’d been adamant that Jordan was not dead.

Could she be right?

Could their child be out there somewhere?

‘Don’t go there.’ He told himself. Giving himself false hope was the last thing he needed right now. He needed to be strong. He couldn’t hold onto the what-if scenarios. Their son had died and neither one of them had been conscious to witness the events that had lead up to him being stillborn. He didn’t blame Lois for clinging to the hope that he was out there somewhere, but he had to face the truth; even if she wasn’t ready to deal with it just yet.

\*\*\*

He’d lied to her. He’d told Dr. Klein about the Kryptonite. He’d told him where to get it; then allowed people to study him... He’d subjected himself to the Kryptonite and hadn’t even told her. Why? Lois furiously brushed away the stray tears that had begun to flow down her cheeks. They used to tell each other everything. Everything.

She glanced out the window at the night sky. “Where is he?” She muttered angrily, pacing in the living room. Nothing. She’d heard nothing from him all day. She wasn’t sure if she should be angry or worried.

\*\*\*

"Pleasure to see you again, Mrs. Cox." Nigel mused as the slender woman stepped into his office. "What can I do for you?"

Mrs. Cox placed a large metal box on his desk. "That was the easiest job I've had all year." She said.

"Well, it helps when you know the security system."

"It also helps when you designed it." She mused, lifting up the lid to the box to reveal a large chunk of green glowing meteorite. "Should I make the call?"

"No. Let Mr. Church sweat it out a bit. I'm interested in the effects of this red variation just as much as he is."

\*\*\*

Lois awoke the next morning to find the warm weight of her husband's arm wrapped around her. Recalling the previous night of how she had fallen asleep alone; she jerked out of his arms angrily. The sudden motion awoke him and he looked up at her confused. "Where the hell were you?" She asked angrily.

A solemn expression crossed his face. "I was working on trying to help out with the orphanage fire..."

"All day?" She challenged.

"No..."

"Then what? Were you working on more secret projects with Dr. Klein?"

Clark looked up at her confused, "Secret projects?"

"I know about the Kryptonite." She hissed angrily as she paced in front of him. "What I don't know is why you didn't have the decency to tell me what you were doing!" The look on his face was enough to encourage her to continue, "While Superman was helping with that fire and disappearing for the day S.T.A.R. Labs was broken into! And guess what was stolen?"

Clark had the decency to look ashamed. "All of it?"

Lois bit her lower lip as she tried to ease the anger that was simmering inside her. "Yes! All the Kryptonite that you had Dr. Klein store at S.T.A.R. Labs is gone." She said vehemently. "How could you do something so stupid and not talk to me first?"

"Dr. Klein said he might be able to create an antidote for the Kryptonite so it wouldn't be a problem anymore."

"Might?" She echoed. "You subject yourself to that...that poison for MIGHT???"

"Lois..." He stood up and approached her.

"Don't." She warned.

"I had to do something. I couldn't just leave the Kryptonite in Smallville for anyone to find."

"That's not the point! You didn't even tell me!" She turned toward the bathroom and slammed the door behind her.

\*\*\*

"Well, it's...unique." Diana reasoned. "Are you sure it will kill Superman?"

"Not exactly..." Gene said hesitantly. "We need to do a test run."

"Test run?"

"Yes, find out what we can about Superman and lure him to us. Test this...red variation on him."

Diana looked at him coldly. "You have got to be joking."

\*\*\*

Lois angrily typed away at her computer, doing her best to ignore her co-workers and Clark. She was still angry at him for shutting her out. Ever since Jordan he'd been pushing her further and further away. The closeness they had once shared was a distant memory. The intimacy they'd shared the previous morning was a rarity. And it seemed that any intimate moments these days were usually interrupted by calls for Superman. Clark didn't use to be able to hear the calls for help when they were that involved; it made her wonder just how focused he actually was on her.

"Lois, where's that piece on the break-in at S.T.A.R. Labs?" Perry asked from behind her.

"I'm just finishing it up," Lois explained.

"That's my girl." Perry leaned over her shoulder to scan what

she had so far. "It's nice to have you back." He said patting her supportively on the shoulder.

"Yeah," Lois muttered under her breath. She cast a wayward glance towards the empty desk across from her.

"So, where's Clark been the past few days?" Perry asked concerned.

"He's been working with Superman on trying to investigate the source of the arson to that orphanage," Lois said icily.

"Uh-huh. I take it you don't agree?" Perry mused.

"Not when I'm not included in the decision making," Lois muttered angrily. "Now, Perry, no offense, but it's hard for me to finish this when I've got my teacher standing over my shoulder."

"All right, I'm going. I'm going." Perry laughed, walking back towards his desk.

\*\*\*

"Is this what you were looking for?" Gene asked, opening a large velvet box. He revealed a glowing red necklace with matching earrings.

"Yes, it's perfect." She said admirably. "Superman won't know what hit him. Where should we start?" She asked turning towards Gene.

"Oh, no." Gene shook his head adamantly. "I'm not going there. Mr. Church said to make sure you had what you needed to do the job. The planning is all you." Gene then took the opportunity to leave.

Diana shook her head in disgust. "I'm always left with the dirty work."

\*\*\*

"Hi," Clark said, handing Lois a fresh cup of coffee. Lois didn't turn to face him. She took the coffee gratefully and continued working on her article. "What are you working on?"

"Follow up on the S.T.A.R. Labs break in," Lois said curtly.

"Lois, I am sorry," Clark said quietly.

She still didn't turn to face him. "Sorry? Is that all?" She asked, turning to face him.

He opened his mouth to speak, but was cut off by Perry's bellowing across the newsroom, "Listen up, boys and girls, I have an announcement to make!" All motion stopped as everyone turned towards Perry who held a folder in front of him and wore an unreadable expression on his face. "I just received word that Bill Church Jr is holding a banquet at the Metropolis Diamond Hotel to celebrate twenty-five years of Cost Mart being in business and also show respect to Bill Church Sr. who passed away earlier this year. You are all invited, so I expect to see everyone there, dressed to impress. It's this Friday." Murmurs of agreement could be heard throughout the crowd as Perry dismissed everyone to continue with their work.

"Great; just what we need; to attend a banquet honoring a criminal organization being in business for almost thirty years," Lois muttered sarcastically.

"Careful. You know how Perry gets." Clark warned.

\*\*\*

"Can I help you?" Lucy asked, looking up from her monitor. A young man in his early thirties with dark curly hair and a bright smile glanced down at her.

"I'm with the DEA; the name's Dan Scardino." He held his hand out to shake hers.

"Lucy Lane." She smiled, taking his hand to shake. "What can I do for you?"

"I'm trying to figure out who I need to speak with. I'm investigating the events that occurred at the Daily Planet about five months ago." Lucy's face fell as he explained his reasons for his visit to the office. "I'm sorry. Are you okay?"

"Fine." She gave him a pasted on smile. "I'm absolutely fine. Mayson Drake is actually the one in charge of that investigation. You should probably check with her."

"Great. Where can I find her?" Dan asked.

“Just straight down the hall.” Lucy pointed.  
“Well, then, it was nice meeting you, Lucy.”  
“Likewise, Mr. Scardino.”  
“It’s actually Agent Scardino, but you can call me ‘Dan.’”  
“Dan.” She echoed.

\*\*\*

“Are you going to talk to me or just continue giving me the silent treatment for the rest of the day?” Clark asked, taking a seat next to her in the conference room.

“What is there to talk about? You don’t value my opinion enough to include me in important decisions. It’s fine.” She muttered angrily.

“Lois, that is not true,” Clark argued. “I had Dr. Klein start looking for the Kryptonite right after the attack on the Planet. I have always been able to protect you, but that day I wasn’t able to because of that meteorite. I wanted to make sure something like that never happened again.”

Lois angrily turned to face him. “For the last four months, you have been subjecting yourself to exposure to...to...that poisonous rock. What if something happened to you?”

“Dr. Klein was monitoring the exposure very carefully...”  
Clark explained.

Lois sighed, “You have an answer for everything, don’t you?”

Clark placed a hesitant arm around her, tightening it around her when she relaxed against him. “I’m sorry. I didn’t know how you would react.” He placed a kiss on her forehead.

“So, were they able to find anything?” Lois asked.

“What do you mean?” Clark asked, uncertain as to what she was referring to.

“The Kryptonite...The antidote...” She prompted.

“Oh, no. We’re getting close I think, but nothing lasting.”  
Clark explained.

“I want to go with you the next time Dr. Klein does another test,” Lois whispered quietly.

“Assuming we can get the Kryptonite back,” Clark muttered slightly deflated.

“Still no word?” Lois asked concerned.

“No.”

A knock on the door announced Jimmy’s entrance into the conference room, “Lois, CK, Lucy’s on line one for you.”

“Thanks, Jimmy,” Lois said, picking up the phone to answer. “Lois Lane...What? Lucy, slow down. Fine. Okay. Yes, I’ll meet you. Would you calm down? Fine fine fine fine!” She hung up the phone then turned back towards Clark. “I have to go meet Lucy for lunch.” She gave him a quick peck on the cheek. “We’ll finish this later.” He nodded and watched her leave.

\*\*\*

“I’ve found some interesting footage on our private surveillance of Metropolis General Hospital.” Mrs. Cox laid several photos in front of Nigel to look at. “It looks like the rise in hormones wasn’t the only thing going on.”

Nigel smiled. “Well, I believe we’ve just found our newest recruit.” Nigel smiled at Mrs. Cox.

\*\*\*

“What is it, Lucy?” Lois asked, taking a seat across from her sister at a small diner. “You call me up; telling me I needed to meet you. What’s going on?”

“This DEA Agent came in to investigate the explosion and what happened. We all had to relay what had happened... They’re investigating the drug that was used in the explosion...” Lucy saw her sister’s face fall. She turned away for a moment, biting her lip, “I know. I’m sorry. I just thought you’d rather hear it from me... even if you do hate me.”

Lois sighed, “I don’t hate you, Luce, it’s just...”

“I know,” Lucy cried. “If I could go back in time and change things I would... You’re my best friend and I feel like the only time we see each other is for work...”

Lois bit her lip, trying to keep from crying. She missed her sister, but it was just too hard being around her. It brought up so many memories of everything Lex had done to them. “Luce...”

“I know. I know...It’s my own fault.” Lucy sighed. “I really wish you would stop investigating the hospital. The sooner you deal with your grief the sooner you’ll be able to move forward and you and Clark can try and have another...”

“Lucy, would you just stop it? Just STOP!!” Lois snapped. “I’m sorry that you seem to think everything in the world that happened that day is your fault but it’s not. I do not have the patience or the time to deal with this.” She got up to leave.

“Why can’t we get back to where we used to be?” Lucy asked.

“Because you, mom, dad, and everyone in the world seem to think the Band-Aid for my loss is to have another baby. I don’t WANT another baby. I want my son.” With that, Lois turned on her heel to leave.

\*\*\*

Lois arrived back at the Planet to find Clark walking up to the entrance at the same time. “Hi. Where have you been?” she asked.

“Bank alarm.” He explained. At her concerned look, he elaborated. “Don’t worry. Everything was okay. The criminals were caught and apprehended.”

“No Kryptonite?”

“No.” He shook his head.

“Good.” Lois nodded, pushing the button to call the elevator.

“How’s Lucy?”

“Having a pity party,” Lois said angrily. They stepped onto the elevator car and continued their conversation.

“What set it off this time?” Clark asked.

“Some DEA Agent...” Lois said airily. They arrived at the newsroom and stepped off, moving towards their respective desks.

“Lois, Clark, I want you to meet someone,” Perry called.

“Diana Stride, I’d like you to meet Lois Lane and Clark Kent.”

“Pleased to meet you,” Lois said quickly.

Clark nodded a smile at her. Perry continued an elaborate introduction of Diana and her history with Bill Church Jr, but Lois really wasn’t paying any attention to him. What she was paying attention to was how close Clark kept moving towards her. His hand rested against her buttocks, pulling her close to him. She felt a shiver of delight as his hand moved up and down her backside. What was he doing?

\*\*\*

A young blonde woman sat at her desk, typing away. Mrs. Cox approached her with a smile. She held a large manila envelope in her arms as she sashayed towards the unsuspecting woman. She slammed the folder on her desk. The woman jumped and looked up at her shocked. “May I help you?”

“I think you can.” Mrs. Cox smiled back at her. “You’ve been a naughty little girl, Ms. Lang.” Mrs. Cox pulled out several photos from the folder.

“Where- Where did you get these?” Lana asked in shock.

“That’s not your concern, Ms. Lang. What is your concern is what I’m going to do with this information?”

“What are you going to do?” Lana asked apprehensively.

\*\*\*

“Thanks for stopping by, Dianna,” Perry called after the Top Copy reporter.

“No problem, Perry,” Dianna called over her shoulder, heading toward the elevator.

Lois let out a sigh of relief as she watched Perry leave. She wasn’t sure what was up with Clark. She’d spent the last half hour swatting him away while his hands kept darting into dangerous territory in front of their boss.

Had they been at home she would have gladly welcomed the attention and even reciprocated—but they weren’t at home. They were at work—in the middle of a very crowded newsroom—where her husband kept trying to feel her up.

His hands moved underneath her blazer once more and she suppressed a groan. “Clark, stop it.” She turned back to him in surprise. He leaned in to kiss her and she stepped away, “What has gotten into you?”

“Nothing.” He shrugged, taking another step toward her, pulling her to him. She felt goosebumps run down her spine as his hands ran up and down her sides. He felt really, really good...

He leaned in to kiss her, “Are you still mad at me?”

‘*That’s what this is about.*’ She thought to herself. He moved his attention to the nape of her neck and she groaned inwardly.

She couldn’t think when he did that. He knew that. “I..”

She felt his hand slip up the back of her blazer and she stopped it. “Clark, stop.” She whispered in a harsh whisper. She spotted Perry heading their way. She really didn’t want to fend Clark off in front of Perry. He seemed intent on teasing her as a way of making up after their fight earlier. Not that she was complaining. She just wished he’d tried this when they’d been at home—in their bed—where they could have made-up properly.

“Um, why don’t we talk in the conference room?” Lois suggested. Maybe once they talked everything out she could get him to focus on work and pick this back up when they got home.

“Okay,” he followed her to the conference room.

She took a deep breath, closing the door behind her. She turned to see Clark closing the blinds. “What are you doing?” Before she knew what had happened his mouth was on hers. He pulled her to him, outlining the frame of her face as he devoured her. She could feel her knees growing weak from the intensity of the kiss. His hands roamed up and down the front of her blazer. He moved both hands to cup her breasts through the soft cream material. “Clark...” She sighed against him. “We’re supposed to be...*working.*”

The heat from his breath hit the side of her neck as he nibbled at the sensitive skin. “I miss you so much, Lois. I want you so bad.”

“I miss you too, but Clark...” She murmured, looking around the conference room as she backed up against the door. “*Here?* What if someone comes in?” She half-squeaked, surprised by her husband’s declaration.

He leaned into her and she let out a guttural moan feeling the familiar tightness in her belly as she felt him press up against her. He reached behind her, turning the lock.

“The door is locked. The blinds are closed.” He whispered, running his hands up the length of her legs. “Tell me to stop and I will...but I *really* don’t want to.” His hands slipped up the back of her legs, hiking her skirt up further and further. “I miss you, Lois,” He unfastened the button to her blazer. “I love you so much, Lois,” He murmured against her lips.

“I love you too, but we can’t just...Oh, God...” She stopped when she felt the back of the door frame against her back. So many wonderful memories of her in his arms against the wall of the Honeymoon Suite came back to her.

“I’ve missed you so much,” he murmured against her lips. He leaned into her and she fought the urge to jump into his arms and let him continue the pleasurable assault on her body. His hands slipped beneath the hem of her skirt.

“I’ve missed you too...so much.” She murmured, grabbing his hands from the back of her thighs. “...but we are at work—we’re supposed to be *working.*” She scolded, trying to bring his focus back on the story.

“You want me to stop?” He whispered, running his hands up the front of her blazer, outlining the curve of her breasts.

“Um, nuh-yess.” She stammered, trying to stand her ground.

“Yes or no?” He whispered in her ear, nibbling at the side of her neck. His hands ran up the front of her skirt, tracing an imaginary outline of her panty lines.

“Cla...” His mouth found hers and he leaned against her, holding her against the door frame as his hands moved beneath her

skirt.

“Do you want me to stop?” He breathed in her ear.

Who was she kidding? She’d let him take her in the middle of Metro Station if it meant ending the drought they’d been in for the past five months.

Five Months.

How had they gone from unable to keep their hands off one another to not being able to...

“Nooo...” She let out a shuddered breath, reaching for his belt buckle. “Oh God yesssss...” His lips brushed against the nape of her neck, sending a pleasurable thrill down her spine.

“Oh, God, baby,” He moaned.

‘*Baby?*’

Why did that name sound so foreign to her? He’d said it a thousand times before.

Five Months.

Over five months. It had been over five months since she had seen Clark like this; sexually aggressive and in need of her. The past few months she had been the one to take the lead. The one to...

“Oh...” She let out a guttural moan as his mouth nibbled at the sensitive flesh of her chest. She looked down at him in surprise. When had he removed her bra? Who cared? She tightened her legs around him.

He felt so good in her arms. She’d missed this. The feeling of his body pressed up against hers. The passionate frenzy with which he assaulted her body... They’d come close to making love several times in the last few months, but never like this. It had been a long time since she’d seen Clark like this.

“Oh, God, Clark...” She hissed as he pressed against her. His hands glided up and down her thighs as he held her firmly against his solid frame.

“Lois...” He nibbled at her earlobe, tugging at it lightly. “I love you so much...” He whispered in her ear.

She let out an involuntary shudder as he nibbled at her neck. “Clark...” She wrapped her arms around him, pulling him close. He readjusted her in his arms, leaning down to recapture her lips.

“I love you so much... I need you so much...” He murmured in between open-mouthed kisses.

“I love you too... Oh, Clark...” She moaned.

“I love you. I need you so much. I missed you so much, baby...” He murmured against her lips.

‘*Baby?*’

It had been ages since she’d heard him use that term. She’d learned the hard way that that term reminded him of Jordan.

“Clark...” She whispered. All thoughts were cut off when he recaptured her mouth. “I love you...” she moaned against him, pleading, “Oh ... Clark, please, don’t stop...”

“I won’t ever stop, baby...” He whispered.

‘*Baby?*’

There was that word again. He’d said it countless times to her in the past, but why did it sound so wrong to be coming from him now?

She let out a guttural moan when he began tugging at her earlobe gently with his teeth. “Cl...” she moaned against him.

“You are so beautiful...” He murmured against her neck. “And sexy...”

The gentle teasing was still there as it always had been whenever they made love. She had to have imagined it. He was fine. It had just been so long for both of them; she just forgot what it felt like to be with him like this.

“Oh, God...” He still knew exactly where to touch her to push her over the edge. His body shuddered against hers, covering her mouth with his to drown out her cries.

‘*Finally.*’

His body tensed against hers. The world around her disappeared. She clung to him desperately, digging her nails into

his back as everything came back into focus. Her body felt numb. She felt complete. Safe. Finally she was home.

“I love you so much. I need you so much, baby...” He let out a shaky breath, resting his head against hers.

‘Baby.’

“Oh, God, I’ve forgotten...” She whispered, leaning her head back against the door frame. “...how incredible.”

“We’re idiots.” He murmured, running his hands up and down her sides, “Need to make up for lost time...”

“Again?” He normally needed at least a few minutes to recover. She looked at him in surprise.

“Why not?” He whispered in her ear, tugging on her earlobe with his teeth.

“Clark, we’re at *work*...” Lois tried to argue, glancing back at the locked door behind her. How long had they been in here?

“Then we’ll get out of here.” He whispered. She felt a pleasurable chill run down her spine as his breath brushed against the nape of her neck.

“Clark ...” She knew she should probably argue but any further protest was lost on her lips as his mouth found hers once again. He held her tightly against his solid frame. The ecstasy induced haze began to wash over her once more and all protests on her lips died while she concentrated on her husband and being one with him once more.

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“The boss?” Lana echoed. “I thought that was Lex Luthor.”

“Nothing is as it seems, but you know that all too well, don’t you, Ms. Lang?” Mrs. Cox teased snidely.

“So, if I work for ...the boss...you keep quiet?” Lana asked, reassuring herself that she understood the agreement.

“As long as you’re a good little girl and do as you’re told I don’t see why not.”

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“So, you weren’t affected by the drug?” Agent Scardino asked.

Lucy looked up at him uncomfortably, “Look, Dan, I’m really not comfortable talking about that day. A lot of really bad things occurred that day. My family is still dealing with the repercussions. Could you please talk to someone else about this?”

“You were there. I need your statement.” Dan said pointedly. “Now about the blast...”

\*\*\*

Clark awoke to the sound of rain drumming against the window outside his and Lois’ bedroom. He felt a familiar weight against his chest and another familiar weight against his legs. He looked down at the sleeping figure of his wife and was surprised to find her body tightly intertwined with his. It was funny. He didn’t remember falling asleep with her like this. He hadn’t seen her like this in a long time; since before Luthor’s attack on the Daily Planet.

He rolled over on his side to face her, allowing her soft hair to fall against his chest. He began to register his surroundings. They hadn’t fallen asleep like this in quite some time. His hand brushed against her cheek. He leaned in to kiss her.

He missed this.

His head was fuzzy. He couldn’t seem to remember much of ...anything. What exactly had happened yesterday?

\*\*\*

“Lana, I’m glad you’re here.” Lucy smiled at her colleague when she walked through the door. “We’ve had this DEA agent asking questions about the blast a few months ago and the effects it had on people. He wanted to ask you a few questions...”

Lana smiled at Lucy, “Sure.”

“Great,” Dan said, walking up behind Lana, “When can we get started?”

Lana glanced apprehensively between Lucy and Dan but continued to smile. “Now?”

\*\*\*

Lois awoke to find herself alone in bed. “Great.” She muttered under her breath, “Some things never change.” She grabbed the robe from the door and wrapped it around herself, making her way towards the kitchen to fix herself some coffee.

She was greeted by the sight of her husband hovering over his laptop with a look of concern on his face. Files were scattered everywhere. He seemed oblivious to her entering the room.

“Clark?” She called cautiously. “Everything okay?”

He glanced up; startled slightly to see her, “What?”

She slowly approached him, taking a seat next to him, “I asked if everything was okay.”

“I don’t know.” He said, shaking his head; worry written all over his face.

“What do you mean ‘you don’t know?’” Lois pressed.

“I don’t know. I can’t seem to remember a lot of the details from yesterday. I remember the fire at the orphanage. I remember us talking about the Kryptonite at S.T.A.R. Labs...” He shook his head in disgust, “I can’t remember anything else.”

Lois stared at him dumbfounded. He didn’t remember? How was that possible? He didn’t remember. They’d finally ended the dry spell in their marriage and he didn’t remember?

“Lois? Did you hear what I just said?”

She smiled weakly at him, “Yeah. Uh, yeah, so...so...you ... you don’t...re-remember...ANYTHING??”

“Well, some...in bits and pieces...none of it really makes any sense...” He explained.

“What are you doing here?” She gestured to the files.

“I’m trying to backtrack and see what happened yesterday,” Clark explained.

“Well, I know you had said you answered a call at a bank alarm.” Lois supplied helpfully.

“Yeah, I’ve got that.” Clark pointed to the article; describing the scene. “But there’s nothing else after that...Superman wise.”

Lois bit her lower lip. He really didn’t remember? He didn’t remember taking her into the conference room, locking the door, shutting all the blinds and making love to her for the first time in over five months...

“Lois?”

“Huh?” She gave him a weak smile.

“Where were you?”

“Oh, just somewhere else.” She muttered. “Somewhere else.”

“Do you remember what all happened after the bank alarm?”

He asked.

“Well, we were really busy...at the Planet.”

‘In the conference room.’

“We were working on the follow-ups...”

‘In the archives...’

“We...we...were ...just really...REALLY busy.”

Clark looked at her cautiously, “So, no Superman the rest of the night?”

Not if you count him taking you on the ceiling...

“No, just...work...” She got up and headed for the coffee maker to begin brewing some coffee. She could still feel his eyes on her.

\*\*\*

“Interesting piece of jewelry you have there, Ms. Stride.”

Linda King said examining the necklace she wore.

“It’s my good luck charm; from a dear friend.” Diana supplied with a smile.

“Well, my compliments to the friend. He certainly has good taste.” Linda remarked.

“That he does.”

\*\*\*

“I told Perry we were going to work from home today,” Lois said, sitting down next to Clark.

“That’s probably for the best. Maybe we can try and figure out what happened yesterday. I just don’t understand how I can...*not*

remember..."

She could have sworn she saw him blush slightly. Did he suspect...? He would have said something. "Well, do you remember the answering the bank alarm?" Lois asked.

"Bits and pieces," Clark explained. "It's kind of hazy."

"Do you remember meeting me outside the Planet afterward?"

"I think so."

"Do you remember Perry introducing us to Diana Stride?"

"No..." He shook his head.

Lois stared at him apprehensively. What should she do? Let him remember on his own? It was just part of a day; not his whole life. It couldn't hurt; could it? Returning to their previous dry spell was not what she wanted. Last night for the first time in a long time she had felt like Clark was actually letting her in. She felt loved and cherished in a way she hadn't in months.

*'Just bite the bullet...'*

"Clark?"

"Hmmm?"

"Are you sure you don't remember what happened after that? Not even a little bit?"

"No."

"So, you don't remember us talking with Dianna Stride?"

"No."

"You don't remember going in the conference room and—"

"I'm sorry. I don't remember anything much after the bank alarm." He apologized, looking at her apprehensively. "Did something happen?"

She did her best to suppress her pained expression.

*'How could he not remember?'*

"You could say that." She began hesitantly. "There wasn't any Superman activity because you were...preoccupied."

"Preoccupied?" He echoed.

"You really don't remember?" She asked with a pained expression.

"No, I'm sorry. I don't." He apologized again, "Just tell me. I'm going crazy imagining every worst-case scenario."

"We got to the Planet. Perry introduced us to Dianna Stride. Then after she left we went in the conference room, soon followed with the archives and later..." Her mind began to drift and she shook her head, steering it back to the task at hand. "We made love..."

He turned his head to face her, "What?"

"Finally...in the conference room, the archives, and..." She took a deep breath, "For the first time in five months."

\*\*\*

"Jimmy!" Perry shouted across the newsroom when he saw the young man run by his office, carrying files towards the research department.

Jimmy stopped and turned towards Perry, "What's up, Chief?"

"What's this about?" Perry held up a pink slip with a phone message that had been left on his desk.

"Oh, yeah. Lois called earlier while you were out. She and CK are doing some follow-ups on the fires and the break in at S.T.A.R. Labs and they're going to work from home today because CK's not feeling that great."

"Working from home?" Perry asked curiously, eyebrows raised.

"Yeah."

"Like they did yesterday afternoon?"

"I guess." Jimmy shrugged, not catching Perry's meaning. "I gotta get these files over to Doris..."

\*\*\*

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"You don't remember any of it?" Lois was holding back tears, trying not to let him see. Even if it wasn't his fault it still hurt.

"I'm sorry." He shook his head. "I wish I did. I mean, I figured something was up from the way I woke up with you this

morning..." She recalled the way they had fallen asleep last night and blushed. He placed an arm around her, pulling her against his chest, "I'm sorry..."

"It's not your fault." She muttered. She was being bitter and she knew it. She pulled herself out of his arms and stood up. "You were obviously drugged... somehow...I guess that's the only explanation, right?"

"I-I don't know." Clark's tone was a bit guarded, "What do you mean 'that's the only explanation.'"

"Exactly what I said." She said, "We should probably look at what was taken from the Kryptonite vault. It could be related. It's not like you can be drugged by just anything..."

"That's not what you meant." He challenged.

She was getting agitated. He kept pushing her. She really didn't want to talk about it. "Don't tell me what I meant. I think I know what I mean when I'm saying it; I don't need you to translate!" She snapped. He stood in front of her with his arms crossed, waiting for an answer. She hated it when he did that.

"I know you better than that, Lois."

"You *know* me?" She challenged; giving a sarcastic laugh. "That's hysterical because I sure as hell don't know *you* anymore. You don't let me in. You shut me out. You find every excuse in the book to appear as Superman everywhere around the world." She ticked off each point on her hand as she spoke.

"That is ridiculous!"

"Is it?" She challenged. The tears she had been suppressing were now streaming down her face. "Because all I know is that you never used to hear cries for help like that before; now all of a sudden..." She made a flying gesture with her hand. "Except for yesterday." She remarked bitterly.

"There weren't as many disasters before as there are now." He remarked bitterly. "Between the Kryptonite; the fires, Intergang, this crazy Superman hate group that's growing, and the remnants of Luthor in Metropolis I've been a *little* busy!"

"A *little*???" She challenged.

"Can we please just drop it? We need to figure out what happened..."

"No."

"What?"

"No, I am not going to just drop it. That's what you've been doing with everything for the last five months and I'm sick of it!" She hissed angrily. "You've done that with everything. Jordan. *Us*. Anytime I try to have a conversation with you about anything outside of work... Superman's needed and you know what? I'm sick of it! I'm..."

Her rant was silenced by his lips capturing hers as he scooped her into his arms; carrying her determinedly up the stairs towards their bedroom.

"What's wrong with him?" The young woman asked in a hushed whisper.

The doctor examined the young child carefully then looked up at the woman in concern, "Who is this boy's father?"

"I...I..."

"His skin is invulnerable, Miss. Who is his father?"

"I can't tell you." She said in a hushed whisper.

\*\*\*

She leaned back against the mattress as she pulled Clark on top of her; moaning in approval as she felt his hand cup her face, tracing the outline of her jaw. She loved kissing Clark. She lightly traced a path through his hair with her fingertips, enjoying the feel of his hair against her hands. He moaned into her mouth as she lightly tugged on his bottom lip with her teeth. She lightly teased him with the tip of her tongue; inviting him to explore her mouth. "Clark..." She moaned against him.

Oh, God, she needed this. She needed to feel loved in his arms. The fear and pain of losing Jordan had taken an emotional toll on her. The tiny doubts that continued to plague her

subconscious wore her down. She needed to feel his skin against hers. She was hurting. It had been five months. The only thing she knew was how good it felt in his arms. The passion between them slowly began to build into a raging inferno as she tightened her arms around him.

She moaned as she felt his tongue trace the outline of her mouth. She moved her hands up to trace his jawline, deepening the kiss. She smiled against his mouth as she slowly slipped her tongue inside his. She felt the rumble against her mouth as he moaned in pleasure. She felt him press his hard frame against her. His arms wrapped tightly around her as their embrace continued. Lois ran her hands up and down his back, trying to find the hem of his shirt. “Oh, God, Clark...” She moaned in approval.

She moved her left leg up and down his leg. She moaned in approval as his hands gently massaged her thigh. “I love you so much.” He whispered against her lips.

Finding the hem of his shirt, she tugged at it; pulling it over his head. He pulled away from her to disentangle himself from the shirt; tossing it to the ground. He lowered himself back into her arms, recapturing her mouth. She moaned in approval against his lips; wrapping her arms around him as she began exploring his broad shoulders, reveling in the feel of him beneath her fingertips.

\*\*\*

How could he not remember? He could remember every moan and cry of pleasure she’d ever made before. He’d recalled her scent; her taste each time they made love. He’d never been able to forget; so what had been different? She needed this; just as much as he needed it. He needed to lose himself in her arms. The things she’d said before; they hurt, but some of it had been true. He *had* been hiding from her; he just hadn’t realized she’d been wise to what he’d been doing.

“Oh, God, Clark...” She moaned. His hands moved to her back, pushing the tank top up her body, revealing her ivory skin to him.

She pushed the shirt back down, “No...” she shook her head.

“Please...” he whispered, lifting the edge of her shirt again, “...don’t do that.” He lowered himself to her abdomen, brushing his lips against the edge of skin exposed.

“Clark...” she sighed, sinking into the mattress.

“You’re so beautiful,” he whispered. He whispered feather light kisses along her abdomen, pushing her tank top up along the way. The scar. It was a constant reminder to both of them of what they had lost. It didn’t matter. He needed this. They needed this. Don’t think about Jordan.

She fought back tears as she felt him brush his hand against the scar on her abdomen. He stopped, lifting his head up to look at her, “I’m so sorry...” he whispered hoarsely. She could feel the heat from the tears as they fell.

\*\*\*

She ran her fingers through his hair. “Clark...”

His lips brushed against her abdomen, moving upward, revealing her flesh to him. “Lois...” She could feel the moisture from his tears against her navel as his lips pressed against her scar.

She pulled her tank top over her head, tossing it to the floor. She pulled him upward, whispering feather light kisses against his tearstained cheeks. “Please...” she pleaded, raking his hair with her hands. “Make love to me, Clark...”

“I love you.” His hand gently grazed against the scarred skin where their son had been cut out of her. He lowered his mouth to the skin, conveying the love he felt for her. “...every inch.” He slowly pulled away from her, inching himself back up her body until he was face to face with her once more. He whispered, cupping her cheek. She felt the love in his eyes as he spoke. He lowered his mouth back down to meet hers.

She moaned in approval as his arms tightened around her body, pulling her to him. Her legs wrapped tightly around his waist. He lowered his mouth to meet hers once again. Her body

began to quiver at his touch. She didn’t know how much more of this she could take. She wrapped her legs more securely around him, eliciting a moan of pleasure from him. “...please...” she pleaded with him, reaching for him.

Lois tightened her legs around his waist, feeling the contact she had so desperately sought. She raked her hands through his dark, silky hair; fisting it aggressively. “Yes, ... Please, yes... more...”

He was still holding back.

No more.

No more shutting each other out.

“I need you...” She whimpered against his skin. He sensed what she needed, and held her by the hips, rolling them over so she was on top. She let out a long sigh as she looked down at him, seeing the love and desire from his eyes. She smiled, running her palms possessively over his chest as she began to move against him.

“Oh, God Baby...” He growled as she tightened her thighs around him.

‘Baby’

There it was. The word he’d yet to use for so long. The single word they’d reserved strictly for the bedroom that had become taboo over the last few months. “Cl...” The world around them disappeared.

‘Finally.’

She collapsed on top of him as he cried out her name in a possessive growl. She could hear his heart hammering in his chest as he held her to him. She looked up at him with a slow smile. He had a sloppy grin on his face. He pulled her to him, capturing her lips with his.

‘Finally.’

She smiled against his lips, tightening her legs around his hips, “I don’t want to move...”

He tightened his arms around her, cradling her against him. “I love you, Lois.” He whispered, “Don’t ever forget that.” With that, he leaned in to recapture her mouth once more.

\*\*\*

“Were you ever able to take care of that nosey redneck?”

Miranda inquired coldly. “I don’t like the idea of having someone out there that can identify me.”

“We’re taking care of it, Miranda.” Mrs. Cox replied coolly.

“Is everything set?”

“I arranged a meeting with Mr. Church for this afternoon,”

Miranda replied airily.

“Excellent.”

\*\*\*

“I’m telling you it ain’t right,” Bibbo argued with Red Dixon as he cleaned one of the glasses behind the bar. “You got death threats! Why aren’t you goin’ to the police?”

“The police are crooked!” Red argued.

“You got to tell someone!” Bibbo urged.

“No, I don’t!” Red shot back angrily. “I can take care of myself.” With that, he headed out the door.

Bibbo noticed Red’s jacket on the counter and called after him. “Red!” He opened the door to his bar just in time to see Red start the engine to his truck...

He fell to the ground; a painful heat enveloped him and he surrendered eagerly to the serenity of darkness.

\*\*\*

“Finally...” Lois sighed happily, leaning into his arms.

“Oh, God... Five months...” he moaned.

“I know.” She wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling him in for a kiss. She curled up against him, laying on her side with her back to him. His arms around her waist.

“No more shutting each other out...” Clark murmured.

“No more,” she repeated, wiping a tear from her eyes.

“What is it?” Clark asked.

“When I woke up without Jordan...I wanted to die.” She whispered softly.

“Lois...” he turned her in his arms to look at him in concern.

“I was so afraid...” she cried. “Now I’d give anything to...”

“I know...” He whispered, holding her close. “I’m so sorry...I don’t know what I would do without you...Losing Jordan ... Just about killed me...I don’t think I could survive if...”

She brushed her fingers against his lips. “I know...” she cried. “Lucy ...and everyone...seem to think having another baby would just...fix everything...but...” her voice cracked. “I don’t think I could take it if we had another baby and something else ...”

“Shhh...” he whispered, brushing the tears from her eyes, “I know...” he sighed, resting his head against hers. “I would love any child we have, but...it scares me to death...there’s so much...I can’t protect you from...”

“I just feel so cheated...” she sighed. “I have the scar...the stretch marks...I never understood how you could literally ache to hold your baby until now. My heart...it literally feels like its breaking every day...I don’t know. I can’t explain it. I know there’s something someone isn’t telling us about Jordan. I just don’t feel like he’s gone.”

Clark sighed, holding her close. He still wasn’t sure if there was any merit to her claims but seeing how much she was hurting...“Then I guess we’ll figure out what DID happen. You have to stop lashing out at everyone, though. Your sister... everyone just don’t know what to do...how to act...what to say.”

“I know,” she cried. He brushed her cheek with his thumb and pulled her to him, capturing her lips, as he deepened the kiss. He smiled against her lips then stiffened in her arms.

Recognizing his expression, she pulled away, “What is it?” Lois asked concerned. His face was grim. He didn’t say a word. “Clark?”

He held up a finger, signaling for her to give him a minute as he listened. He shook his head, “There was an explosion over on Hobb’s Bay.” He said grimly.

“I’ll meet you there.” She began.

He shook his head, “No.” He gave her ‘that look.’ It was bad. “Please just stay here and see what you can find out about the break-in at S.T.A.R. Labs. I’ll be back as soon as I can.” He quickly spun into the suit, gave her a peck on the cheek and was gone.

Lois sighed, shaking her head. It had to be really bad. She turned on the television and switched it to LNN. The news banner below the anchor read, “Car Bombing: Several Injured and Suspected Homicide. Waiting For Confirmation.”

“Oh, my God...”

\*\*\*

“Your son can’t get his immunizations because his skin is impenetrable. How exactly am I supposed to keep this quiet?” The doctor asked.

“I don’t want to talk about this. You can’t tell anyone...” She shook her head vehemently.

“Did you have an affair with Superman? Is that why you’re trying to cover this up?”

“What? NO!”

“Then you might want to elaborate on how your son...”

“I’m leaving!” She snapped, grabbing a hold of her son in her arms. “I don’t have to answer any of these horrendous questions. She breathed a sigh of relief when she was outside the doctor’s office; away from the inquisition she had been subjected to just moments ago. “What am I going to do?” She cried.

\*\*\*

Lana Lang sank into the luxurious couch, breathing a sigh of relief as she listened to the silence in her apartment. It had been a long time since she’d heard it. Silence. Her roommate, Linda King had offered her a deal she couldn’t refuse when she’d moved to Metropolis. Linda would pay the rent and all Lana would have to

do was pay for the groceries. That had been fine until the murder charges had been brought against her. Linda luckily had had the money saved up to pay for the rent and necessities until her release. It was after her release that things had gotten complicated.

\*\*\*

“Thank you for the tapes, Dr. Klein,” Lois said as she left his office. “Hopefully, we’ll be able to get to the bottom of this.”

“Yes, tell Clark to be careful.” Dr. Klein instructed. “There’s no telling who has the Kryptonite... Any rescue he goes on...” His voice was a hushed whisper as he spoke; despite the fact that no one else was around. “He could be in danger.”

“I know.” Lois smiled weakly.

\*\*\*

Clark wore a grim expression as he watched Bibbo Bibbowski be escorted towards an awaiting ambulance. He was injured, but he was alive. His friend hadn’t been so lucky. Red Dixon. The same man that had refused to speak to Lois and him about what he’d seen at the Metro Club. Whatever it had been had cost him his life. They’d been so distracted these past few months. If only...

“Thanks, Superman.” Bibbo smiled earnestly up at him. “If you hadn’t have shown up when you did... I don’t know what would have happened.”

“I’m just glad you’re all right.” He smiled weakly at Bibbo.

“Hey, Superman!” A man from the crowd hollered, holding a large sign with the ‘s’ symbol marked out in large black marker. He gave a lewd gesture and spat at him. “Super-ZERO is more like it. How many more people have to die??”

“Just ignore him,” Henderson said from behind him. “Nobody could have done anything.”

“I know.”

“Super ZERO!!” The man began chanting. Others slowly began chanting with him.

Clark shook his head in disgust, “Is there anything else I can do for you?”

“No, go on and get out of here. You did good. Don’t listen to them.” Henderson reassured.

Clark still wore a grim expression, “Yeah.” He muttered before ricocheting into the sky to head back home.

“We don’t need you!!!” The man hollered angrily.

\*\*\*

He yanked a large phone book out of his desk and flipped through the pages. He pulled out the file of personal information and opened it up. It was illegal, but it was the right thing to do. Why should Superman neglect his child while the mother was left to struggle alone? He picked up the phone and dialed, “Yes, I’d like to speak to someone about a possible story...”

\*\*\*

“You want me to what?” Lana asked in shock.

“Lane and Kent have always been a problem for us.” Mrs. Cox explained. “You have a history with Mr. Kent...use it. We need to know everything they know.”

“Spy?” Lana asked, slightly dumbfounded.

“Unless of course you would rather I talk to them?” Mrs. Cox prodded.

“No!”

“Good. I’m glad we have an understanding.”

\*\*\*

Clark landed on the balcony to his and Lois’ townhome. He closed the balcony windows behind him; locking them as he did so. He spun out of his Superman suit and into a pair of jeans and a light sweater. “Lois?” He called.

No answer. He scanned the downstairs and was amused to find her in the kitchen. Even after his gentle prodding she still hadn’t adapted to trying to cook. From the looks of things she still wasn’t. He laughed to himself as he watched her struggle with the contents of the mixing bowl.

“Lois?” He placed his hands on her shoulders from behind. She turned to face him, misery written all over her face. “I can’t get this...” She shook her head angrily. “I can’t...” Flour was everywhere along with various ingredients of what he wasn’t sure.

He placed a kiss on her cheek, tasting the remnants of the batter that had splattered on her. “Hi.” He whispered.

She smiled weakly, “Hi. I was trying to make dinner...” She gestured to the mess in the kitchen, “You can see how well that turned out.”

At super-speed, he cleaned the mess up then reappeared in front of her. “See what?” He teased.

She glanced skeptically to the now empty and clean bowl that had once been filled with unidentifiable goo. She smiled at him, “You’re handy to have around. Have I mentioned that?”

“Once or twice.” He teased, wrapping his arms around her waist. He let out a shaky breath as he held her close.

“I saw the news.” She mumbled against his chest, “Are you okay?”

He sighed, resting his chin against her head, “I think so. It’s just...” He shook his head vehemently, “It never gets easier.”

“I’m sorry.” She murmured, wrapping her arms around his waist, holding him tightly. This was usually the point where he would pull away and tell her he was fine. She had said he wasn’t letting her in.

He slowly untangled himself from her arms and moved toward the refrigerator to begin finding some ingredients for dinner as he spoke, “What all did you see on the news?”

“The explosion. They said it was a car bomb. There was talk about more of those crazy anti-Superman...”

Clark shook his head. “It’s nothing.” He muttered.

“It’s not ‘nothing.’” She argued.

He sighed. He really didn’t want to talk about the crazy anti-Superman groups tonight. “Bibbo Bibbowski was there.”

“Bibbo? Was he hurt?” She asked, concerned.

“Yeah, but he’ll live.” He sighed, pulling out several vegetables, some chicken breast, and cheese from the refrigerator along with some egg noodles from the pantry. “You remember that guy, Red Dixon, he kept trying to get us to talk to a few months back?”

“Vaguely.”

“It was his car that had the bomb in it.”

“What?”

He could feel the tears burning behind his eyes as he spoke. “We’ve been so distracted lately. Red saw something that night at the Metro Club and it cost him his life. Bibbo said he’s been getting death threats...”

“Clark...” She placed a hand on his shoulder for support.

“The coroner said he died within seconds of the bomb being triggered. There was nothing anyone could have done. I just wish we’d been able to stop this...” He moved his attention towards the vegetables he’d pulled out and began cutting them up at super-speed. Within a few minutes, dinner was cooking on the stove.

“Must you do everything at super-speed?”

He smiled at her. “Not everything.” He pulled her toward him, wrapping his arms around hers.

\*\*\*

A knock at the door awoke the young woman from her sleep. She pulled herself out of bed and went to answer the door. “May I help you?” She asked.

“Yes, I’m Linda King. I’m with the Metropolis STAR. I understand you have a story to tell.”

“Story?”

“Your son is Superman’s, is he not?”

\*\*\*

“The perfect perfume. The perfect jewelry.” Diana examined the dress she wore in the full-length mirror. “And the perfect dress.

All I need now is to draw out Superman.”

“You could try the old fashioned way.” Miranda teased. “Help, Superman?”

Diana wrinkled her nose, “No, that brings too much attention to me. I think this is where my history as a rogue spy for Intergang comes in handy. Will the fragrance be ready in time for tomorrow night’s function?”

“Yes, I’ll have a bottle of Revenge for you by tomorrow afternoon.” Miranda smiled devilishly at Diana Stride.

“Excellent.” Diana smiled happily. “By the time I’m done Superman won’t know what hit him.”

\*\*\*

“The Metropolis STAR? What are you doing here in Michigan?” the young woman asked nervously.

“I’m here to help you. I heard about your predicament and I believe I can help get your story out...”

“My story?”

“Superman can’t do this to you. He can’t just ...” Linda shook her head angrily, “He can’t just lead you on...leaving you pregnant and then expect you to take care of the child yourself...”

“But I...”

“We’re talking millions of dollars here...”

“But...What? Millions?”

“Yes. Where should we begin?”

\*\*\*

An unidentified figure stood above her. She held a young baby in her arms, whispering softly to him. This was her baby. The baby she had carried for so long. A brilliant flash of white light illuminated the room.

A dark figure approached her, pulling the young baby from her arms. Her arms were numb and unmoving as the young child was wrenched from her arms.

“No!”

\*\*\*

“Lois, wake up.” Clark gently shook her shoulder. “Lois, it’s just a dream.”

“No...” She incoherently fought against him, beating her fist against his chest. “No, give him back...”

“Lois, honey, wake up. It’s just a dream.” He urged, grabbing her wrist to stop her from striking him. “Lois...”

She seemed to register the sound of his voice and looked up at him, “Clark?”

“It was just a dream.” He repeated. She looked up at him, biting her lower lip as she tried to suppress the tears he knew she was holding back. “Are you okay?” He asked. She shook her head vehemently, burying her face in his shoulder. He felt her body shudder against him as he held her close. “It’s okay.” He reassured, wrapping his arms around her. She relaxed against his solid form.

She’d had nightmares off and on over the last few months. She never wanted to talk about them, but he suspected they were about Jordan. All he could do was try and reassure her of his presence and hope her nightmare didn’t revisit her when she fell back asleep.

\*\*\*

“Mr. White, you’re here early,” Diana said with a smile when she saw him exit the Daily Planet elevators.

Perry looked at her suspiciously, surprised to see her waiting in the newsroom. “Diana, this is a surprise...”

“I was wondering if I could bend your ear for a few minutes.”

“Uh, certainly.” He said, graciously, motioning for her to follow him into his office. “What’s this about?”

“Superman.”

“Pardon?”

“Superman.” She repeated. “I want to do an exclusive on him and I think your reporters, Lois Lane and Clark Kent are the key ...”

Perry shook his head, “Diana, that’d be up to them. They’ve both been through a lot and I don’t think they’d be too keen on sharing information about Superman; especially not with all the crazies out there...”

“Perry, do I look like a lunatic?” Diana purred.

“Maybe.” He teased.

“Perry, I’m just a fan of Superman’s. I hate to see him being treated so poorly. I want to give him a chance to show Metropolis his true colors.”

Perry seemed to be toying with the idea. “I’ll talk to them when they get in.”

“Thank you so much.” She gushed, giving him a peck on the cheek. “You won’t regret it.”

\*\*\*

Clark walked down the stairs, looking for Lois. He’d woken up alone. “Lois?” He spotted her at the desk in the living room, typing away. “Honey, how long have you been up?”

“About an hour or two.” She shrugged, continuing to type away. “I wanted to go ahead and type this up while it was fresh on my mind.” She said, motioning to the monitor in front of her.

He took a seat next to her, “What are you working on?”

“The follow up on the break-in at S.T.A.R. Labs.” She said. “The time of the break in coincided with the time of the fire you were at. I don’t think that’s a mistake.”

“You think it was a setup?” He asked.

“Could be.” She shrugged, “I don’t know, but I do know if we don’t have something to show for us taking the last two days to work from home, Perry’s going to have our hide.” The ringing of the phone caught their attention, “Watch, that’ll be him.” Lois added.

\*\*\*

“Why exactly are we doing this?” Lois asked skeptically.

“Perry wanted us to talk with Diana Stride and figure out what she needed for her Superman piece. She’s supposedly trying to clean up his image.” Clark said, not believing it any more than she did.

“I don’t trust her,” Lois said.

“Why doesn’t that surprise me?” Clark sighed.

\*\*\*

Bibbo stared at the burnt exterior of his club. He’d made many friends among the clientele that had come through his doors. Red Dixon had been a good friend of his. Red had paid the price of being too proud to ask for help. Maybe if he’d done more he’d still be alive. All Bibbo had left was the old worn jacket Red had left at the club that night.

He folded up the jacket to put away when a slim jeweled case fell out of the pocket. Bibbo frowned, leaning over to pick up the case. “What’s this?” He wondered aloud. In large bold letters, the word ‘REVENGE’ was spelled out.

\*\*\*

“So, you see, I just wanted to sit down with Superman and have a one-on-one interview with him. That way I can show the world what a wonderful person he is, not this... cretin Metropolis is painting him out to be.” Diana explained, sipping her cappuccino.

“Ms. Stride, Metropolis hardly has such an opinion of Superman. It’s these hate groups, filled with propaganda that is the problem.” Lois corrected.

“Ms. Lane, it starts with the hate groups and then soon it’s the entire city. How do you think the Holocaust got started?”

Lois frowned at that remark. The lamp beside them blinked repeatedly and she glared at it, annoyed, “You should probably get that changed.”

“Yes, well, I appreciate you coming by, Ms. Lane, Mr. Kent.” Diana stood, ushering them out the door quicker than they had come in. Something was definitely up.

\*\*\*

Outside Diana Stride’s office, Lois and Clark headed towards the elevator, taking them back to the streets of Metropolis. “Gee, that went well,” Clark said sarcastically, as they stepped on board an empty elevator.

Lois rolled her eyes. “Tell me about it. I will never understand the fascination people have with that woman. I mean, she’s such a...”

“What?”

“She’s so flashy, and ... manipulative...”

“Well, I guess that works for Top Copy,” Clark said, trying to steer the conversation elsewhere. “What do you think her real reasons are for doing this story?”

“I don’t know, but she’s got Perry wrapped around her scrawny little finger and I don’t like it,” Lois said miserably. “Did you smell that perfume she was wearing? It was disgusting...”

“It did have a strange scent, I guess.” Clark reasoned, “But, she was right about one thing.”

“What?” Lois turned to face him.

“This propaganda about Superman has gotten out of control. It’s getting harder and harder for me to help anyone.”

“Who do you think is behind this?” Lois asked.

“I don’t know.”

\*\*\*

Mike Rogers read over his latest subscription reports for the Metropolis Star and grinned, “It seems the people of Metropolis have taken a shine to the new Star.” He said.

“And why shouldn’t they? We’re telling them what they want to hear.” Bill Church Jr. grinned, puffing at his cigar.

\*\*\*

The weekly staff meeting was an event Lois always hated. Perry would ramble on about how they needed to find bigger and better stories, cut their existing stories to shreds and expect them to go to work. This meeting, however, was different. Perry was much more focused on the party this evening and pressing the message that everyone had to attend. She could think of a thousand other things she’d rather be doing than to celebrate the life of the head of Intergang. Perry still didn’t believe their theory about Bill Church Sr.

She glanced at Clark; who was seated next to her. He seemed just as bored as she was. He looked really good. He wore a crisp blue dress shirt with black dress pants and a matching jacket; complimented with his usual taste in outlandish ties. She could smell his cologne...

She let out an involuntary shudder. Her body was beginning to respond to his closeness. ‘Control yourself. You’re at work.’ She reminded herself. She let out an involuntary shudder as she tried to steer her mind elsewhere.

“Now, I expect you all to be at the party at seven sharp. This is a big deal and a lot of bigwigs are going to be there rubbing elbows with Mr. Church. We have the upper hand here.” Perry’s voiced droned on about the party. Would he still be such a big supporter of Mr. Church if he knew he had been behind Intergang and his kidnapping a few months ago?

Clark’s hand gently squeezed hers from beneath the table. She felt her body begin to go numb at his touch. What was wrong with her? Her body normally responded to Clark’s touch, but not like this...

She bit her lower lip, trying to suppress a moan. Maybe her senses were just heightened after going so long without... She let out an involuntary shudder once more, recalling their activities over the last two days.

“You okay?” He whispered in her ear.

All she could do was nod as she squeezed his hand supportively. She didn’t want to let go of him. His skin was so soft and warm. He felt so good to touch.

Was it warm in here? She tightened her grip on his hand. It was really warm in here. She tugged his hand towards her, resting

against her abdomen. She really wanted him. He smelt so good... felt...so good.

“Lois, are you all right?” He whispered in her ear, concern was written all over his face.

She bit her lower lip once more. She had to get herself under control. They were in the middle of a staff meeting. “Fine.” She squeaked out. He didn’t believe her. She could tell from the expression on his face. She looked away, glancing at the clock on the wall. They still had another thirty minutes before the meeting ended.

\*\*\*

“I’m not sure I understand what happened. You said the perfume would have everyone begging to please me. It’s not working.” Diana snapped, tossing the bottle back at Miranda.

“It needs some time to take effect.” Miranda shrugged. “You can’t expect it to work all at once.”

“Well, how long are we talking?” Diana asked annoyed.

“An hour? Maybe two.”

“An hour?” Diana scoffed. “Yeah, that’ll go over well,” she muttered under her breath.

“Or you can do your dirty work without my help. Makes no difference to me.” Miranda said.

“I think I’m going to need a larger order.”

\*\*\*

Fifteen minutes. Fifteen minutes until the meeting ended. She could do this. She just had to act professionally. They were at work. When they got home she could take him upstairs or in the kitchen...or living room...or right there at the front door... and have her way with him. Now, they were at *work*. She had to focus on *work*. They had to get to the bottom of the break-in at S.T.A.R. Labs. They also needed to figure out who was behind all this Superman Propaganda and why. They were *very* busy. They didn’t have time for any distractions.

She cast a sideway glance at Clark once more. No, she couldn’t do this. She couldn’t go all day thinking about him like this; her body responding to him like this...

She guided his hand up her thigh, brushing the lace of her thigh highs against his thumb. His muscles tighten at her touch. She smiled to herself. Feeling bolder, she lowered herself to the edge of the chair, allowing her skirt to bunch up at the sides. She guided his hand between her legs. His hand lingered for a moment, brushing against her before pulling it back, away from her grasp.

She frowned at the loss of contact.

She moved her hand towards him, resting her palm against his thigh, feeling him almost immediately respond to her touch. He grabbed her wrist and pulled it away, settling it back in her lap with a stern look.

“Lois, stop,” he chastised in a barely audible whisper.

She looked back at him innocently. He caught her gaze then quickly turned his attention back to Perry. She could tell by the slight redness at his collar he was getting turned on. Very casually she folded her hands together on the edge of the conference table, allowing her elbow to push her pen down into her husband’s lap.

“I’d known Bill Church for a number of years. I knew he’d had heart problems, but I never imagined he’d die from a heart attack. He had the best doctors money could buy...”

Before he could respond, she reached into his lap. He caught her hand, placing her misplaced pen in her hand and gave her a warning glare. She bit her lower lips as she met his gaze. She opened her hand, allowing the pen to fall once more...

“Lane, Kent, what’s the status on the break in at S.T.A.R. Labs?” Perry barked.

She quickly removed her hand from his lap, reaching for the misplaced pen. She couldn’t seem to get her mouth to cooperate in order to respond.

“We’re still running through the list of possible suspects. We’re still waiting for a copy of the security tape at S.T.A.R.

Labs.” Clark responded coolly. She watched him with admiration. The super-willpower he had definitely came in handy. Perry turned his attention to another unsuspecting victim and Clark reached for her hand, guiding it up her own thigh...

Her body was on fire.

She wanted him so bad.

She felt him withdraw his hand, closing her legs and tugging her skirt back down her legs. She frowned at the loss of contact.

“All right, that’s it,” Perry said. Everyone around them began gathering their things and making their way toward the exit.

They were at work. She reminded herself.

\*\*\*

“How is this possible?” Henderson asked himself as he watched the tape.

“What is it, Inspector?” Detective Wolf asked.

“I’ve gone through all the tapes and there is no footage of the robbery on it.”

“Could the tapes be edited?”

“The timestamp hasn’t changed.”

“Maybe there’s an invisible man out there.” Detective Wolf joked.

\*\*\*

“You want me to what?” Bill Church asked skeptically.

“Get Superman at that party tonight. It’s a social event. He’ll show up to support his friends and smile at the camera. We are after all donating a good sum of money towards the Coates Orphanage. That should get his attention. Once he shows up I’ll test the red kryptonite on him.” Diana replied coolly.

“How exactly am I supposed to invite him?”

“Send a message through courier or one of his friends.” Diana shrugged. “You want the Kryptonite tested or not?”

\*\*\*

“This is the best work you’ve done, Linda,” Mike said, reading over the copy of her latest article. “You were out of touch for a bit. Anything I should know about?”

“No, nothing concrete yet,” Linda said, shaking her head.

Mike looked at her suspiciously. “You wouldn’t hold out on me, would you?”

“Of course not.” Linda smiled. “I’ll see you later tonight.”

\*\*\*

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Clark watched the last of their co-workers leave the conference room then looked over at Lois, “Lo-is...What has gotten into you?”

“Why? Are you complaining?” She ran her hand down the front of his dress shirt, outlining the length of his tie with her index finger.

“Never...” He managed to whisper as she ran her hand over his belt buckle “Just wondering...what...” He moaned as her hand teased the waistband of his trousers. “Oh, this isn’t a good idea...”

“You didn’t need this much prodding during the staff meeting.” She reminded him, standing up from her chair and moving so she was standing over him, leaning her back against the conference table.

“I was getting revenge.” He said in harsh whisper, “Someone tried to feel me up in the middle of the staff meeting.”

“You liked it.” She grinned back, perching herself on the edge of the conference room table, swinging her legs aimlessly. His mouth went dry when he saw her run her hands over the polished wood behind her, parting her legs just enough to give him a view of her panties.

Her hands moved up and down her blouse, “I want you so bad, Clark,” She whispered in a sultry tone that he normally only heard in the bedroom. He eyed the door that was still very unlocked and the blinds that were still partially open. He needed to...

“Lois...”

“Clark...”

“Lois, I would love more than anything than to...” He eyed the lace trim of her thigh highs where her skirt had bunched up and looked back at the unlocked door.

She was making this really difficult.

He swallowed hard, staring at the conference table behind her. *‘It would be so easy to...’*

“Please, Clark...” She leaned her back against the table, supporting herself on her elbows as she met his gaze. He swallowed hard, watching her run her hand up the solid wood of the table, “I need you.”

*‘So tempting...’*

“Lois, we can’t do this *here*.” He began to argue.

“Why not?” she purred, running her hands up and down her sides.

“The door is unlocked and...” His eyes widened as he watched her fingers work through the buttons on her blouse, allowing the material to hang open, “Lois, stop!” He pulled the material back together, shielding her from the open blinds in the room where anyone could peek in as he helped her fasten her blouse back up, “What has gotten into you?”

“Not what I want.” Lois pouted, leaning against the conference table.

*‘Oh, the things he wanted to do to her on that table...’*

He groaned as he watched her sit herself up on the table, motioning for him to come to her. He knew if he did he was done for. He glanced back at the door in dire need of locking and the blinds in need of closing only to find Jimmy and an unidentified man standing in the doorway.

*‘I’m going to kill him.’*

“Lois, CK, this is Agent Scardino. He wanted to talk to you guys.” Jimmy introduced the man as he closed the door on his way out.

*‘Definitely going to kill him.’*

“You can call me, Daniel.” Agent Scardino smiled at the young couple.

*‘Dear God not now...’*

He cringed as he watched Dan Scardino take a seat across the table from him and pull out a tape recorder. “I’m with the DEA. We’re doing an investigation into what happened with the drug that was released during the Planet explosion last year.”

“Oh,” He managed as Lois slipped down from the table, reclaiming the chair she’d been in earlier as she scooted up next to him. He caught her gaze. Normally whenever the Planet explosion was brought up she got upset.

She seemed unaffected by this Scardino’s statement as she scooted her chair closer to. He watched as the DEA Agent began setting out his notepad to take notes and Lois cast Clark a longing gaze.

His mind began to race.

Something seemed off about her reaction.

“So, you were both caught in the explosion. Did you experience any...”

Clark looked back at Lois who was staring down at her lap. Maybe he’d imagined it.

Lois cleared her throat, “Listen, Mr... Whatever-Your-Name-Is, we’re really busy right now. Deadlines and all of that. Could we reschedule this?” She asked as her hand slipped into Clark’s lap, causing him to jump.

“Reschedule?” Scardino echoed.

Clark suppressed a groan, “Ye-Yes,” He stammered, removing her hand from his lap, holding it securely in his grasp. “We’ve got a tight deadline. Do you have a...”

*‘What was the word he was trying to think of?’*

“...business card?” Lois supplied for him.

“Right!” He nodded, “Business card.”

Scardino looked between the two of them then began gathering his things, “Okay, yeah, I can reschedule next week.

How’s Tuesday at three sound?”

“Perfect.” Lois interjected, fingering the outline of his palm from within his grasp. She was trying to kill him. He silently nodded and watched as Scardino got up to leave.

He couldn’t move.

He knew if he did he’d risk seriously embarrassing himself.

“Better?” She asked, leaning toward him with a seductive smile.

“We need to go home...now.” He managed.

“Home?” She asked innocently. “I thought we... Oh, Clark...” she sighed happily when he pulled her to him.

“Home.” He repeated, “Now.” He gave her a heated gaze, running his hands up and down the sides of her face.

She sighed happily, tugging on his tie to pull him toward her, “Clothing optional?”

“Clothing *forbidden*.” He reassured her.

Her face spread into a broad grin. “Suddenly I’m feeling under the weather...”

\*\*\*

“What do you mean it’s not on camera?” Dr. Klein asked. “We have the best security system money can buy.”

“All I am saying, Dr. Klein, is that the footage shows the vaults closed; then seconds later the vaults are open and empty. How do you explain that?” Henderson asked mildly annoyed.

“I don’t know. The only explanation would be for someone to have hacked into the system, but that would mean it would have...” He stopped.

“Would have what?” Henderson asked.

“It would have had to have been an inside job.” He whispered in a barely audible volume.

\*\*\*

It had taken exactly three minutes. Three minutes for Lois to tell Perry they were working from home the rest of the day and gather their things to head for the stairwell. As soon as the door behind them closed He had them in the air and flew them home.

He hadn’t even stopped long enough to change.

It had taken him two minutes to unlock the front door and sixteen seconds to fly her up the stairs and into their bedroom.

His mouth went dry as he watched her hand move down the front of her blouse, pressing her palm against the sensitive flesh he had every intention of exploring thoroughly. He allowed her to lead him to their bed, leaning back on the soft mattress. “I need you,” She whispered, motioning for him to join her on the bed.

It was incredibly sexy seeing her like this, but was it right? Something in the back of his head was nagging at him. He couldn’t seem to shake the feeling.

“Lois, are you sure you’re okay?”

“Very,” She said meeting his gaze with a sultry smile as she threw her skirt to the floor. His resolve was long gone as his doubts disappeared, focusing on losing himself in her arms.

“Please don’t ever stop doing that.” She whispered in his ear, running her hands through his hair.

“I’m sorry.” He leaned in to kiss her. “I won’t ever do that to us again.” He whispered, sealing his promise with another kiss.

\*\*\*

“Encore. Encore.” She teased, leaning up to kiss him.

\*\*\*

“Anyone seen Lois or Clark?” Perry asked, looking around the decorated room. There was no sign of the famous duo and Bill Church Jr. would be arriving soon.

“CK assured me he’d talk to Superman,” Jimmy reassured him. “If Superman can make it he’ll be here.”

“Yeah, well, where is he? And where’s Lois? This is supposed to be the biggest event of the year.” Perry remarked bitterly.

“I’m sure they’ll be here,” Jimmy reassured him. He caught sight of a familiar brunette entering the front doors. “I gotta catch you later, Chief. I just spotted someone I need to talk to.”

Perry followed Jimmy's gaze and laughed. "Go get her, kid."

\*\*\*

No one noticed when a mist released itself into the air. No one noticed when men in tuxedos approached the coat check and began sifting through the money of all the attendees. No one noticed when the valuables of the hotel were taken. No one noticed.

\*\*\*

The sign read, "Confidential" but to someone that was used to breaking the law this was a minuscule thing. She had done this countless times before; breaking and entering; accessing information that was not privileged to herself or her employer. She was the best and continued to prove it countless times; over and over again.

"Well, well, Dr. Klein, let's see what you have to say about our neighborhood alien."

\*\*\*

"Help Superman!"

"He's got a gun!"

"No!"

Cry for help after help reached Clark's ears. He quickly peeled himself out of his wife's arms and spun into his suit to answer the cries for help.

\*\*\*

Lois groggily awoke the next morning with her head pounding and her body aching. She winced as she opened her eyes and groaned as the sunlight streamed into her eyes. Clark was nowhere to be seen.

She slowly got out of bed and began to get dressed. She glanced at the clock on the dresser. She was running late and there was still no sign of Clark. Hopefully, Perry wouldn't be too mad. She wasn't sure if she could come up with a good excuse for her husband's absence this morning.

She raced down the stairs, looking for her keys. The living room was a mess. Clothing was scattered all around the foyer. It was strange. She didn't really recall what had happened yesterday. She recalled meeting with Diana Stride...

"I just need some coffee." She said, grabbing her purse from the floor. She dug out her keys and headed for the Planet.

\*\*\*

"What did you do?" Diana hissed, slamming the door behind her.

"I was just pushing things along." Miranda smiled, filing her nails as she spoke.

"You were supposed to release the fragrance when Superman showed up. Do you have any idea how hard it is to fight off fifteen old men at the same time?"

"Not nearly as hard as it would have been to fight off Superman." Miranda pointed out.

"We don't know that the fragrance even works on him. That was the whole point. To test him."

"The damage has been done. What to do?" Miranda shrugged.

"Don't you dare just shrug me off, Miranda. We had a deal."

\*\*\*

"What in the world?" Lois walked through the newsroom, examining her surroundings in disbelief. It was completely dead. No one outside of the janitors sweeping the floors could be found. "Where is everyone?" Even on a Saturday, the Planet was usually busy.

"Good morning, Ms. Lane." Willy, the head of security nodded at her as he made his rounds. She nodded in recognition. Something strange was going on. Perry never missed work and neither did Jimmy.

She glanced at her desk and noticed the files she and Clark had been going through the previous morning. She had notes about Diana Stride and not trusting her. The rest of the day seemed hazy. She made her way towards the conference room. Something had

happened in there. What was it?

She glanced at the board and noticed Perry's notes from the staff meeting. That must be it. They'd had a staff meeting yesterday. That wasn't it. Something else. She picked up the phone and began to dial. She reached Perry's voicemail. She hung up the phone and dialed another number and reached Jimmy's voicemail.

"Weird." She muttered, sinking down into one of the chairs. A sharp object pricked at the back of her leg and she moved out of the chair. She noticed the edge of the chair was warped in what looked like a hand print.

"What the...?" She gingerly touched the imprint. She knew it had to have been Clark. What could have happened yesterday to have caused him to grab the edge of his chair so fiercely? He seemed to always have control of how much strength he was using with every touch.

<<"Lo-is..." Clark groaned when she pressed her body up against him. "What has gotten...Mmmmm...into you?"

She nibbled at his earlobe, seductively tugging at it with her teeth. "Why? Are you complaining?" She teased, reaching in between their bodies.

"Never..." He rasped out as she tugged at his tie, pulling him closer. "Just wondering...what...Oh, God, Lois...">>

"Oh, my God..." She shuddered at the memory, burying her head in her hands. She'd been throwing herself at him mercilessly. What had made her act like that? Why was she having such a hard time remembering everything?

"The clothes on the floor..." She recalled. "Now it makes sense."

<<"Lois, are you sure you're okay?" He asked as she took a hold of his tie, tugging him towards her.

"Why wouldn't I be?" She purred, popping open his dress shirt one button at a time.

"You're not usually so aggressive...Oh, God..." He moaned as she tugged on his earlobe with her teeth.

"Clark..." She brushed his shirt off his shoulders and began nipping at his neck seductively. "We went five months without making love. Is it so bad if I'm a little aggressive in making sure we don't repeat that mistake?">>

She glanced at the file in her hands. That was the last thing she clearly remembered; leaving to interview Diana Stride. Could she be connected to her sudden memory lapse? She headed back towards her desk to look for more clues.

The sonic boom she had come to know as Clark's arrival resonated through the room. She glanced up towards the stairwell and smiled when she saw him open the door to enter the newsroom. "Hi." He said, walking up to her, wrapping his arms around her from behind and kissing her on the neck. He looked around, "Where is everyone?"

"Beats me." She said, shaking her head. "Where've you been?"

"Where do I begin?" He asked. "Bank alarm, mugging, attempted rape, another bank alarm, a fire..." He shook his head as he listed off the long list of rescues he'd been busy with this morning. "It's crazy out there."

"Well, something's going on and obviously there's nothing going on here." She gestured to the newsroom.

"Have you tried calling Perry?"

"No answer."

"Jimmy?"

"Nothing."

Clark had a scowl on his face. "Something is definitely up. It's like the entire city has gone nuts." He placed a hand on her shoulders, "I'm sorry I had to leave last night. I know you don't like waking up alone..."

She smiled reassuringly at him, linking her arms around his neck. "It's fine. You were needed elsewhere."

"I know, but after everything, that's been going on recently..."

He stopped as his head tilted up to listen to a cry for help only he could hear. His face grew grim and he glanced at her apologetically, "I'm sorry. I gotta go."

"It's okay. We'll talk later."

He leaned in to kiss her quickly on the cheek and a second later he was gone.

<<' Everything that's been going on recently...'>>

If he knew she couldn't remember yesterday he'd think he'd taken advantage of her. Putting a crimp on their recently revived love life wasn't something she looked forward to doing. She had done the same thing to him when he hadn't been himself the other day. The day they'd finally ended the drought in their marriage.

Why couldn't she remember? Had she been drugged and not known it? Drunk? Nothing made any sense.

"Well, I guess I better get to work." She muttered, gathering the files on her desk and heading back towards the conference room.

\*\*\*

48 Hours Later

Clark threw his Superman suit into the waste basket and headed for the bathroom to take a shower. He had been running nonstop for the last seventy-two hours. Everywhere he went; Metropolis seemed to have lost its mind. Bank tellers were throwing themselves at criminals, declaring their love to them by unlocking the vaults to the bank. He had been attacked more than once for trying to stop such an occurrence.

The strangest part was no one seemed to notice the problem. It seemed...normal. At first, he'd been afraid that Lois had fallen victim to whatever had consumed Metropolis, but she insisted she was fine.

He stepped out of the shower and spun into a pair of jeans and button up shirt; then headed downstairs to begin trying to piece together the events of the past few days and get a handle on what they were dealing with. The crime seemed to have slowed down a bit but he knew it was only a matter of time before the sirens would begin once more. They'd been trying to reach Perry and Jimmy over the last few days, but hadn't succeeded in reaching either of them. He was beginning to grow more and more worried.

"Clark?" Lois walked down the steps, wrapped in her terry cloth robe.

"Hey, honey, I didn't mean to wake you." He apologized, pouring a cup of coffee.

"You didn't come home again last night." She muttered sleepily.

"I know. I'm sorry." He handed her a cup of coffee.

"Still bad?" She asked.

"I don't know what's going on out there." He said, shaking his head.

"Still no sign of Perry or Jimmy?"

Clark shook his head, 'no.' "Or anyone else at the Planet."

\*\*\*

Lucy Lane groggily awoke from her slumber. Her head was pounding. Her body ached and her head was spinning as she lifted it off the pillow. She felt an unfamiliar warm weight on her. She cautiously opened her eyes.

"Oh, my God!"

\*\*\*

"So, Perry finally called back?" Lois asked, wrapping her arms around his neck. He was exhausted, but he didn't dare try to sleep right now.

"Yeah, he can't seem to remember what had happened the last few days. He said he'd meet us at the Planet in a few hours." Clark said. Lois got an odd look on her face.

"Oh. Well..."

"What?" He pressed.

"Nothing. I just think it's a bit odd."

"Odd? I'd say we're way past odd." Clark teased. "This whole

city's turned into a nightmare the last few days. I'm not sure what's going on, but even I need a break."

"Any word from Jimmy?" Lois asked.

"No. I'll try him again later."

\*\*\*

"What are you doing in my apartment?" Lucy hissed angrily at Jimmy.

"I don't know. I woke up here just as surprised as you!"

Jimmy shot back.

The radio alarm blared, "Good morning, Metropolis! It's another beautiful Monday morning..."

"Monday?" Lucy and Jimmy echoed to one another in unison. They'd lost three days.

\*\*\*

"So, what we're dealing with is something code-named 'Revenge'... according to this." Inspector Henderson waved a slightly burnt disk case in front of him. "We were able to salvage most of everything on here. We've got the tech guys looking at it; trying to get the last few files off of the disk, but they're encrypted."

"Where did you get the disk?" Clark asked curiously.

"You remember that fire from last week? Bibbo Bibbowski? He said this disk was inside Red Dixon's jacket..."

"Maybe Red was trying to tell us something?" Lois asked.

"It's possible." Henderson acknowledged. "All I know is the description of what this 'Revenge' is supposed to do sound awfully familiar to the mayhem we've been experiencing the last three days."

"What do you mean?" Clark asked.

"No rhyme and reason, people losing their willpower..." Henderson pressed, "It's been crazy. We've had every man out there these past few days. I guess whatever voodoo juice everyone was exposed to, has finally worn off."

"But what is the point in making everyone lose their inhibitions?" Lois asked, confused. "This makes no sense."

\*\*\*

Lana tugged the white sheet securely around her body. She didn't remember anything of the past few days. She had woken up in bed with a stranger. Well, not exactly a stranger. She had met him a few times. Agent Scardino.

"So, about what happened..." His voice interrupted her thoughts. "I'm sorry. I don't even remember what happened or how..."

"Me neither." She admitted shyly.

"I guess we had a bit too many cocktails at that party, huh?"

"I think it's a bit more than that."

"Probably. I think whatever this is..." He raked a hand through his hair as he spoke.

"Whatever this is?"

"Whatever we were exposed to probably has a lot to do with..."

"With what happened between us?"

"Yeah." He smiled weakly. "I'm sorry. I'm not really this type of person. I don't just..."

"It's okay." She reassured him. "Neither of us knew what we were doing."

\*\*\*

"Let's see here. Gets his power from the sun...only known weakness is Kryptonite. A possibility of killing him. Red variation is still under experimentation..." Mrs. Cox read off the report.

"Red variation? Have we seen any results from this Red Kryptonite yet?"

"No, I'm growing quite impatient with it, though," Nigel said. "You'd think a simple test would be so easy for them, but 'no.' They have to make everything so complicated."

"That's just the price of having others do your dirty work for you."

“Yes, well, my patience is growing thin.”

\*\*\*

Six Weeks Later

“Billy wouldn’t do something like that,” Perry argued.

“Perry, everyone on the street knows what a crook he is.

Everyone at that party was robbed. Everyone at that party was exposed to this ‘Revenge.’ The same substance that was released during the Planet’s explosion.” Lois argued.

“I’ve known Billy since he was able to spit up on me.”

“So, he can do no wrong?” Lois challenged.

“Lois, drop it,” Perry warned. “You’re missing something, but it’s got nothing to do with Billy.”

Lois met Perry’s gaze and relented. He obviously wasn’t ready to face facts just yet. “Fine, but just remember this. He was in charge of Multiworld Communications when they kidnapped you in order to force the board into selling. Do you really think that’s a coincidence?”

With that she left his office, leaving Perry to contemplate her last words.

\*\*\*

“Lois, could I have a minute of your time?” Diana asked, walking up to her as she exited the Daily Planet.

“What do you want?” Lois asked harshly. She was not in the mood for dealing with Diana Stride. Ever since her experience with that pheromone... She was sure she had been exposed to it from Diana. There was no other explanation.

She hadn’t been herself for the last few weeks. Her body was achy and sore and she was exhausted. Dr. Klein was supposed to get back to them on his experiment with ‘Revenge.’ They had found traces of the substance in the air ducts of the Metro Hotel, where Church had held his party a few weeks ago.

The source of this substance seemed to still be a mystery. No one knew who had developed it and/or why.

“I think I have some information for you, you might find interesting.”

“What’s that?” Lois turned to face Diana. “You found cross-dressing cousins that you’re related to?”

“Why do you always have to be so snippy?” Diana asked.

“No, I just got wind of a story regarding your friend Superman.”

Lois rolled her eyes, trying to ignore Diana. “Every story on your show has something to do with Superman lately. False invasion stories, alien abductions, experimentation... How do you sleep at night? I mean, he takes time out of his life helping to save everyone and all you can do is attack him. You should be ashamed of yourself.”

“Sleaze sells. You should know that.”

“I don’t print sleaze. I print fact.” Lois shot back.

“Well, don’t say I never gave you anything.” Diana handed her a large manila envelope. “From one reporter to another. It’s already airing on Top Copy as we speak.”

\*\*\*

“Have you even tried to figure out what they are working on?” Mrs. Cox asked. “It’s been over a month. What have you found out?”

“I haven’t exactly been myself lately.”

“Oh, you haven’t been yourself lately? What’s that; an enabler? Would you prefer an orange jumpsuit and a prison sentence for accomplice after the fact in kidnapping?” Mrs. Cox narrowed her eyes as she spoke. “That’s where you’re headed.”

“I’m not comfortable... I can’t spy on them. I’m not even friends with them.”

“Well, you better figure something out. I’m sure the DA would be interested in this footage...”

“No, please...” She pleaded. “Please don’t.”

“I’m a patient woman, Ms. Lang. I can wait. In the meantime, I have some errands for you. These cases need to be buried. Files removed, evidence gone. Are we clear?”

“Yes.” Lana looked at the case numbers Mrs. Cox had written down. They seemed very familiar, but she did her best not to dwell on that. The quicker she got out of here the better.

\*\*\*

‘Leigh-Ann Stipanovic, Age 33. Mother of 6-month old boy, Jesse Stipanovic. Jesse possesses gifts only known to one person: Superman. The woman claims to have had a relationship with him last year. She has produced love letters and a photo of herself with the Man of Steel. The original investigation of this case was conducted by Linda King of the Metropolis Star.’

Lois stopped reading. She couldn’t read it anymore. ‘It’s a lie.’ She told herself. ‘Tabloid trash. It came from Linda. That should tell you something.’ She pulled out the photo in question and looked at it closely. It was outside of a hotel, but something about the photo seemed off.

“Hey, honey, sorry that took so long.” Clark took a seat next to her. She quickly stuffed the photograph and files back in the manila envelope. He glanced curiously at her but continued, “Dr. Klein said he thinks he’s got everything he needs from that disk. It looks like the lab reports this ‘Revenge’ came from Lex Labs.”

“Lex Labs? As in Lex Luthor?”

“This may have been one of the many underhanded experiments Luthor was working on...” Clark reasoned, “What’s that?” He asked, pointing at the envelope on her desk.”

“Oh, just ... Garbage.” She shrugged it off. “Diana Stride has another bogus story on Top Copy and is trying to rub my face in it. It’s nothing.”

“Let me see it.”

“No.” She took the file and put it behind her back. “It’s nothing, really, Clark.”

“Lois...” He reached for the file but missed and she quickly took it over towards the shredder, hoping to get rid of the file before he saw it. She wasn’t quick enough. He grabbed the file from her before she was able to put it in the shredder. “What is so...?”

“I told you. It’s nothing.” She said, walking away.

“It’s not ‘nothing.’” He said bitterly, reaching for her arm.

“You know I would never...”

“I know.” She said. She hoped he believed it anyway. She’d learned the hard way last year to trust her initial instincts. When the Superman clone had gone on a rampage last year she had thought it to be Clark. “I need to sit down.” She said, taking a seat at her desk.

“Are you okay?” He asked in concern.

“I’m fine. I just... I need to sit down. It’s a lot to take in. I’m tired.” She could hear the weariness in her voice. She was exhausted. “Perry doesn’t want to listen to anything I find about his golden child, Bill Church Jr. Diana Stride shoves this in my face... and I’m tired.”

“You mentioned that.” He said, raking a hand through his hair. “Well, you said you weren’t exposed to that stuff, so why are you so tired all the time.”

“I don’t know. It’s just been a very long couple of months...”

“I know.” He said.

“I’m going to go take this photo to Jimmy and see what he can find. There’s something just off about it...” She got up to head towards the ‘Research Department’ only to be hit with a wave of dizziness. “Whoa...”

“You okay?” Clark asked in concern.

“I’m fine. I just...” Her knees buckled from behind her and she collapsed against his solid form. The dizziness persisted.

“You’re not fine.” He said, lowering himself to the floor with her.

\*\*\*

“What are you doing with all these files?” Lucy asked.

“I’m just trying to verify everything on the archives.” Lana replied sweetly.

“Do you need some help?”  
“No, I’m fine.” Lana replied sweetly.  
“Can I ask you a question?”  
“Sure.”  
“That stuff we were all exposed to ...Did you... Have you been feeling... Well, kind of blah...?”  
“Run-down?” Lana asked. “The first few days.”  
“Yeah, I’m just now starting to feel like myself again. I don’t understand it. I mean, a lot of people were exposed to this stuff before...”  
“A lot of people were injured too.” Lana reminded her.  
“I guess.”  
“Kind of weird, huh?”  
“Yeah,” Lucy said bitterly.

\*\*\*

“Well, it’s not a lot, but it does look like you were exposed to this new ‘Revenge’ drug.” Dr. Klein said, looking over the blood work.  
“That’s impossible. We weren’t anywhere near where that drug was.” Lois shook her head adamantly.  
“Well, somehow it got into your system.”  
“What about the dizzy spells?” Clark asked.  
“It could be a side effect from this ‘Revenge.’” Dr. Klein acknowledged. “I’m testing everything to make sure it isn’t anything serious, but ...” He stopped when his phone rang, “Just a minute.”

Clark glanced at her in concern, “How are you feeling?”  
“I’m fine.” She said, slightly annoyed. He really was a mother hen. “I’ll be even better when whatever this is... gets out of my system.”

“I’m sorry.” He whispered, wrapping his arm around her shoulders. “I thought there was something off, but I ignored it...”

“How were you supposed to know there was something wrong? I didn’t even know it.” She tried to reason. She hated it when he blamed himself.

“Lois...” His head shot up in that familiar faraway look.

“Go.” She said.

“But...”

“I’ll be fine. Go.” She instructed.

He nodded and quickly spun into his suit and ricocheted into the sky to answer the cry for help only he could hear.

“Well, that was the lab.” Dr. Klein said, turning to face her.

“And?” Lois pressed.

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“Sorry, Superman. I think the alarm’s just acting up.” The bank manager apologized.

“That’s okay,” Clark reassured him. He turned to leave, only to be stopped by Diana Stride.

“Superman, could I get a statement?”

The closer she got, the more relaxed he seemed. “What is it, Ms. Stride?”

“The accusations against you? Do you have a comment?” She smiled as she spoke. He noticed the familiar red jeweled necklace she wore.

“Not really. I don’t respond to lies.”

“Lies? How do you explain the fact that this boy has all of your powers?”

“Maybe he’s not really this woman’s son.”

Where had that come from? His normal control over his emotions seemed gone. The first thing that came to his mind seemed to be coming out of his mouth.

<<Not her son?>>

<<Six months...>>

<<“I’m so sorry. We did everything we could, Mr. Kent...”>>

<<“No no no no no...Jordan...My baby...Where’s my baby? Clark, where’s our baby?”>>

<<“He was cremated yesterday afternoon.”>>

<<“How do you explain the fact that this boy has all of your powers?”>>

<<“Lois, you can’t keep obsessing over this...It’s not healthy...It’s not normal...”>>

“Normal? I’m sorry if I’m not handling having my child cut out of me while I was unconscious well enough for you, but this is how I deal with things...There are too many pieces that don’t add up...I am never going to be able to be ‘normal’ after losing Jordan.” Lois fumed angrily.>>

<<“They LIED!!!”>>

<<“He cried...”>>

He could feel the pain burning beneath him as the memories flowed through him. All the things he hadn’t allowed himself to feel. He looked around himself, recalling he wasn’t alone. Diana Stride looked at him curiously.

Before he could give her another chance to rebut; he flew up into the sky and headed towards S.T.A.R. Labs. Towards Lois.

\*\*\*

“Maybe he’s not this woman’s son,” Superman said into the cameras.

Jimmy watched the screen in confusion as the newscaster began adding his comments to the story of Superman’s supposed love child and his response to the allegations. “Well, I’m sure everyone noticed how Superman didn’t deny having a child but actually had the audacity to deny the mother of the child.”

“Olsen!” Perry bellowed across the newsroom.

Jimmy turned his attention away from the television screen and towards the Editor in Chief that was beckoning his attention at the moment, “I’m coming, Chief.”

\*\*\*

The memories he’d buried so deep rushed to the forefront of his mind. Jordan. He’d buried the pain for so long. It felt like a tidal wave of grief rushing to the surface. It hurt. The pain he’d felt for so long and buried as he persevered through; ignoring the pain that lied beneath.

He had thought his son to be dead, but what if Lois was right. How else could the existence of a child with his superpowers be explained? This woman had taken their son from them. It was the only explanation.

\*\*\*

“Superhero super zero!” A crowd of angry protesters stood outside of S.T.A.R. Labs chanting repeatedly as Clark flew towards the building. Perhaps, landing there wouldn’t be the best idea. He landed in a back alley about a block from S.T.A.R. Labs and spun into his street clothes and glasses.

He stepped out of the alley and headed towards S.T.A.R. Labs when he was confronted by Diana Stride. “Superman!”

“Pardon?” He asked, feigning confusion as he walked past her.

“Oh, I’m sorry Mr. Kent. I thought I saw Superman land here.” She began.

“Nope.” He shrugged, continuing to walk away from her. He could still feel her eyes on him. He had to be more careful.

\*\*\*

“Hey, Lana, is Lucy around?” Jimmy asked cautiously.

“She’s out,” Lana replied matter-of-factly.

“Oh. Any idea when she’ll be back?”

“Three to five days. The doctor said she’d been pushing herself too hard.” Lana said airily. “Is there something I can help you with? I’m kind of busy.”

Jimmy scanned the file on Lana’s desk. “I didn’t know you guys were reopening that case on the Metros.”

“We’re not.” Lana slammed the file shut. “Don’t you have a dog show to photograph or something?”

Jimmy stared at her suspiciously for a moment before moving away from her. She was up to something but he wasn’t going to get anywhere pressing the issue. “Tell Lucy I came by.”

“Sure.” She shrugged, turning away from him.

\*\*\*

“Red Kryptonite?” Clark asked, confused.

“If you remember we were doing some experimentation with the meteorite.” Dr. Klein prompted. “From what Dr. Peterson was able to find, Lois had slivers of the meteorite in her blood stream. They’re already taking the precautions to remove it from her, but...”

“How did it get inside her in the first place?” Clark asked in concern.

“We don’t know.” Dr. Klein shrugged.

“You don’t know? What do you mean you don’t know?”

“Clark, please calm down...” Dr. Klein urged.

“I’m not going to calm down. You have no answers. You don’t know anything! This meteorite has somehow gotten into Lois’ body and you have no idea how or why? What if she gets sick? We don’t know anything about this stuff! We don’t even know what effect it has on me!”

“Clark...”

“NO!”

“If you would just calm down?” Dr. Klein tried to calm Clark down, but he wasn’t listening.

\*\*\*

“Mike, this is great stuff. Superman being labeled as a deadbeat dad. I love it. I’m ashamed I didn’t think of it myself.” Bill took another puff of his cigar as he paced in front of the STAR editor.

“Ironic, huh? Golden boy’s got some skeletons in his closet too. Just like any politician.”

“This Leigh-Anne? You sure she’s legit?”

“I’d stake my reputation on it.”

“Count on it.”

\*\*\*

“Thank God.” Dr. Klein breathed a sigh of relief when he saw Lois step into his office.

“Where is he?” Lois asked.

“In a soundproof room.” Dr. Klein motioned her to follow him down the hall. “I don’t know what happened. He just lost it. He got so angry and he just...”

“He what?”

“He collapsed...right in the middle of the lab. I- I didn’t know what else to do.” He opened a sliding door that revealed Clark lying on a cot in the middle of the room.

“Clark?” Lois approached his motionless figure, uncertain of what to expect from him.

“He hasn’t woken up since he collapsed a couple hours ago.”

“Clark...” Lois gently shook his shoulder, trying to wake him. “It’s Lois.”

“Jor...” He murmured so softly she had a hard time hearing him.

“What?”

“Jor...dan.” He murmured again. His eyes still remained closed.

“Clark, wake up. You’re dreaming.” She knew what he’d just said. He hardly ever said their son’s name anymore.

“Lois?” He slowly opened his eyes and groggily looked towards her. “What happened?”

“You don’t remember what happened earlier?” Dr. Klein asked in concern.

“I remember checking on a bank alarm and...I don’t know.” He shook his head, confusion written across his face.

“What do you mean ‘you don’t know?’” Dr. Klein repeated.

“You really don’t remember?” Lois asked.

“No.”

“Memory lapse of some sort? Has this happened before?” Dr. Klein asked.

“Uh, yeah, about a month ago,” Lois said.

“Any other side effects?” Dr. Klein asked. Neither herself nor,

Clark answered. She felt the heat from her crimson blush crossing her cheeks. “Okay, let’s run some tests...If that’s okay with you?” He looked at Clark skeptically.

“Yeah.”

\*\*\*

“This Red Kryptonite seems to affect Superman mentally.”

Diana mused, “As interesting as this is; it just isn’t doing the job in trying to eliminate him. I’m going to need the green kryptonite.”

“I’m doing everything I can right now,” Bill reassured her. “It isn’t easy.”

“If you want Superman taken out, get me the Kryptonite. Otherwise, you can leave me alone.”

\*\*\*

“So, you think this Red Kryptonite is affecting him mentally?” Lois asked.

“Or emotionally. Whichever way you want to look at it. It seems to be bringing out your subconscious feelings. Things you’re suppressing.” Dr. Klein explained.

“You think subconsciously I suspected Jordan was kidnapped?” Clark asked.

Dr. Klein looked from the pained look on Lois’ face to the guilty expression on Clark’s and shook his head, uncertain of how to even broach the subject of their son. “We don’t know anything for sure.”

\*\*\*

“She’s hiding something. I know it.” Lucy said to Mayson. “Why is she so interested in the archive files all of a sudden? It makes no sense.”

“Maybe you’re being a little presumptuous?” Mayson suggested. “I know everyone’s had a hard time these past few weeks...”

“Files are missing. The evidence is gone. How convenient is that when we’re supposed to be arguing the appeal for Baby Rage and his file is GONE???”

“I don’t know. Do you want me to open an investigation?”

“Lucy, can I talk to you?”

Lucy turned around to see Jimmy standing in the doorway of her office. He seemed nervous. He was toying with the strap of his camera bag. He never went anywhere without that camera. Her friend, Jimmy.

How could she have...?

This was Jimmy.

“What is it?” Lucy asked.

Why couldn’t she forget that night? She couldn’t remember the details of what had lead up to them making love, but every detail of that night in his arms was seared into her mind.

“You’re avoiding me.”

“Should I...?” Mayson pointed at the door.

“No, Mayson, we have work to do.” Lucy cut her off. “Jimmy, I’ve been busy.”

“Too busy to pick up a phone?”

“I should go.”

“No,” Lucy ordered once more. “We have to piece this case back together piece by piece by tomorrow morning or else this case gets thrown out.”

“Maybe I can help?” Jimmy suggested, taking a seat. “You can talk while you work, can’t you?”

“Jimmy, I don’t have time for this...”

“Hey, the Skins case. I remember this.” Jimmy smiled up at her. “Fires.”

“Yeah.”

“I think Lois and CK have a copy of a lot of the original stuff from that file. I could bring it by tonight... We can talk over dinner?”

“Dinner?”

“You have to eat and I need to talk. I’ll see you at seven.”

Before she knew what had just happened he was gone.

“Sounds like you’ve got yourself a date.” Mayson winked at her. “Problem solved. Now, about these missing files...”

\*\*\*

The screen showed Lois on the operating table. Doctors surrounded her as they worked on trying to save her life. A cry echoed as a young baby was pulled out from her womb.

“He’s okay.” The doctor said. “I think he’s okay.”

“Doctor, her blood pressure is rising.” The nurse said, motioning to Lois’ unconscious body.

The image began to shake and the screen went black.

“I’ve tried everything I can, but nothing seems to be able to help restore the image,” Lois explained. Clark nodded, wrapping a supportive arm around her, pulling her towards him.

The screen shook once more and showed the doctor looking at the young baby. “I don’t...” The screen shook again and the audio changed once more. The screen went black again.

“No.” Clark shook his head and rewound the tape once more. “We’re missing something.”

The image of Lois on the operating table appeared once more.

\*\*\*

“Oh, good, you’re still here,” Lucy said coolly, approaching Lana’s office.

“Lucy, I thought you were off,” Lana said a bit flustered to see her colleague. She reached for a manila file folder to cover up what she’d been working on.

“I was, but I decided to come in. What’s that?” Lucy asked, pointing to Lana’s desk.

“Nothing,” Lana replied sweetly. “So, how are you doing?”

Lucy pulled up a chair and took a seat. “I’m fine. Mind telling me how you’re doing? I mean, there must be a reason why you keep messing around with all the archive files and why they have come up missing...all of a sudden?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Lana said, brushing her off.

“Yes, you do,” Lucy said. “Keep your hands off my files.”

\*\*\*

“Where is she?” Bill Church hissed angrily.

“Who?” Diana asked innocently when Bill came barging into her office.

“I’m radioactive?” Bill narrowed his eyes at Diana. “How could you let things get so out of control? I’m going to have to explain to everyone why they got exposed to a radioactive substance at my party.”

“It’s temporary.” Diana shrugged. “I’m already clean. It was just a small bit of red kryptonite. Nothing to write home about.”

“We don’t even know what this stuff does. You were supposed to test it on Superman, not the entire upper class of Metropolis.”

“What’s done is done. Do you have the green kryptonite?” Diana asked.

“No, I...I’m working on it.”

“Then we have nothing further to discuss.”

\*\*\*

“I got an interesting call today. Mr. Church was inquiring on our status and interested in a possible purchase of Kryptonite.” Mrs. Cox smiled up at Nigel. “He sounded desperate.”

“I’m guessing his quest with the Red Kryptonite didn’t go as planned.” Nigel mused.

\*\*\*

Test after test. The last few days had been filled with endless visits to different labs; monitoring the slow decrease in the presence of this radioactive substance in Lois’ body. Almost everyone they had spoken with that had attended the party a few weeks ago had suffered the same effect. It made no sense. He and Lois hadn’t attended the party so how had she been exposed to the radiation?

“I swear to God, if I have to be pricked in the arm with one

more needle I’m going to scream.” Lois snapped angrily, rubbing her forearm as they exited the doctor’s office once more. She walked with Clark towards their Jeep.

“I’m sorry, but at least we know that stuff is out of your system.” Clark tried to reassure her.

“I guess.” She said. “It still doesn’t make any sense to me. None of this does. A large majority of the city goes crazy for three days; now that same percentage is radioactive.” He opened the door for her then walked around to the passenger side to climb in.

“I don’t know. I’m still trying to figure out the logic in this whole mess. What’s the point?”

“Well, there were a lot of crimes being committed those few days. Maybe someone thought you would be out of commission?” Lois suggested, cranking the engine. “Perry did try and get us to have Superman make an appearance.”

“I guess.” Clark sighed, “By the way, I called the hospital and requested background information on everyone that was allowed access to that operating room.”

Lois nodded in recognition. “Good. It still doesn’t make any sense. Why would this woman kidnap a baby then come forward like this?”

“I don’t know,” Clark said. “But we’re going to figure it out.”

\*\*\*

Diana pored over the files in front of her, sipping a glass of white wine. Superman. He had appeared on the scene a little over a year ago. His first interview was with Lois Lane when he had rescued her from the blast at Prometheus. After that, his interviews seemed centered with both Lois Lane and Clark Kent. Other journalists, of course, had had exclusives with the Man of Steel, but none of them with the same in-depth exclusives as this duo.

“Interesting.” She mused, taking another sip of her wine as the wheels in her mind began to turn.

\*\*\*

Clark spun into his civilian clothing after he landed in the trees behind the Pine Grove Cemetery. A tradition he’d started since he’d buried his son’s ashes. Maybe. He reminded himself. What if it wasn’t his son? What if his son was in the clutches of this Leigh-Anne person?

He swallowed the lump in his throat and approached the grave. He was surprised to find someone standing over his son’s gravestone. It was Lana. What was she doing here? “Lana? What are you doing here?”

She turned around sharply. Fear was written all over her face. “I...I’m sorry. I should go.” She said, moving away from the gravestone.

“What are you doing here?” He asked.

“I was just...paying my...my respects,” Lana said tearfully.

Clark winced inwardly. “I...I’m sorry. I just...I wasn’t expecting to see you here.”

“It’s fine. I should go.” She repeated.

“You’re crying.” He noticed.

“It’s a cemetery. People are dead, Clark.” She said, pointing out the obvious.

“Yeah.” He said solemnly. He stared at the gravestone marked, ‘Jordan Lane Kent’.

“I’m sorry,” Lana said. “I know I never said it before, but I’m really sorry about what happened.”

He hated this. He hated it when people apologized for Jordan. He never knew what to say or do. “Please don’t.” He said quietly.

“Don’t what?” She asked.

“Don’t apologize for my son.” He said.

“Oh.” Her voice changed to a bit more edgy tone. “Well, like I said. I should get going.”

“Yeah.” He watched her leave then turned back to the grave marker where they had buried Jordan’s ashes. Using his enhanced vision, he scanned beneath the ground to the contents of the urn. He felt his stomach churn and his knees buckle as he examined the

contents. “No...” He fell to his knees.

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From a distance, Lana Lang watched as Clark Kent fell to his knees. What was going on? Why was he on his hands and knees? She'd never seen Clark cry. Not even as a child. He'd always been pretty well put together in more ways than one. She'd been angry when he'd humiliated her senior year of high school by breaking up with her in the middle of the pep rally. It had taken years for her to get over her anger. Looking back, she'd always thought of Clark as the one that got away.

\*\*\*

Below the cemented gravestone was the urn he'd had buried so many months ago. He hadn't known what to do with it? The claims of the doctors and nurses that they had cremated their son's remains had been heart wrenching. Now he saw the lies for what they were.

The closer he examined the contents of the urn the angrier he got.

Why hadn't he ever thought to examine the contents of the urn before? Why? Anger coursed through him as he stared at the gravestone before him. His son was not dead.

The doctors had lied.

The nurses had lied.

Kidnapped. That's what Lois had been saying all this time. In the last month or so since Leigh-Anne's appearance he'd begun to suspect, but now he had the proof that they'd been lied to.

He angrily stalked out of the cemetery as he planned how to get his son back.

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“I'm very sorry for your loss, Mr. and Mrs. Kent, but I can't exactly give out personnel information. It would be unethical.” Dr. Benzen said, nervously readjusting his glasses as he looked back at them.

“Unethical? Don't even start with me on unethical!” Lois fumed.

“Lois...” Clark tried to calm her down but to no avail.

“First we get told our baby died on the operating table; which I'm sure you recall that that is a lie! We watched the tape. We know he cried. Then we get told you had him CREMATED! Another lie. Since when does cremating a human body create wood chips?” Lois was furious.

“Mrs. Kent, I know you're upset, but I can't...”

“Upset? Upset doesn't even begin to cover half of what I'm feeling. You lied to us. Your entire staff lied. Then you have the gall to try and pull the ethics card?” Lois glared at him angrily. Dr. Benzen had backed away from them by a few steps.

“Mrs. Kent...I really really CAN'T. I. I could lose my license...”

“You could lose your license?” Lois asked innocently. She turned around to see a patient being wheeled in. The man wheeling her in was glowing in anticipation. The woman was obviously in labor.

Very loudly, Lois turned to the crowded room of expectant mothers and announced, “Careful, you might wake up and find out your baby was kidnapped like I did!”

“Mrs. Kent, please...” Dr. Benzen pleaded.

The crowd looked at her in shock. She continued. “Yeah, I got told my baby was cremated; only I find out it's only a pile of burned wood chips. No baby. And now, Dr. Benzen refuses to tell me anything about the people that operated on me the day my baby supposedly died.”

“I could sue you for this.” Dr. Benzen hissed.

“Maybe, but you won't,” Lois said angrily. “I could take this hospital to the cleaners if I wanted. What I want is my baby. You are going to give me the information I'm looking for or I'm going to keep telling all your patients here what you and your staff did got it?”

\*\*\*

“I cannot believe you just blackmailed that doctor into giving us this information.” Clark hissed as they stepped off the elevator, into the lobby of the hospital.

“Hey, it worked, didn't it?” Lois asked. “Now we just need to narrow the search down.”

\*\*\*

Two Weeks Later

“This is the report on the contents of the urn. The medical examiner said it was impossible for the ashes to have been anything but ... but burnt wood chips.” Henderson read off the report.

“The stray pieces of pine are a dead giveaway too,” Clark said angrily as he paced Henderson's office.

Henderson looked up at Clark and slowly put the file down he'd been reading over. Ever since Clark had come to him about his suspicions of Jordan's kidnapping he'd been a constant fixture in his office every morning the last few weeks.

“Clark, we're doing everything we can right now. We're trying to track down everyone that was working that day and...”

“We've already given you all of that!”

“I don't know how you got that information, but it wasn't by legal means.” At Clark's stern look, Henderson sighed, deciding to take a different approach. “I'm doing everything I can right now. I have to do everything by the book or I risk having this case fall apart when it goes before the grand jury. Is that what you want?”

“You know I don't...”

“Then let me do my job.”

“What am I supposed to do until then? What am I supposed to tell Lois? That we can't do anything but just...WAIT? Hope maybe you'll catch this person? Our son is out there somewhere with some...”

“You can't keep doing this to yourself. You're going to drive yourself crazy.” Henderson laid a supportive hand on Clark's shoulder.

“How am I supposed to NOT concentrate on this? My son was KIDNAPPED in the middle of a hospital. I had doctors and nurses lying to me for months about what happened.”

Henderson stared at Clark, uncertain of how to answer the young man's question.

\*\*\*

“You're avoiding me.” Jimmy accused.

“You said dinner. I had dinner with you and you gave me my files. End of story.” Lucy harrumphed, turning back to her computer monitor to finish typing up the deposition she was working on.

“A drive-in burger joint wasn't exactly what I had in mind.”

“Jimmy. I really don't want to talk about this.” Lucy said in a harsh whisper.

“Why? Are you afraid you might actually have to admit you have feelings, Lucy?”

She glared back at him, “You need to go now.”

“You can't avoid me forever.” He shot back angrily, turning towards the door to leave.

\*\*\*

Leigh-Anne sat with Diana Stride, tearing up as she spoke into the microphone, “This last year has been so hard. Sure, I've always hoped Superman might give us a little loan or something to get us on our feet...But mostly...” She let out a choked sob, “I just want him to see his boy.”

“Turn that trash off!” Perry bellowed across the newsroom. He then muttered underneath his breath, “I can't believe Diana would buy into all that.”

Jimmy looked at him curiously, “You don't think there's a story here, Chief?”

“A story? All you have here is tabloid trash; plain and simple. I used to think Diana Stride was above this kind of tawdry... Well,

I was wrong.” He sighed. “The Daily Planet, by the way, will not be wasting one drop of ink on this cock and bull story.”

“Uh, Mr. White?” Allan approached him with a pink message slip. “Publisher called. He wants to talk to you about the Superman scandal.”

“Pencil pushing, yellow-bellied...” Perry muttered as he took the message from Allan and made his way back towards his office to return the publisher’s call.

“What’s wrong with Perry?” Lois asked, walking up to Jimmy and Allan.

“Oh, the publisher called about the Superman scandal.” Allan supplied. “I got to get this down to Doris.” He gestured to the files in his hand and left.

“Amazing, huh?” Jimmy gestured to the muted image of Leigh-Anne on the television screen. “I never thought Superman would do something like this.”

“What makes you think he did?” Lois accused.

“Hello?” Jimmy grinned, pointing at the screen. “That’s hard to deny.”

“All you have is this woman claiming to have his child. Where’s the proof?”

“That photo says a lot.” Jimmy pointed out. Clark walked up to them with a file in his hands. “CK, what do you think? I mean if I was Superman and had, you know, his looks, muscles, and tight pants... women falling all over me...” Jimmy noticed Lois’ glare was darkening as he continued. “I sure might...” Clark’s glare was equally dark. “Or not. Probably not. Wouldn’t be a thing I’d think about.” He tried to recover.

“Jimmy, do yourself a favor and please refrain from comments like that around my sister. You’ll only dig yourself even deeper into the hole you’re in.” Lois snapped.

“What’s the big deal?” Jimmy asked, not understanding.

“The big deal is that you’ve already found Superman guilty of what this woman claims without even talking to him.” Lois said irritated, “Then you’re over here talking about scooping up women like they’re prizes at a carnival and...” She was in full force Lane babble mode. He could tell she was angry.

“I’m sorry,” Jimmy said, holding his hands up as a sign of surrender. “I wasn’t thinking. I was joking. I promise. I’d never...”

Seeing Jimmy needed a way out of this conversation before he dug himself any deeper, Clark interrupted. “Jimmy, do me a favor and get me some contact information,” Clark handed him a list from the file he held. Jimmy looked at him curiously, waiting for an explanation, but got none. Clark’s expression was grim. He nodded and headed towards his desk.

\*\*\*

“So, what’s all this?” Lois asked, taking the file from Clark as they made their way back to their desks.

“The information on the staff that was in the room when Jordan was born,” Clark said solemnly. “I figure it’s a start. The same stuff that everyone was exposed to a few weeks ago is most likely the same substance that made everyone crazy that day as well.”

“Except this time it didn’t have green kryptonite in it.” Lois pointed out.

“Yeah. It’s still out there.” Clark said solemnly.

“So, what have we got here? Amanda Marshall? Surgical Registered Nurse during the c-section. Tony Benzen...Lead surgeon...” Lois read off the list.

“Yeah, I figured we could try and track down the RN and talk to her about what happened in that operating room. Maybe get some clues.”

“Yeah.” Lois smiled weakly. “The sooner we get to the bottom of this the better.”

\*\*\*

“You want me to what?” Gene asked.

“Break into their apartment and see if you can find anything incriminating on Superman. Bring it back to me. You’ll be reimbursed for your troubles.” Diana smiled warmly.

“Why don’t you do it yourself?”

“Unnecessary risks aren’t a part of my job description,” Diana said.

\*\*\*

Amanda Marshall watched intently as Lana finished her meeting with one of the victims of a rape from the recent events the last few weeks. She wasn’t sure why Lana was having so many problems with Lucy Lane. Lana had been nothing but kind to her. She had helped her to get this job when she had been desperate for money. Raising a young child was hard on anyone. She wouldn’t trade her young son for anything, but she hadn’t anticipated the financial cost of having him.

That fateful day at the hospital six months ago had been a blessing for her. After Benjamin’s death, she’d felt an empty hole inside of her that only a child could fill. Steven had left a month after his death, leaving her to pick up the pieces of her life alone.

Dr. Benzen had spoken of placing the young child in foster care when the parents weren’t waking up a few hours after the surgery. There had been so many children that hadn’t made it. Her young son had proven the doctors wrong. He was almost seven months along when he had come into the world and many had thought he would too face the same fate the other premature babies had, but he hadn’t.

It had been fairly easy. Switching the bodies of the two babies and pretending not to know what happened when Dr. Benzen asked. Premature babies had issues all the time. Complications from surgery. Issues breathing. Once Dr. Benzen had filled out the death certificate she’d known she was in the clear. After putting the poor baby that hadn’t made it back in the morgue she’d began planning how she would fake the ashes. She’d lucked out when the mother and father both had remained in a coma for a week. Most people that had been exposed to the gas had only dealt with issues for a few days. She’d taken her new son home and had thought she’d been home free until her visit from Lana Lang.

\*\*\*

A young man in his late teens stared up at the brownstone on Hyperion Avenue. He checked the address he’d been given. After assuring himself that the address was correct he headed up the steps.

\*\*\*

“Clark...yes...” Lois moaned as he moved up her body, leaving a trail of open-mouthed kisses in his wake. She looked into his eyes filled with the same desire he knew was reflected in his own.

They would be fine. They had to be. He loved this woman so much.

He captured her mouth hungrily. He could feel her body begin to quiver against his touch. He moaned against her lips. Her arms were wrapped tightly around him, his face buried against her neck as he continued to move her body against his.

CRASH!

A noise from downstairs broke them both out of their reverie. “You have got to be kidding me...” He muttered under his breath as he painfully removed himself from his wife’s embrace.

His head was still spinning and his heart still racing from their recent lovemaking. He quickly spun into his clothes and sped downstairs to see what the commotion was that had disturbed him and Lois in the middle of the night.

\*\*\*

“Lucy, wait!” Jimmy pleaded.

“I told you this was a mistake. Why do you keep pushing?” Lucy cried as she attempted to push him out the door.

“Because I love you.”

“Don’t say that,” Lucy yelled vehemently. Her fists pounded

against his chest, "Please just go!"

Realizing he wasn't going to get anywhere further in their argument until they both cooled down, Jimmy nodded and left. She closed the door behind him, sinking to the floor as she gave into the tears that had been threatening to overtake her. How had her life ended up so screwed up? She barely spoke with her sister anymore. Everyone she knew was no longer who she thought they were, but mostly she was disappointed in who she had become. She no longer felt confident in herself or her choices. She had allowed herself to be duped by the biggest criminal in Metropolis. What business did she have in trying to work with the District Attorney's office in prosecuting criminals when she couldn't read the signs everyone had been pointing out to her for months?

\*\*\*

A dark shadow fled as Clark moved at super speed to catch the intruder. The intruder had been by the bookcase where his suits were kept. Had he seen anything? He looked over at the table where a bag of his and Lois' belongings had been flung into the bag carelessly. "Where do you think you're going?" He snapped, grabbing the intruder by the collar.

\*\*\*

Jack had lived on the street for roughly one and a half years. After he and his brother Denny had entered the foster care system at the age of nine and seven, they both had witnessed their fair share of crime. Every home promised to be better. Every social worker offered empty promises. They soon learned to rely on one another.

After the last foster home had sheltered them with more abuse and alcoholic caretakers, Jack decided the best thing for himself and Denny was to leave. He packed his and Denny's things and left in the middle of the night, keeping an eye over his shoulder for that unsuspecting blow to the head that might come if he were caught. Fortunately, for Jack, they weren't.

They survived on the charity of others; willing and unwilling. His plan to save up enough money for their own place seemed like a pipe dream until he had run into a man named Gene Newtrich. Fifty thousand dollars. It seemed easy enough. Break into the home, look for any connection to Superman while making it look like a robbery.

When he'd realized the tenants were otherwise occupied he'd taken longer than usual for his raid on the home. He had been just about to investigate the hollow sound behind the bookcase when a dark figure had descended the staircase, "Where do you think you're going?"

He fought against the figure, but to no avail. The man had a strong grip on him and was not letting go. He'd screwed up. What was going to happen to Denny? He couldn't survive on the streets by himself. "Let me go!"

A flood of light filled the room and Jack looked up into the very angry eyes of Clark Kent, "What are you doing here?" He snapped, gesturing to the bag of loot Jack had acquired so far.

"What does it look like?" Jack snapped back sarcastically. He still hadn't loosened his grip. Clark's eyes narrowed. For a split second, Jack thought he was going to hit him.

He found himself thrown to the couch roughly, "It looks like you're just a kid breaking into my home and stealing."

"The door was open." Jack snapped back.

Clark crossed his arms over his chest, looking disapprovingly at Jack, "Try again."

"Clark?" A feminine voice from the stairwell caught Clark's attention, causing him to look away. Jack took the opportunity and ran for the door.

"Oh, no you don't!" Clark grabbed him by the collar and threw him down to the couch once more. "You're not going anywhere." He picked up the phone nearby.

"What are you doing? Calling the police? Good luck with that." Jack scoffed.

Clark kept a strong hold on the young man's collar and Lois confronted the young man angrily, "What's your name?"

"Yeah, like I'm going to tell you." Jack snorted, "I'll take my chances with Juvie."

"So, you've been in the system before? You make a habit of stealing and breaking into people's homes?" Lois asked. "Your parents must be proud!"

"Nope." Jack shook his head. "No parents. I don't live anywhere. I'm responsible for me. Want to call the cops? Be my guest." Jack snapped.

Lois' face softened as well as Clark's. "What do you mean you don't live anywhere?" Clark asked. "You're just a *kid*."

"I'm seventeen years old. I'm nobody's problem." Jack sighed, "What do you want from me? An apology? Fine; I'm sorry I broke into your place and tried to steal from you, but I got to make a living somehow."

"By *stealing*?" Clark asked.

"Pays the bills." Jack snapped.

Lois and Clark looked at one another for a moment before turning back to him. He wasn't sure what to expect. Were they going to let him go? They hadn't called the police yet. Maybe that was a good sign.

Clark gestured to the pile of loot on the table. "If we catch you trying to do this again you will go to jail. This is your warning." He set the phone down and released Jack.

Lois opened the front door for him to leave. "Don't let this happen again."

\*\*\*

"I can't thank you enough." Amanda smiled at Lana, "First the money you've given me; now this job. I don't know what I would have done without your help."

"It's no problem. I know it can't be easy raising a child on your own." Lana smiled sweetly down at the sleeping baby, "He's so cute."

"Yes, he is. He's surprisingly such a good baby. I just wish he didn't cry so much when I hold him." Amanda sighed. "It's an adjustment."

"Well, maybe he's teething," Lana suggested.

"Maybe." Amanda sighed, "Thank you for helping me out. I don't know what I'd do without you."

\*\*\*

After putting everything back in its place at super-speed, Clark reentered the bedroom only to find Lois asleep on the bed. He knelt down to kiss her before turning towards the bathroom to take a very cold shower.

\*\*\*

"What is it?" Denny asked, looking at the round globe before them.

"I don't know." Jack said, "But hopefully it'll be worth something."

\*\*\*

Superman. He had come to Metropolis as a hero; uplifted by many and feared by some. He had never met as much fear and resentment as he had in the past few months. Mike Rogers smiled as he looked at the latest report on the Star's subscriptions. Their readers were growing more and more angry with Superman. Letter after letter came in demanding the government step in and rid Metropolis of this alien. Superman would soon be out of the picture, making room for Intergang.

\*\*\*

Ellen Lane stepped out of the yellow checkered cab, carrying a single suitcase. She paid the cab driver and looked up at the apartment complex before her. Her daughters had been avoiding her phone calls for the last few months and it was time she put an end to the lack of communication. After all, how else were they supposed to know what was going on in her life, and vice versa?

She headed up the steps to her youngest daughter's apartment,

determined to fix the problem.

\*\*\*

“You couldn’t even do it yourself? You sent...a KID?” Diana scolded Gene as she paced around her office.

“Yeah, we’re still trying to locate him. I don’t know what he was able to find out.” Gene explained. “Don’t worry, Ms. Stride. I’ve worked with him before. He’s good.”

“What if he got caught?” Diana asked nervously. “We can’t afford for this to come back on us.”

“He doesn’t know anything about Intergang; or you,” Gene reassured him. “He also knows what would happen if he ran his mouth.”

Diana drummed her fingers against the wood grain of her desk for a moment, contemplating what to do next. “Any word on the Kryptonite?”

“None of my guys have been able to find the green variation, yet, but we did come across some old files of Bureau 39’s. We’re going through them. Hopefully, they’ll point us in the right direction.”

\*\*\*

“Alice, I really don’t understand...” Perry began to argue but was cut off by the expression on his wife’s face. He sighed, realizing she wasn’t going to back down from the issue at hand.

“Perry, you’ve been having nightmare after nightmare about your abduction. Obviously, however, you’ve been dealing with it hasn’t worked. You need to try something different.”

“Mr. and Mrs. White?” a soft feminine voice interrupted them.

Perry looked up to see an older woman in her mid-forties with blonde curly hair. “Yes?” Alice answered.

“I’m Dr. Friskin.” The woman said, extending her hand out to shake theirs. As Alice greeted the woman, Perry could only wonder how he’d gotten talked into seeing a shrink.

\*\*\*

James Turner stared at the Metropolis Bridge in anticipation. The last few months he had watched Metropolis change. The change had been for the better. He had been hired to do one thing: get rid of Superman. So far, he had had no such luck. Despite the constant support he had rallied behind him and the berating he often did whenever Superman showed up to a rescue, the Man of Steel had proved to be a worthy adversary.

He checked his watch once more. “4:59pm” One more minute before show time.

\*\*\*

Below the Metropolis Bridge four timers blinked as they counted down to the inevitable...  
30 seconds...25 seconds...

\*\*\*

“I know you are not WORKING on a Saturday.” Ellen Lane scolded.

“Mom, I don’t have time for this,” Lucy said angrily. “I have a lot of work to do. I have to prep for court on Monday. What do you want?”

“You used to have time for me.” Ellen sniffed. “You and your sister both. Now, I’m just an afterthought...”

“That’s not true.” Lucy sighed, realizing her mother was in her self-pity mode.

“Isn’t it? You’ve hardly said two words to me after that fiasco with Lex Luthor.” Ellen said bitterly, “And let’s not forget your sister who won’t return anyone’s calls...”

“Mom...”

\*\*\*

The sound of a large blast resonated in Clark’s ears. He looked up, zeroing in on the source. Followed by the blast was the flood of cries for help.

“Help, Superman!”

“My baby...”

“I can’t get out!”

“Help, I can’t breathe...”

“Please, God, no!!!”

\*\*\*

James Turner watched in amusement as he took in the symbolism behind the destruction of the Metropolis Bridge. The bridge that symbolized peace and brotherhood was gone. Maybe now Metropolis would do what was right and rid itself of its alien invader.

\*\*\*

“Everything is set, Ms. Taylor.” The nurse handed her the discharge paperwork. “Good luck.”

“Thank you.” Toni Taylor took the paperwork from the nurse and headed for the exit. She’d been hospitalized after a fire had broken out in her club. She’d been bedridden for months as she’d had to undergo surgery after surgery to repair the damage the fire had done. During this time she’d had time to contemplate what she would do to the person responsible. She was ready for revenge.

\*\*\*

Lois wrapped herself up in a fleece blanket, glued to the television as she watched the footage of her husband and the hundreds of men and women of public service, fighting to save the many lives that had been put in danger by such a sinister act. It had been seven hours since he’d been called away by the cries for help only he could hear. She had known from the expression on his face that it was bad. She’d never imagined this kind of catastrophe.

Who would do such a thing?

\*\*\*

Jack held the wooden box in his hands firmly as he threw on his overcoat jacket. He’d finally gotten word of a buyer for the globe he’d found. Hopefully, he’d get enough money off of it to start making a real life for him and Denny.

\*\*\*

Lois awoke to the sound of the shower in the master bath turning off. She looked around the room groggily and was surprised to find herself in her master bedroom. She had remembered falling asleep, watching the coverage on the Metropolis Bridge. She had filed the story hours ago with Perry, but Clark still had yet to return.

“Hey, I thought you were sleeping,” Clark said sinking into the bed next to her.

“I was.” She said, reaching out to caress his cheek, “Are you okay?”

He shook his head. “We got everyone out.” He said simply, pulling her into his arms. He breathed a sigh of relief as he held her close.

“What does that mean?” Lois asked, curiously. She knew she may be pressing the issue, but something about his tone was off and the reporter in her wouldn’t let her leave it alone.

He sighed, letting out a bitter laugh, “It means that everyone got out, but not everyone survived.” He sighed, tightening his arms around her. “A lot of people were hurt. Some didn’t make it.” His voice cracked slightly as he spoke.

“Oh, Clark, I’m sorry.” She gently stroked his chest. Her hand instinctually went to her abdomen where Jordan used to be. Even though she knew he wasn’t there anymore she still had an instinctual reaction to touch her abdomen whenever hearing about the loss or danger to a child. She leaned up to capture his lips. She was surprised by the intensity of his kiss. She moaned in pleasure as he dipped his tongue inside her mouth, exploring the inner confines.

\*\*\*

Jack cautiously opened the box and peered at the unfamiliar globe that was inside. He carefully reached out to touch the globe. A bright light appeared and a man in a white robe appeared.

“My name is Jor-El...”

He dropped the globe and stepped back. There was something

strange about this globe.

A pair of headlights caught his attention. He closed the box over the globe and stood up. His buyers would have to pay a lot more than they originally anticipated.

\*\*\*

The painful cries that had haunted Clark for the last several hours slowly began to dissipate as he continued the exploration of his wife's body. "I love you so much, Lois..."

She bucked her hips against him with enthusiasm. "...Cla... Clark... please don't stop..." she moaned.

"I won't."

The soft cries of their recent lovemaking echoed in his mind as he held Lois against him. "Wow..." she lazily smiled up at him.

He withdrew from her and held her close. "Definitely." He whispered.

She smiled up at him and opened her mouth to say something, but he was unable to hear what was being said. His mind was filled with a bright light and the image of his birth father, Jor-El. "I am Jor-El..."

Just as quickly the image disappeared. He shook his head, trying to focus.

"Clark?" Lois' voice reached his ears. "Are you all right?"

"Fine...I think." He said, shaking his head. "It was really weird. For a moment I felt like I had another of those messages from the globe playing...except it was in my head."

\*\*\*

"What's your price?" Mrs. Cox asked.

"Five thousand," Jack said.

"Done." She waved several hundred dollar bills in front of her.

"You found this?" Nigel challenged.

Jack nodded, "In a dumpster on Third. People throw away strange stuff sometimes." Jack said casually.

"Indeed," Nigel said, turning on his heel.

\*\*\*

Leigh-Anne sat across from Dan Rox and Dianne Lennon, hosts of Wake Up Metropolis as she nervously toyed with the gold chain necklace around her neck. "H-How many people are watching?"

"Hopefully all of Metropolis," Dan said with a smile. "Thanks again for doing the show for us. You have no idea how hard it was for our producer to find you..."

Leigh-Anne smiled nervously and muttered under her breath, "That was the point."

"What was that?" Dianne asked.

"Nothing." Leigh-Anne smiled. "I really don't want to do anything to hurt Superman. I just..."

"It's okay." Dianne laid a sympathetic hand over hers. "We're here to help you." She arched an eyebrow at Dan and in an authoritative tone said, "Aren't we, Dan?"

"That and our ratings," Dan muttered under his breath. "Yes, Leigh-Anne, we're here to help you...and your son. What Superman has done to you is a tragedy."

"All right, we're rolling in five...four...three...two...and one." The director called out.

\*\*\*

"Check this out, guys. Superman's approval rating keeps going down more and more." Jimmy pointed to the cover story in the Metropolis Star describing a recent poll among readers.

Lois angrily grabbed the paper out of Jimmy's hands and threw it into the garbage bin, "I thought Perry told you not to bring that rag in the newsroom!" She snapped.

Jimmy looked at Lois warily, "Something...wrong?" He broached cautiously.

"No! Of course not, Jimmy. Why would anything be WRONG???" She angrily glared at the news coverage on the television screen, depicting an image of Leigh-Anne with her son. She closed her eyes, trying to will the lump she felt in her throat to

disappear. "Please shut that garbage off." She snapped vehemently.

Lois knew that Jimmy was used to her outbursts over the years, but the anger she felt over this woman's accusations was out of character, even for her. She silently counted to ten as her young friend returned. "You want to talk about it?"

"Talk about it?"

What was there to talk about? This woman was refusing any contact from the Planet for interviews while she went on national television bragging about a fake relationship she'd had with HER husband. To top things off, she was flaunting a child she claimed to be Superman's and neither Lois nor Clark knew how to prove her wrong. What if the baby was their son? What if he wasn't?

"Lois?" Jimmy waved a hand in front of her, trying to bring her back to the present.

"I just really...don't like seeing Superman portrayed in such a manner." She harrumphed.

Jimmy nodded, understanding. "Yeah. I know you guys are friends."

"Yeah." Lois nodded.

"Where's CK?" Jimmy asked.

"Police station." At Jimmy's questioning look, she pressed on. "Some kid broke into our house last night. We didn't realize until later that he'd taken something. Clark's trying to find him."

"That sucks. Did he take anything valuable?"

"Yeah, something priceless," Lois said softly.

\*\*\*

"We have nothing? How did this happen?" Mayson growled as she paced in the Chief of Police, Steven Waldron's office.

"I don't know, Mayson. All the evidence we had against Intergang seems to have disappeared along with everything we had against Luthor."

Every file, every witness statement, and every physical piece of evidence the department had against the two biggest criminal organizations seemed to have disappeared. Baby Rage had been released at his appeal trial today due to lack of physical evidence. Mayson had come to his office to deliver the news.

"What? Evidence doesn't just get up and walk away." Mayson snapped.

"I've got my best team on this," Steve reassured as Mayson continued to pace around the office. Steve looked at her cautiously, hoping his reassurances were reaching her. She turned to face him, an angry expression on her face.

"You better hope they find everything or I'm going after your department for negligence and tampering with evidence." She jabbed her index finger into his chest as she spoke.

"Now, Mayson..." Steve tried to calm her down but was met with a steely gaze. She wasn't playing. "I'll make sure they know what's at stake."

\*\*\*

"Is this the kid?" Henderson laid out a photo in front of Clark. "Yeah." Clark grabbed the photo Henderson held out. "That's him."

"His name is Jack. Jack Crane. Mother left him and his brother, Denny when he was seven. They were found wandering around in a strip mall. They bounced around from foster home to foster home. There's no information on the father. He's been hauled in more than a few times for stealing."

"Any idea where he is now?" Clark asked apprehensively.

"Your guess is as good as mine. He was reported as a runaway three months ago." Henderson said glumly. "It's a shame."

"Thank you, Inspector."

"No problem. Hey, while I got you here you may want to take a look at this." He pulled out a file from his desk.

Clark opened the file and scanned its contents. He looked up at Henderson for confirmation; who nodded. "How did this happen?"

\*\*\*

"I'm disappointed, Gene. I don't like it when I'm disappointed." Bill said, puffing on his cigar.

"We're doing all we can to find the kid. He usually does such good work." Gene shook his head pitifully. He knew Bill Church Jr's allowance for mistakes was short and his temper was fierce.

"Never trust a thief," Bill said, patting Gene on the shoulder.

\*\*\*

"Well, I've sent the offer to Mr. Church's office. We should be hearing from them shortly. Are you sure you want to give up your bargaining chip, Nigel?" Mrs. Cox asked.

"Oh, we're not giving it all away. I still want to be the one to bring Superman to his knees when he takes his last breath." Nigel opened a small box from his desk and smiled at the glowing green meteorite. "It's a pity Lex never had the sense to rid himself of that Lane woman. He might have lived to see the day Superman was finally exposed."

"Yes, have you seen the reports Diana Stride has been doing? She's trying to do an expose." Mrs. Cox laughed.

"Not a bad idea." Nigel mused. "Perhaps we should help her along."

\*\*\*

"Hey, toots, how you doing?" Bibbo asked, his face lit up when he saw Lois and Clark enter his newly built night club.

"Good," Lois said as she surveyed the club. The crowd was mostly of the same clientele Bibbo had attracted before. "How's your head?"

"It's nothing." Bibbo shrugged it off. He motioned for them to follow him.

Lois and Clark glanced at one another skeptically but followed close behind Bibbo, "Mr. Bibbowski, you said you had something important to talk to us about." Clark prompted.

"Yeah, I heard you were looking for somebody. I caught him trying to panhandle some of his loot through one of my guys..." Bibbo opened the back office door to reveal a very angry Jack tied to a chair.

"Jack?" Lois and Clark asked in unison.

"How did you...?" Clark wasn't even sure how Bibbo had found him let alone how he knew they'd been looking for him.

"Careful. That kid's a menace."

Lois angrily stalked forward and ripped the duct tape off of Jack's mouth, "OW!" He winced in pain.

"Where is it?" She barked.

"Where is what?"

"Don't play games. You know exactly what I'm talking about. You broke into our house and stole it!" Lois snapped angrily. Jack turned away from her, looking at Bibbo and Clark for help. They offered none. She jerked his head back to look at her, "Don't look at them for help. Where is it?"

She wasn't playing. Jack struggled with his restraints only to find he was only tightening them as he moved. Sighing in defeat he gazed remorsefully up at Lois, "I..I sol..I sold it."

"You what? I'm sorry I didn't catch that."

"I sold it," Jack said a little louder, annoyance in his tone evident.

"To whom?" Clark asked, advancing towards him.

"I didn't get a name. A woman and an old creepy guy." Jack said, struggling with his restraints.

"What do you want me to do with him?" Bibbo asked.

Clark gave Lois a pleading look. She shook her head violently, "No. No way. No how. Not happening."

"Lois..."

"No. I'm not budging on this."

\*\*\*

"Diana you have a visitor." The receptionist buzzed through the speaker phone.

Diana rolled her eyes in disgust, "Who is it?"

"A Toni Taylor?"

Diana's ears perked up in interest. "Send her in."

\*\*\*

"Revenge is the most marketable drug in Suicide Slum. People don't even know they need it until they've tried it. Once they've had a taste of what it does for them they can't get enough. I've mostly sold to the small-time pimps and club owners. However, Mr. Bibbowski, I think for the right price we could come up with a good deal." Miranda said, caressing his cheek seductively.

Bibbo shrugged her off of him, "No thanks. My customers are my customers. I don't want to be messing with their heads. They get hard enough to handle as it is."

\*\*\*

Jimmy laid a folder on Lois' desk. Lois looked up at him curiously, "What's this?"

"They just found him floating in Hobb's Bay."

Lois opened the folder, "Gene Newtrich?"

"Yeah, I showed it to Perry. You won't believe this. Mr. Newtrich was Perry's kidnapper."

"What?" Lois asked aghast.

"What's going on?" Clark asked, walking up to them.

"Here" Lois handed Clark the report.

"Yeah, I heard about that. Superman found his body floating in Hobb's Bay earlier after that bank heist on Third." Clark said, reading over the report.

"Well, apparently he's Perry's kidnapper from last year," Lois explained. The expression on Clark's face was grim as was Lois' as they glanced towards Perry's office.

\*\*\*

Two Weeks Later...

"Hey, Lane!" a voice called from the alley behind Mike's diner. Mike Lane turned around only to come face to face with Baby Rage.

"You!"

"I told you, you was dead. Why didn't you listen to me, man?" Baby Rage asked, lifting up an aluminum bat and swinging in Mike's direction.

\*\*\*

"So, whatever happened to Lana?" Amanda asked hesitantly.

"She left," Lucy said curtly.

"Left?" Amanda asked.

"Yes, left. Gone. Hasta la vista. She isn't working here anymore." Lucy snapped angrily as she scanned the deposition in front of her. "Is there something I can help you with?"

"No." Amanda smiled weakly.

\*\*\*

Lana angrily stomped the ground below her. It wasn't fair. She had had everything planned so perfectly. How had she not known? How had everything spun out of control? She stared at the gravestone in front of her.

It hurt.

Would the pain ever go away? The guilt? Hot tears streamed down her cheeks. She struggled to maintain control of herself.

A familiar voice approached her from behind, "Lana? What are you doing here?"

She turned around only to come face to face with the familiar face. "I...I'm sorry. I should go."

\*\*\*

"So, how long am I going to be staying here?" Jack asked.

Perry looked up from his laptop and arched an eyebrow at him. "Where would you rather be staying? On the street?"

"No..." He looked around the house, examining his surroundings.

"All the silver and good china are locked up," Perry said.

Caught off guard, Jack shook his head, "That's not what I..."

"It's a joke," Perry said. "You'll stay here until you're able to support yourself-- the honest way --on your own."

“And Denny?”

“Is in a good foster home now. You can visit him.”

“So, I guess this means I have to find a job?”

Perry handed him the classifieds from the Planet. “Welcome to the real world.”

\*\*\*

“It’s so beautiful,” Diana said, fingering the glowing meteorite before her. “Who knew such a small thing could bring Superman to his knees?” She laughed to herself.

Bill Church smiled. “I’m confident you’ll make his death as painful as possible.”

“Yes, but there’s still the question of my expose,” She said, “I don’t just want to kill him. I want to destroy him...on national television for all the world to see.”

\*\*\*

Lucy angrily threw another file on the ground, shaking her head as she turned to the large stack of files before her. Ever since the fiasco with the Skins in court and the disintegration of their case against Baby Rage, Lucy had been going through all the archive files to assure herself that all the evidence in the file was in evidence lock-up. So far about fifty percent of the files were missing information.

How had this happened? How had they not seen what Lana had been doing? When questioned she’d had no answer. She’d quietly packed up her things and left. Mayson had been too shocked to do anything.

The problem was there was no hard evidence linking Lana to the missing information or evidence in any of these cases. It was all circumstantial, but Lucy knew Lana was behind it.

She glanced at the photo on her desk of herself and her sister. “Should have listened to you, sis.” She muttered under her breath. “Listened to what?”

Startled, Lucy spun around, knocking the large stack of files on her desk over; onto the floor with the rest of the files she’d gone through. She narrowed her eyes in irritation as she lifted her head to meet the face of her intruder.

“Sorry.” Jimmy smiled sheepishly.

Lucy let out a frustrated scream, “Jimmy, what are you doing here?”

“I heard about the case against the Skins.” Jimmy said remorsefully, “I wanted to see how you’re doing.”

Lucy winced inwardly, immediately regretting the tone she’d taken with him. “I’m sorry, Jimmy. I’m..I’m fine.”

“Are you sure?” He asked, pulling up a chair next to her.

“Because, no offense or anything, but you don’t look it. You...”

“Jimmy, I really have a lot of work to do.” Lucy cut him off.

“Your mom came by the newsroom the other day.”

“I know,” Lucy said quietly.

“CK had to rescue Lois from lunch with her,” Jimmy said with a smile.

“How is she?” Lucy asked curiously.

“Good. She’s..” He was quiet a moment, “She’s still not the same, but she’s good.” She nodded quietly. “You can’t keep yourself cut off from her forever. You’re going to have to talk to her. You guys used to be so close...”

“Used to be.” Lucy corrected. She sighed, brushing a stray strand of hair behind her ear, “I really appreciate you coming by, Jimmy, but I really have a lot of work to do here.”

“Fine.” Jimmy nodded. “I’ll go.”

\*\*\*

Clark landed in a darkened alley where he heard the muffled cries for help. The cry was so faint he was barely able to pick it up. “Hello?”

“H...e.l.p.” a weak cry for help came from the end of the alley.

He advanced forward, keeping his guard up as he examined the alley. He stopped.

Crumpled in the back of the alley was an elderly man, covered

in blood. He x-rayed the man’s body and grimaced when he saw the fractured ribs and arms. “It’s okay.” He tried to reassure him.

The man turned to face him, “Su..”

“Don’t try to talk.” He reassured him, kneeling down beside him. As the man leaned closer to him; he got a better look at his face. He squinted, uncertain he was seeing correctly, “Mr. Lane?”

\*\*\*

“How did your kidnapper end up in the bottom of Hobb’s Bay?” Lois asked.

Perry sighed, raking a hand through his thinning hair. “I don’t know. Your guess is as good as mine.”

“Well, judging by what they did to him; I’d guess he pissed someone off,” Lois said, reading over the coroner’s report. The phone beside her rang, “Lois Lane.” She said, answering the phone.

\*\*\*

Lucy stared irritably at the files before her. How? How had so many files been sabotaged without her knowing? She glanced at the photo of herself and Lois from last year. It seemed like ages ago.

The phone beside her rang, “Lucy Lane.”

The voice on the other end was one she hadn’t heard in quite some time, “Lucy? It’s Lois. You need to come down to Metropolis General.”

“Why? What’s going on?”

“Uncle Mike was attacked,” Lois said shakily. “I’ll, uh, see you when you get here.”

With that, she hung up. Lucy glanced at the photo on her desk and shook her head. How had any of this happened?

\*\*\*

Marge’s Café stood on the corner of Fifth Street. A young thirty-something woman in a sharp business suit entered the café with a bright smile on her face. She scanned the crowd of customers until she spotted who she was expecting. The hostess watched in exasperation as she was pushed aside by the woman.

“Really, Nigel, I’d have thought you’d want to meet somewhere a bit nicer,” Toni said airily as she took a seat across from him.

Nigel looked up at her, over the newspaper he was reading. “I prefer to remain in plain sight. People only see what they want to.”

“So, what’s this about?” Toni asked, getting down to business. “You had my club burnt down and nearly killed me. What makes you think I want anything to do with you?”

Nigel folded his paper and placed it on the table in front of him. His demeanor changed from the cool and collected businessman to someone dark; someone capable of anything. The expression in his eyes was unnerving. “If we’re going to be working together you must remember not to make such accusations in public.” His demeanor changed again to a façade of the calm businessman he portrayed to the public. Toni watched in amazement as his facial features relaxed and she once again saw the man she’d always seen in parties and business functions with Lex Luthor. He patted her hand soothingly, “You obviously suffered a more severe bump on the head than you thought. I had nothing to do with that fire.”

“Bill Church was nowhere near Metropolis when...”

“Let me repeat myself, ‘I had nothing to do with it.’ Are we clear?”

“Yes,” Toni said quietly.

“Good. Then we can start getting down to business.” Nigel smiled.

How had she ever thought Lex Luthor to be dangerous? The expression in Nigel’s eyes when he was angered exposed a fraction of what he was capable of. It had been rumored that he had once served in Her Majesty’s secret service as a spy. He had killed. He was a dangerous man and not to be crossed.

“What business?”

“Bringing down Intergang.” Nigel smiled. “Croissant?” He offered her a basket of pastry. She declined, shaking her head.

“How exactly do you expect to do that?”

“Information. I have information on something even Bill Church Jr. didn’t know about his father.” Nigel smiled, opening a file in front of him. “Information is power.”

Toni peered up at Nigel suspiciously, uncertain what he was getting at. He handed her the file and she read with interest. “She gives a whole new meaning to the term ‘homecare,’ wouldn’t you agree?”

\*\*\*

The visit to the hospital was emotionally draining. Ellen Lane had been uncharacteristically quiet as everyone had spoken, trying to figure out how Baby Rage had gotten out. Lucy had been ashamed of her inability to keep Baby Rage behind bars. Lois had quietly taken everything in, choosing to chip in a word or two here and there. Her mind was elsewhere. Clark had caught her gaze drifting to the sign that read, ‘Maternity Ward’ once or twice during the visit.

He was careful to make the patrol around the city quick. Thankfully, the criminal element decided to take a break for the night. He only spotted a few minor occurrences that needed his immediate attention; an attempted break-in in Suicide Slum and a carjacking. He deposited the criminals at the police station and gave the officers his statement; then left to return home.

When he returned home, Lois was sitting on the couch with files all around her. She was typing furiously on her laptop, barely looking up when he entered the room. He smiled slightly, bemused at the intensity in which she threw herself into her work. “Hi, honey.” He said, taking a seat next to her. She leaned up to give him a peck on the cheek before she returned to typing.

After a few minutes, she stopped typing and scanned what she’d been typing so vigorously. He waited patiently for her to finish before daring to speak. She closed her laptop and placed it on the table in front of her; then turned to face him. “Sorry, I was writing up the piece on Uncle Mike’s attack.”

His eyebrows furrowed, “Lois, aren’t you a bit...”

“What?” She interrupted, challenging his accusation before he even voiced it.

“...close to this?” He asked.

“We wrote the original piece on his attack before. We get the follow-up.” She said, “Those are the rules.”

He sighed, raking a hand through his hair. She neglected to remember that Perry hadn’t wanted her working on the story in the first place and she’d had to argue with him for two days before he finally gave in.

“Fine. What’s all this?” He asked, motioning to the files surrounding them.

“These are the cases in which evidence has come up missing. I’m trying to find the connection.” Lois explained.

“I thought Lucy said they already figured out it was Lana that was getting rid of the evidence.”

Lois shook her head, “There has to be more to it. It makes no sense. Just out of the blue, she decided to start sabotaging the cases? I think we need to look at the cases that have been sabotaged. Figure out the pattern.”

“Okay.” He nodded.

Lois picked up another file on the table, “This is the file on Dr. Benzen who conducted my...Caesarean. I.” She shook her head as her voice began to crack. He placed a supportive arm around her.

“It’s okay.” He soothed. “We’ll figure this out.”

“How? When? That...that woman is out there flaunting Jordan everywhere and...and we have no idea where she is or...”

“I know.” He tightened his arms around her. “I feel like an idiot. I should have listened to you. You were right.”

“I’m always right.” She smiled up at him proudly. He smiled

wryly down at her. She was trying to lighten the mood. “But that’s not the point. We have to find her. We have to figure out why she took him.”

“What if we’re wrong?” Clark asked hesitantly.

“What do you mean?” Lois asked, backing out of his embrace.

“I mean, what if she doesn’t have Jordan? Then what?” Clark asked.

“She has a six-month-old baby that FLIES, Clark. How else do you explain that?” Lois asked accusatorially.

He raked a ragged hand through his hair, “I don’t know. It’s just...Nothing. Nothing makes any sense anymore. I mean, I’m full-blooded Kryptonian and I didn’t even start developing powers until I was a teenager.”

“So, what are you saying?” Lois asked, “We should just give up and let this crazy lady ruin your reputation while she raises our baby...IF he is our baby.”

“I don’t know what I’m saying.” He said shaking his head. He let out a shaky breath, “We just have to be very careful about this.” His wrapped his arm around her, pulling her close to him. “This woman’s got the entire media circus eating out of her hand right now. The last thing we need to do is draw attention to ourselves by making accusations without anything to back it up.”

“Perception is the difference between headlines and filler.” Lois nodded. “I know. I know you’re right, but I...I hate this.”

“Well, first thing first; we need to find this woman and figure out a way to find out if he’s Jordan or not.”

“I’ll know,” Lois said confidently.

“Honey. Don’t you think we need some kind of DNA test?”

“Clark, trust me on this; I’ll know,” Lois repeated, patting her abdomen. “I carried him for seven months. I heard his heartbeat. I felt him move and kick and hiccup. I’ll know.” She leaned up to kiss him, wrapping her arms around his neck as she deepened the kiss.

He groaned in pleasure as she moaned against his lips, pressing her body against his solid frame. “You sure you’re not...too...tired?” His answer was a long seductive finger running up and down his chest as she leaned up to recapture his mouth.

“No way,” She murmured, slipping her hand beneath the hem of his sweatshirt. He moaned in pleasure as her hand brushed against his abdomen. “I have...plenty of...plenty of energy.” She rasped out, lifting his sweatshirt over his head and tossing it over her shoulder.

He murmured his approval as he lifted her sweater over her head and tossed it to the ground. He planted open-mouthed kisses along her bust. She laughed in response as she disentangled herself from the garment, tossing it on the couch.

“Oh, Clark...Oh, God...” She moaned as he buried his face into the valley between her breasts.

He wrapped his arms around her, pulling her more securely against him. He felt her back arch against his touch as she fisted his hair. “Clark!” She yelled when he scooped her up in his arms, carrying her towards the bedroom.

“Need more...room...” He rasped out as he walked determined towards the bedroom with her wrapped securely against him.

\*\*\*

“I paid good money for this globe and it doesn’t even turn on? What seems to be the problem?” Nigel asked angrily.

“I don’t know.” Mrs. Cox said airily. “Maybe it just doesn’t like you? Or maybe the kid broke it?”

“Find him.”

\*\*\*

“So, you say, Superman flew Lois Lane into the newsroom?” Diana asked.

Jimmy beamed up at the camera that was aimed at him. “Yeah, I got the pictures, but they didn’t turn out that great because they were moving so fast. It was pretty cool. It was the first time I’d

ever seen Lois speechless!”

“What is Lois Lane’s relationship with Superman now?” Diana asked.

Jimmy shrugged. “I don’t know. I never really thought about that. I mean, I guess they’re friends.”

“And Clark Kent?” Diana asked.

“What about him?”

“What’s his relationship with Superman?”

“Friends I guess,” Jimmy said. He was beginning to get a bit uncomfortable with Diana’s line of questioning, but he’d agreed to the interview.

“Let’s discuss the bombing of the Planet a few months ago. Why do you think Superman didn’t show up?”

Jimmy nervously toyed with the strand of thread that had come undone on his shirt. He hated it when people asked about the Planet bombing. He had to relive his humiliation of that day all over again.

“Mr. Olsen?”

Jimmy looked up at the camera and gave his best smile before he spoke. This was not going to be easy.

\*\*\*

“I really don’t understand why you insist on hiding. Superman has to pay for abandoning you and your son.” Linda said, taking a sip of her coffee.

“I just don’t want my little boy subjected to...”

“Please, Leigh-Anne, all we’re doing is trying to help you. You were wronged. You are an example of every other single mother out there that has been abandoned and not given a second thought by the father. Do you see Superman struggling with anything right now?”

“Well...”

“No! He’s too busy flitting around from one place to another; showing the world how great and superior he is to everyone else...” She stopped when she noticed the expression on Leigh-Anne’s face. “I’m sorry. That was...”

“Ms. King, he’s only ‘flitting around’ as you call it to rescue people. I don’t understand how you think he’s trying to prove his superiority in doing so.”

“I just... I have my opinions.” Linda said, trying desperately to change the subject.

“Fine, but you need to understand something. I don’t want anyone trashing Superman’s name like that. After all, he did save my life and I...”

“Is that how you met him?”

“Uh... yeah.” Leigh-Anne said, forcing a smile.

“See, this is the type of stuff people are interested in. Your relationship, your son, you. They want to get to know the real Leigh-Anne behind the tabloids. You have a real chance of doing that if you come back to Metropolis with me.”

“Okay, I’ll come back to Metropolis with you.”

“Great. We leave tonight.” Linda said with a smile.

“Tonight?” Leigh-Anne looked up at Linda worried.

“Yes, you have an exclusive interview with Top Copy at nine. Don’t worry, Leigh-Anne, I’ll be there every step of the way.”

\*\*\*

“This Leigh-Anne person isn’t even on the list of staff at the hospital,” Clark said, looking through the files in front of him at super speed.

“Are you sure? Maybe she changed her name.” Lois suggested half-heartedly.

“Lois, Clark, I’d like you to meet someone,” Perry said from behind them. Lois and Clark turned to face their boss. “This is James Turner. He’s a partner of Bill’s and he’ll be working with us, trying to get a hang of things. He’s a, uh, journalism major.” Lois and Clark had learned long ago to keep a smile pasted on their faces when Perry discussed Bill Church or any family members or associates.

“That’s great. Nice to meet you, James.” Lois said, forcing an even broader smile that was sure to split her face in half if she let it.

“It’s great to finally meet you both. I’ve heard and read so much about you.” James said. Lois felt a chill go down her spine when he smiled at her. She instinctually placed a hand over her abdomen.

“So, James, are you from Metropolis?” Clark asked. She was grateful Clark had picked up on how uncomfortable she was under James’ gaze.

“No, I was born and raised overseas.”

“Jamie here was born and raised in Scotland.” Perry patted him on the back.

Clark raised his eyebrows, “Scotland?” He asked skeptically.

“Yeah, peculiar thing. I have no idea where my accent is.”

James said with a laugh.

“Ah,” Clark said. Lois watched in amusement as Clark allowed the forced smile on his face to disappear for a moment, sending a silent message to Perry. Perry seemed to get the message quickly and steered James away from them.

“Is it just me or is that guy creepy as hell?” Lois asked in an inaudible whisper only Clark could hear.

Clark took her hand and kissed her palm. “Something’s definitely off about the guy.”

“Hey, guys, guess what?” Jimmy bounded up to them excited.

Lois smiled up at their young friend, “What is it, Jimmy?”

“The Metro Club is reopening under Toni Taylor!” Jimmy showed them the flyer he’d found.

“What?” Lois and Clark asked in unison.

\*\*\*

“A pleasure to make your acquaintance, Mrs. Church, I’m sorry to hear about your husband’s passing,” Nigel said solemnly.

Mindy Church pulled out a cigar and lit it, taking a puff on it. “How did you find me?”

“I have my sources,” Nigel said with a smile.

“So, it would seem,” Mindy said, straightening her skin-tight dress as she paced around the office. “My Billy promised he’d give me everything. I haven’t heard a word from anyone since he left a few months ago. Nobody called me to tell me he had died or anything. I had to read it in the paper. Do you have any idea how upsetting that is?” She asked angrily.

“Yes, I know it must be very traumatizing for you, Mrs. Church, but this is your chance to claim everything that is yours. The businesses Mr. Church ran are being run by his son, Bill Church Jr.”

“Oh, really? And why would I want to run those businesses?”

“Power. People at your beck and will. Respect. The whole package.”

“But I don’t know how to run a business.” She said quietly, running a seductive hand up and down Nigel’s chest.

“Well, then you’ll need a partner to teach you, won’t you?”

Nigel mused. Mindy raised a glass as a sign of a toast and he clinked his glass against hers. “Partners?”

“Partners.” She said with a smile.

\*\*\*

“Whoa! What in the Sam Hill is going on here?” Perry asked, motioning to the files surrounding Lois, Clark, and Jimmy.

“We’re reopening the Metro Club story and trying to piece some of this stuff together,” Jimmy said.

“Metro Club?” Perry asked.

Clark handed him the flyer Jimmy had shown them before. “What in the Sam Hill? Wasn’t she injured in the fire?”

“The Metro Club was involved in a lot of illegal activities. If Toni Taylor is trying to resurrect the club she’s going to resurrect everything else that was going on at the club too.” Lois said. “We just need to figure out what that something is or was.”

“And what happened to that story on the opening of the new

wing of S.T.A.R. Labs?” Perry asked.

“Perry, that story is as good as written and...”  
 “We’re still on it, Chief.” Clark interrupted.

Perry looked between the three of them then turned back to his office, shaking his head. Lois glared at Jimmy, “‘We’re reopening the Metro Club story?’ Really? Is that the best you can do?”

“On short notice, yes.” Jimmy hissed back.

“Okay, both of you cut it out.” Clark interrupted. “What do you have on Bill Church’s will?”

“We’re getting a copy couriered over to us later this afternoon,” Jimmy said. “You think this James Turner is really a partner of Bill Church’s?”

“I don’t know. I do know he gives me the creeps. We need to figure out what he’s up to and why he’s here.” Lois answered.

\*\*\*

Leigh-Anne stepped into her newly furnished apartment and smiled to herself as she looked around. This was definitely a better way of living. “Look, Jesse, a brand new TV.” She switched the television on, showing him the large screen.

He just stared complacently back at her.

“Don’t worry, you’ll enjoy it when you’re older.” She whispered.

He smiled up at her, clapping his hands as he floated out of her arms. “Jesse! Jesse, get back here!” She yelled.

Jesse just laughed happily as he clapped his hands in the air, watching his mother reach for him. “Jesse!”

Linda stepped into the apartment with Mike Rogers and smiled at the scene. She motioned for her photographer to take a picture. “We’ve got gold,” Mike said with a smile.

Leigh-Anne threw an annoyed look at Mike and he just shrugged.

\*\*\*

“I don’t know how much more of this I can take,” Lois whispered hoarsely, lying against Clark’s chest, wrapped in a sheet on their bed. “I feel like we keep getting the run-around everywhere we go...”

“I know,” Clark sighed, placing a kiss on her shoulder. “We’re going to find him.” He promised. “We’ll figure this out...”

“What if we don’t?” Lois cried.

“Lois...” Clark cupped her cheek, turning her to look at him.

“I’m serious. With all the kids that are kidnapped every day all around the world what makes us think we’ll be able to find him? It’s been over six months...”

“I know,” Clark said, hanging his head in remorse. “I should have listened to you then...but I’m listening now and I promise you we will find him.”

“What if we don’t?” Lois asked again. “My heart can’t take this...”

He rested his forehead against hers, holding her close. “We will find him...and we will prosecute his kidnapper to the fullest extent of the law.” He placed a kiss on her cheek, “...and watch him grow up...” he gave her a kiss on her shoulder, “...with his brothers and sisters...”

She laughed, “Oh really?”

“Yes, really,” He held her close. “He’ll need someone to play with...” he kissed her cheek again.

“When exactly did you want ...Oh, um...right there...” she whispered as his lips brushed against her earlobe.

“Whenever you want...” he whispered, holding her close. “...but I promise we will find Jordan...even if it takes a lifetime...I will find him...and bring him home to you.”

She sighed, resting her head against his chest. “I feel cheated,” she said. “I never got to see him...or hear him...”

“I know.”

“I guess it wouldn’t hurt...” she sighed against his lips as he tightened his arms around her, “...to try.”

“Practice makes perfect...” he grinned against her lips.

\*\*\*

“How can you be so sure Superman will show?” Bill Church asked as he took a long puff of his cigar.

Diana smiled as she reapplied her lipstick in the mirror. “Because Superman has always been known to rescue a damsel in distress.” Her eyes narrowed as she got down to business. “Are you sure you’re ready for this?”

“I’ve been dreaming about this day ever since my father’s death was announced.” Bill Church muttered grimly. “Make it painful.”

\*\*\*

Across the hall, a tall dark woman watched as Bill Church Jr and Diana Stride conversed. She smiled to herself as she examined the walls of the room they were in. The soft glow of a greenish hue emitted throughout the halls. She pulled out her cellular and dialed a number well known to her. “Sir? It appears we’ve underestimated Intergang. They’ve lined the walls of S.T.A.R. Labs with the Kryptonite we gave them...”

\*\*\*

“Mrs. Cox, do I seem like a man that finishes last?” Nigel asked, irritated as he spoke into the phone.

“No.” Her echo reached his ears as she hesitantly spoke.

“Then why do you insist on looking inside the box instead of around it? Why do you think I would actually give Intergang, my enemy, kryptonite? A good replica, yes. The actual thing, no.” Nigel smiled to himself. “Mr. Church is going to expose himself and be in for a royal surprise.”

\*\*\*

Lois and Clark walked through the front doors of S.T.A.R. Labs. “Hopefully we can get to the bottom of all this mess with Jordan and find out what happened to him soon,” Clark said, wrapping his arm protectively around her.

She sighed, leaning against his shoulder, “Yeah, I still don’t know why we have to cover this thing. The story’s as good as written. S.T.A.R. Labs has a new state of the art wing and will study a bunch of boring things in it.” She grinned up at him. “See? All done.”

“As lovely as that story is, I’m sure Perry would want just a few more details than that.”

“Party pooper.” She pouted. “I can think of several other things we could be doing rather than attending this press conference.”

He laughed, wrapping his arms around her from behind for a moment, leaning into whisper in her ear as he gave her a peck on the cheek, “Me too.”

“Hey, guys, I was wondering when you were going to get here,” Jimmy said, walking up to them, camera in tow.

They reluctantly pulled apart and smiled a greeting at their friend, “Hey, Jimmy.”

\*\*\*

“You know; you don’t have to keep me company twenty-four-seven. I understand if you need to get back to your life.” Mike Lane said as he watched his niece staring outside the window of his hospital room.

“I’m worried about you, Uncle Mike.” Lucy gave him a watery smile.

“Oh, really? Is that why you keep daydreaming and staring out the window?” he teased.

“I’m sorry. My head’s just been...somewhere else.” Lucy apologized.

“Your head or your heart?” Mike asked with a knowing smile.

Lucy got up from her seat and nervously looked at the clock, “Isn’t it about time for your nurse to give you your meds?”

“Avoidance is a form of denial, you know.”

“Yeah, definitely time for your meds. I’m going to go get the nurse.” Lucy said, briskly as she stepped out of the room to find the nurse.

Mike shook his head, staring at her retreating figure, “Poor kid. She’s got it bad and doesn’t even know it yet.”

\*\*\*

“So, Lois, uh, have you heard from Lucy?” Jimmy asked, “I was, uh, wondering how she’s doing. I know the whole thing with Mike really got her upset.”

“Not since the night, Uncle Mike was attacked. Even then we didn’t really talk much...” Lois said quietly. “We should probably take our seats.” She motioned to the crowd that was beginning to move.

“Yeah.” Jimmy nodded, following the duo to their seats.

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Bill Church stood by the double doors that held the new wing to S.T.A.R. Labs closed. He pulled out his cell phone and dialed a familiar number, “On my signal. Break down the doors.” He hissed, “Don’t screw this up.”

On the other side of the door, armed men pulled on their hooded masks preparing to break in.

\*\*\*

Dr. Leonard Rahz stood at the podium, addressing the press. “Our newest wing has the latest in security, making it impenetrable to break-ins or robberies. We hope to put an end to disasters like the break-ins and robberies that have been occurring at S.T.A.R. Labs the last few months. Our scientists work hard on their research and we hope the latest security we’ve added will protect their projects and allow them to see the light of day and not fall into the hands of criminals. As you know S.T.A.R. Labs works very closely with the government and...”

A loud crash could be heard on the other side of the room as the doors to the new wing were opened by a powerful blast. The room quickly filled with black hooded armed men. Clark gave Lois a warning look and quickly disappeared into the panicked crowd.

“Silence!” One of the hooded men cried out. “Nobody move!” He grabbed Diana Stride from her seat and held the barrel of his gun against her hip. “This is a holdup.”

“Watch it, that hurts.” Diana hissed under her breath.

“We have to make this look realistic.” Her kidnapper whispered back.

Lois stared suspiciously at the open doors to the new wing. They emitted a familiar green glow. “Oh, my God, Kryptonite.” She whispered under her breath.

“What’d you say?” Jimmy asked. “Where’d CK go?”

“Uh...” Lois feigned ignorance as the familiar sonic boom of her husband’s arrival resonated throughout the room.

“Let her go!”

“Ah, Superman!” the man smiled at the superhero. “So predictable.” He walked towards the entrance of the glowing wing with Diana Stride in tow.

Lois watched, frozen in place, preparing herself for the worst. Nothing happened. Clark remained standing just as strong as ever. “What in the world...”

“I believe you have some explaining to do.” Before anyone could react, Clark had tied up the hooded men and melted their weapons. The crowd of press soon overcame their shock and quickly went into reporter mode.

“Superman, could we get a statement!”

“Superman, over here!”

\*\*\*

On the other side of the room, Bill Church Jr stared at the scene in horror, “What the hell?” He fumed angrily, “That son of a... I had that entire room painted in Kryptonite and he didn’t even flinch.”

Diana Stride, who had slipped away from the mob of reporters unnoticed, approached him, “I don’t know what happened, Billy, but if I were you I’d get the hell out of dodge before your yuppies over there turn on you.”

\*\*\*

Lana paced through her bedroom, replaying the last few months’ events over and over in her head. Nothing had worked out how she had planned. Her job was gone. The few friends she had were growing slimmer and slimmer. Linda was tiring of her excuses when she was unable to pay her half of the expenses.

“How did everything get so screwed up?” She muttered.

\*\*\*

“Careful!” Dr. Klein shouted as Lois reached out to touch the glowing green wall.

“I’m fine,” Lois said, holding up her hand to show him.

“See?”

Dr. Klein took her hand and examined it carefully, assuring himself that she was indeed all right. “This doesn’t make any sense. It... It looks exactly like...”

“I know, but obviously it isn’t.” Lois finished for him.

“Isn’t what?” Clark asked, entering the room. “What is all this?”

“Good question.” Lois said, “For some reason; this whole room was painted to make it look like it was coated in Kryptonite.”

Clark lowered his glasses to examine the walls more closely. “Whatever it is; it’s not Kryptonite. It doesn’t have any of the components as Kryptonite.”

“How can you be sure?” Lois asked in concern.

“You mean aside from the fact that I’d be doubled over in pain by now?” Clark asked, half-joking.

Dr. Klein pulled out a small pen-shaped device and clicked a button, revealing a sharp blade at the end of it. “What are you doing?” Lois asked.

“I’m going to cut out a sample of this and try and figure out what this is. The glowing we’re seeing from the wall would indicate some sort of radiation.” Dr. Klein explained.

“I think there’s a larger issue here. Someone thought they had Kryptonite and was planning on using it here tonight. Whoever sold it to them obviously has Kryptonite and plans on using it themselves.” Clark said grimly.

“Then we need to find them and figure out what they want,” Lois said determinedly.

\*\*\*

“I’m sorry,” Mindy Church cooed, batting her eyes at Sheldon Bender, “Where do I sign?”

“Right here, Mrs. Church. As Mr. Church’s widow, you’re entitled to everything he owned.”

Mindy’s eyes lit up like a child’s at Christmastime.

“Everything?”

“Yes, Mrs. Church.” Sheldon said, pointing to the next line, “We just need one more signature.”

“You sure are bossy,” Mindy muttered, signing her name on the line Sheldon was motioning to.

“That’s part of my bedside manner I’m afraid,” Sheldon said, gathering up the papers he’d had Mindy sign. “I’ll get these filed and you will now be the new owner of Cost Mart and all its subsidiaries.”

“Oooh, yay!” Mindy clapped her hands together lightly. “You are such a good lawyer.” She leaned over and pulled Sheldon into a passionate embrace, leaving him speechless. “Thank you.” She said, pulling away. She stood up and walked towards the door, leaving Sheldon dumbfounded.

\*\*\*

“Dr. Klein said it would take a few days on the lab result on that paint sample he took,” Clark said, slipping under the covers with his wife later that night.

Lois nodded mutely, concentrating on the book she was reading as she instinctually curled up against his chest, resting her chin against his bare chest as she continued reading to herself. He watched her amused, catching a glance at the title of the book.

‘What to Expect When You’re Expecting.’

“Haven’t you read this one already?” He asked, placing a soft kiss on her forehead.

“I wanted to refresh my memory.” She said. “It’s a classic.”

“A classic?” He asked amused.

“Yes, a classic for expecting parents. We never got to implement everything we went through when we were expecting Jordan. I figured it would be a good idea to refresh my memory on everything.” She gave him wary look. “You think I’m crazy?”

“No, I think you’re very smart. When we do find him it’ll be good to have caught up on all the reading.” He said, brushing a strand of hair behind her ear. “I guess refreshing our memory on a few things isn’t the worst idea you’ve come up with.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Lois asked, defensively. “I have excellent plans.”

“Need I remind you who dragged Jimmy to EPRAD to break in without any sort of a backup plan?” His eyes were dancing with laughter as he teased her.

“Yes, and who followed me?” Lois challenged, “With no backup plan.”

The book in hand had now been abandoned as she sat up, hovering over him; arms crossed awaiting his answer. His eyes gazed over the cream negligee that hugged her curves perfectly. The fiery look in her eyes only made her more beautiful to him.

“What can I say?” He shrugged, “I was dumb and in love.”

Her face broke out into laughter at the corny line and he reached up to capture her lips with his own. “You are so corny.” She laughed against his lips. He groaned in pleasure when he felt her legs move to straddle him as he cupped her cheek, deepening the kiss.

“Mmmmm hmmm...” He moaned against her lips as he slipped his hands beneath the hem of her negligee, exploring her soft ivory skin. He moved his attention to her neckline, brushing feather light kisses along it as he inched himself lower. Her legs tightened around his waist as she pulled him closer. “You are so beautiful.” He murmured, recapturing her lips once more.

“Clar...” She moaned against his lips.

He leaned up to cup her cheek, pulling her down to his level once more and deepened the kiss. Once she was at his level he rolled them over on their side, making sure she was comfortable, facing him. “I love you, Lois Lane,” He whispered against her lips.

Her face brightened as he spoke, unshed tears shining in her eyes as she looked up at him. “I love you, Clark Kent.”

\*\*\*

“My father did WHAT???” Bill Church Jr. hissed into the phone.

“Apparently, he got married to a now Mindy Church. Everything in his estate is owned by her now; excluding everything that was placed in your name before his death.” Sheldon Bender said smugly.

“That..that’s everything.” Bill Church said aghast.

“Yep.”

“She can’t do this.”

“She can and she did.” Sheldon smiled, “Isn’t family fun?”

\*\*\*

“All right, for the last time, kid, who hired you to do the raid on S.T.A.R. Labs?” Henderson asked, pacing around the interrogation room. He hated this part of his job more than anything. Especially when he was forced to question such a young kid that was barely of legal age.

He still wasn’t speaking.

“Listen, I know who you are, Jack. I know you’re a runaway. I know about your kid brother, Denny. I don’t think it was your idea to raid S.T.A.R. Labs so why don’t you tell me whose idea it was so I can get you out of here?”

“You promise you’ll protect Denny?” Jack asked cautiously.

Henderson sighed, “I swear it. He and you will be protected.” He took a seat across from Jack, “Now, who hired you?”

“Mr. Church...and Diana Stride.” Jack said. At Henderson’s curious expression he continued, “They wanted to trap Superman. They thought they had something called Kryptonite that would kill him. I guess they were wrong.”

“You’re saying Bill Church and Diana Stride arranged this whole thing to kill Superman?” Henderson asked aghast.

“They wanted to expose him and kill him at the same time,” Jack said.

“Expose him as what?” Henderson asked.

“I dunno.” Jack shrugged.

\*\*\*

Outside the Police Headquarters, Mrs. Cox watched the front doors cautiously. “I think I’ve found our little friend.” She said into her phone.

“Excellent. See to it you give him the royal treatment when you bring him here.” Nigel instructed.

“Will do.” With that, she hung up.

\*\*\*

“Mr. White, thanks for making it down here so quickly.” Inspector Henderson said, greeting the elderly editor in chief as he entered the police station.

“You said it was an emergency.” Perry shrugged. “What’s going on?”

“You and your wife are fostering Jack here, correct?” Henderson motioned to Jack who sat at Inspector Henderson’s desk.

Perry nodded, sighing as he shook his head, “Yeah, uh, we... we’re responsible for him. What did he do?”

“Well, it seems our young Jack here got himself caught up in a big mess. The raid on S.T.A.R. Labs earlier?”

Perry looked from Jack to Henderson as the information began to process. “What? I don’t understand. He was working for Cost Mart...”

“That was the problem,” Henderson said.

“What do you mean?”

“It seems our favorite philanthropist might have a few skeletons in his closet.”

\*\*\*

James Turner poured himself a scotch as he joined his guest on the sofa. “To a beautiful friendship.”

“Yes, to power.” Mindy Church said with an evil smile as she took a sip of her wine.

James examined his reflection in the mirror, “I really must find that surgeon and thank him. He did an incredible job.”

“Oh, Jamie, I already thanked him for you.”

“Did you?”

“Yes, with a six-inch blade in the back.” She said in a dark tone.

“Ah, my favorite type of souvenir.” He smiled.

“Well, Dr. Benzen used up his usefulness. I couldn’t afford to have him talking. One of my boys said he was talking to a couple of reporters the other day. We can’t afford that kind of exposure. Not this late in the game. We’re so close.”

“Yes, that we are.” James pondered a moment, “You say he was speaking to reporters?”

“Yes, Lois Lane and Clark Kent from the Daily Planet. Real killers if you know what I mean.”

“Yes, I think I do,” James said, sinking back into the sofa.

“Do you know them?” Mindy asked curiously.

“Oh, yes. Quite well. We almost became family.” He smiled.

\*\*\*

“Where am I? Let me go! You can’t...”

Nigel slammed his fist on the metal table in front of the blabbering Jack, “I think I can!” He hissed, ripping the blindfold off of Jack’s face.

“You!” Jack rasped out.

“Indeed. We have a business arrangement that needs some amending.” Nigel pulled out the small wooden box that held the globe he’d been sold. “Look familiar?”

\*\*\*

“How do you lose someone like this?” Perry growled angrily.

“I don’t know. You saw for yourself Jack was sitting right there. We came out of the conference room and he was gone. I can’t explain it.” Inspector Henderson said, scratching his head. “This doesn’t make any sense.”

“All these cops around here and none of them can tell you where the kid went?”

“Nobody was paying any attention.” Henderson sighed, rolling his eyes as he spoke.

Perry’s eyes narrowed at Henderson’s response. “Pardon?”

“Don’t start,” Henderson warned. “He was handcuffed to the desk. I don’t get how he got out of here unnoticed.”

\*\*\*

“Just think how much better you’ll sleep tonight knowing you’re a free woman.” Mrs. Cox said as she handed Lana Lang five hundred dollar bills. “Here. Don’t want you struggling to make ends meet when we need you around. Don’t spend it all in one place.”

Lana took the money gratefully and shook her head as she watched Mrs. Cox step into the back of a black limousine, closing the door behind her. She had just aided and abetted in a kidnapping. *‘How is that different from what you did a few months ago?’* Her conscience chided her.

“Shut up!” She hissed to herself.

*‘You watched that woman take that baby and said nothing.’*

“Stop.”

*‘You found her. You could have stopped her... Instead you gave her money.’*

“Shut up!”

*‘Do you really think losing their baby is going to break them up? What good is any of it?’*

“I said, SHUT UP!!!”

“Lana?”

She looked up and saw the concerned eyes of Agent Scardino looking at her. “Dan, hi.”

\*\*\*

“So, let me get this straight. This Jimmy guy says he’s in love with you, but you just keep brushing him off?” Mike Lane asked his niece as they played Rummy.

“It’s not a good idea for me to get in a relationship with Jimmy.”

“Why? What’s wrong with him? Is he a drug dealer or something?” Mike asked.

“No.”

“Murderer?”

“Nope.”

“Criminal?”

“Nah.”

“Gay?”

Lucy glared at her uncle. “No!”

“So, then what’s the problem?”

“It’s not a good idea,” Lucy said firmly.

“Chicken,” Mike muttered.

“Excuse me?”

“You heard me,” Mike said. “I didn’t stutter.”

“How are we doing in here?” Nurse May asked as she entered the room. She took a look at Mike’s IV. “You seem to be doing well, Mr. Lane.”

“Yeah, I’d be doing a lot better if I quit getting this line of bullshit from my niece.” He said pointedly.

Lucy grinned broadly, covering up the anger she felt boiling inside her. “Uh-huh. Well, you seem to be doing fine here, Uncle

Mike. How about I just leave you to yourself for a while?”

“Oh, Mr. Lane, you’re an O negative.” Nurse May said, looking at his chart.

“Yep,” Mike said broadly.

“Would you mind donating some blood before you’re discharged? We’re actually in need of O negative right now.”

“Sure.” Mike said, “Glad to do my part.”

“I could donate too. I’m O-negative as well.” Lucy chipped in, forgetting her anger at Mike at the moment.

Nurse May smiled at the both of them. “That would be great.”

“I thought you were leaving,” Mike said, teasingly.

“I’m trying to help,” Lucy said. “For all, we know you could get beaten up again and you might need a blood transfusion. We both know I’m the only one in the family with the same blood type as you.” Lucy said. “I can donate right now if you need.”

Nurse May smiled as she watched the banter between Lucy and Mike. It was amusing to watch the way patients sometimes interacted with family members. “I’ll be right back.” She said.

A few moments later, Nurse May returned with the equipment she needed to draw the blood. After prepping Lucy, she pricked her finger to test her blood. “We’re just going to test for pregnancy, diabetes, HIV, and the normal battery of tests.”

“I’m NOT pregnant,” Lucy argued as she watched the nurse dip her blood into the various tubes.

Nurse May smiled looking back and forth from one of the test tubes and back at Lucy again, “Are you sure about that?”

\*\*\*

Clark was awoken out of a peaceful sleep by the jerk of the covers and the loss of a warm body next to him. Lois hovered over the toilet as she emptied her stomach out, gasping for air as she did so.

He knelt down beside her, rubbing her back as she sank back against him, “You okay?”

She shook her head, “I knew that chicken tasted funny...” she muttered as she rested her head against the wall in exhaustion.

He smiled apologetically. “I’m sorry.”

“I’ll be okay. Just food poisoning...” she sighed.

“I’m sorry, baby.” He whispered, placing a kiss on her forehead. “You okay to move?” She nodded mutely and he picked her up and carried her back to bed, lying down next to her.

“Didn’t mean to wake you.” She murmured, resting her head against his chest.

Clark held her tightly against his solid frame, running a hand through her silky hair. “I’m fine. Do you want me to get you a glass of water or something?” He asked.

“I don’t think I can digest anything just yet.” She grimaced.

Clark glanced at the clock, “Do you want me to call Perry and tell him you won’t be in?”

“No. I’ll be fine.” She shook her head. She followed his glance towards the clock. “We might as well start getting ready.”

The alarm began to blare and the radio turned on, “State officials have just released the name of the body found in Hobbs Bay last night. Dr. Tony Benzen, a surgeon at Metropolis General Hospital...”

Both Lois and Clark looked at the radio in shock, “Did he just say what I think he did?” Lois asked.

Clark watched as the wheels began to turn in her head, “No, absolutely not.” He shook his head.

\*\*\*

“I cannot believe you talked me into this.” Clark fumed as they walked down towards the barricade the police had created around Hobbs Bay. “You just got done hugging the toilet this morning and here we are investigating a murder...”

“The murder of a doctor that just so happens to be involved in Jordan’s kidnapping...”

“We don’t know that.”

“Why else would he insist on hiding behind his ethics like

that?” Lois crossed her arms in defiance. “He knew a lot more than he was letting on.”

“And someone obviously didn’t want him talking,” Clark said, watching as the police carried away the black body bag of the late doctor in question.

\*\*\*

“You want to what?” Linda asked confused.

“Adopt a baby,” Lana answered reapplying her makeup as she spoke.

“Why?” Linda asked, still not comprehending.

“Well, I’m not getting any younger and I…”

“Okay, stop right there.” Linda interrupted. “You just got fired from your job.”

“And I have a new job.” Lana snapped. “I think this is the right decision for me. Are you going to support me or not?”

Linda stared at Lana a moment then shrugged, “Sure, why not?”

\*\*\*

“Do I even want to know how Jimmy got this address?” Clark asked as they climbed the steps to the Metro Heights Complex. Jimmy had found Leigh-Anne’s residential address as soon as word had reached the press that she was back in Metropolis.

“Probably not.” Lois said over her shoulder, “We’ve been trying to find her; now we’ve got her. What’s the big deal?”

“The big deal is we don’t even know how we’re going to approach this. ‘Hey, we think your baby is our kidnapped son?’” Clark mocked how the conversation would go. “‘Oh, well, here you go.’ What do you expect? Her to just hand him over so you can figure out if he’s our son or not?”

“I don’t have a plan, Clark, but I will let you know once I figure it out.” Lois snipped as they reached the door to Leigh-Anne’s apartment. “This is it.”

Lois reached over to ring the doorbell. “You’d think this place would be swarming with media,” Lois commented looking around.

“Yeah, but remember how long it took Jimmy to find her address. She obviously is trying to keep a low profile.” Clark pointed out.

“Obviously.” Lois nodded.

“May I help you?” Leigh-Anne asked, opening her door.

\*\*\*

Lucy sat in the corner of her office, curled up in a ball as she cried to herself; rocking herself back and forth as the tears flowed freely. Pregnant. She was pregnant. How had this happened? How had her life become so screwed up?

“Lucy?” Mayson knocked on her office door. When she saw the state of distress she was in Mayson immediately knelt down to check on her, “Lucy, are you all right?”

Lucy shook her head, unable to stop the tears, “I don’t know how this happened…” She cried, showing Mayson the readout from the hospital.

Mayson scanned the document for a split second before realization dawned on her and she placed a supportive arm around Lucy. “It’ll be okay. You’ll see.”

“No, you don’t understand. I can’t be a mom. Look at how screwed up I am. My life. My family. The only person I really called family, my sister… We don’t hardly sp… speak anymore… I don’t know how to be a mother…” Lucy cried even harder.

Mayson laid a supportive hand on Lucy’s shoulder and handed her a file, “You can start by going over the Baby Rage case. Work has a way of saving you from yourself. Don’t let your emotions get the best of you.”

\*\*\*

“I’m not sure I understand.” Leigh-Anne said, taking a seat across from Lois and Clark. “How exactly did you find me? And why are you here?”

“We have our ways,” Lois said quickly. “We’re here to set the

record straight. You’ve made all these claims against Superman, but have shown nothing to prove Superman even knows you. You produce a child with these abilities… Well, you have to admit your story is a bit farfetched.”

“What’s far-fetched about it?” Leigh-Anne asked nervously. “Superman is the father. He just… never comes around…”

“You still have shown the world nothing to prove…”

“Look, Mrs. Kent, I…”

“Lane.” Clark interrupted.

“Pardon?” Leigh-Anne asked.

“My professional name is ‘Lane.’” Lois answered.

“Oh. Well, as I was saying, I know you and Mr. Kent are friends of Superman’s and that’s commendable, but that gives you no right to question me like this.”

“Question you like what Leigh-Anne? A reporter?” Lois challenged. “You printed that story about yourself and Superman. You took the stage with your son and stared America in the eye and told them that Superman was a Deadbeat Dad.”

“I…”

“You have gone on talk show to talk show to talk about this supposed sordid affair, but I ask one question… and you are all on the defensive. What’s the deal?”

“There was no relationship was there?” Clark challenged quietly, even though he knew the answer to the question.

“I… I…” Leigh-Anne looked back and forth from Lois and Clark.

A soft cry from the other room caught their attention before Leigh-Anne could answer. “Uh, just a minute.”

Lois and Clark exchanged a glance as they followed Leigh-Anne into the next room where Jesse was lying down for a nap. He flew several feet above his crib, rolling from side to side in mid-air as he cried.

“Jesse, honey, wake up.” Leigh-Anne pleaded. “You see what I have to deal with? I can’t hold him because he flies out of my reach when he’s sleeping.”

Jesse seemed to register the sound of his mother’s voice and slowly began to float down to her awaiting arms. Lois and Clark watched the exchange in rapt attention. This young child did indeed have Superman’s powers, but the question was how did he obtain them?

“Hey, sweetie.” Leigh-Anne cooed to her son. She sniffed the air and her nose wrinkled up. “Oooh! You need to be changed.” She reached for the diaper bag below Jesse’s changing table. She struggled to balance the baby and the bag in her arms.

“Here” Clark reached out to take the baby from her as she pulled out the things she needed to change him.

“Uh, thank you.” Leigh-Anne said with a small smile.

Clark held Jesse in his arms as Leigh-Anne situated herself. He ran a hand through the young boy’s silky blonde hair, desperately looking for a connection between himself and Jesse. He felt nothing. He saw nothing.

“He’s usually so shy around strangers.” Leigh-Anne commented, taking Jesse from him.

“Yeah, well, Clark’s a natural with kids,” Lois commented, steering the conversation elsewhere.

Clark gave a forced smile as he tucked his hand inside his coat pocket, toying with the strand of hair he’d taken from the boy’s head while he had been holding him.

\*\*\*

“What the hell is wrong with it? Why isn’t it working?” Nigel fumed.

“I… I don’t know…” Jack stammered.

Nigel reached for Jack’s hand once more and forced it on the globe once again. “Nothing.” He slammed his fist on the table once again, knocking the globe on the floor. The globe rolled to the corner of the room where a black Labrador Retriever sat watching the scene unfold. The black Lab sniffed at the globe and

placed its paw on the globe.

The globe came to life, emitting an image of Jor-EL, “The creature of the canine is...”

The black lab removed his paw from the globe, frightened by the image.

Nigel rolled his eyes, “Great, my dog can figure it out, but I can’t.”

\*\*\*

“I’m not sure I understand.” Dr. Klein said, staring at the strand of hair. “I thought you said...”

“We need to know if this boy is our son, Dr. Klein.” Lois interrupted.

“But wasn’t he...? Isn’t he...?” Dr. Klein continued to skirt around the question.

“We don’t know anymore,” Lois answered. “That’s why we need you to run a DNA test.” With that, Lois pulled a strand of hair out of her own hair and handed it to Dr. Klein. She smiled, “My DNA should be simple enough to obtain compared to Clark’s.”

\*\*\*

“Lana, what are you doing here?” Amanda asked, opening her door.

“I hadn’t seen you in a while and wanted to check on how you were doing,” Lana replied sweetly, stepping inside the apartment.

“That’s so nice of you,” Amanda said with a warm smile. “I just laid the little bit down for a nap so we have some time to talk.”

Lana took a seat on the couch and smiled up at Amanda, “Good, we have a lot to talk about.”

She pulled out a file from her purse and laid it on the coffee table. “Let’s talk about the changes that are about to take place in yours and my life.”

\*\*\*

“That just can’t be true.” Perry shook his head adamantly, “Billy would never...”

Inspector Henderson sighed, “I understand your hesitancy to believe Jack’s story, Mr. White, but you have to admit...”

“I don’t have to admit anything. Billy wouldn’t do something like this. Billy wouldn’t... He would never have hired someone to kidnap me like that...traumatize Alice like that...” Perry shook his head, “No.”

“What about Jack? Why would he lie?” Henderson challenged.

“I don’t know,” Perry said, shaking his head. “I just... I don’t know.”

\*\*\*

“Nigel, you can’t keep beating the kid like this.” Mrs. Cox warned. “He won’t be of any use to us if he’s unconscious the entire time he’s here.”

“He knows how to work the globe.” Nigel fumed. “He knows how to work it and he refuses to cooperate.”

“Beating him senseless isn’t going to do any good.”

\*\*\*

“What do you mean you won’t help me?” Diana fumed angrily as she followed Miranda around her studio.

“I have a lot at stake in this project. Ms. Stride. It’s not my fault you didn’t do your research before trying such a bold stunt.” Miranda said airily. “I can’t afford to be seen with you, Diana. It’s only a matter of time before the police come knocking on your door...or have they already begun?”

“You will regret this,” Diana warned, jerking the door to Miranda’s studio open as she stalked out.

\*\*\*

“Hey, guys, I just heard what happened at S.T.A.R. Labs; it’s all over the wire,” Jimmy said excitedly as he approached Lois and Clark stepping off the elevator.

“Yeah, they are still trying to find Bill Church Jr. and Diana

Stride. According to one of the culprits they apprehended, Church and Diana were working together on this raid.” Clark explained as they walked towards his desk.

“Any idea where they could be?” Jimmy asked.

“Not a clue.” Lois said, “I guess we could try a sewer.”

Jimmy cast a wayward look towards the editor in chief’s office where Perry was pacing on the phone. “Better not let the Chief hear you say that. You know how protective he is of Bill Church Jr.”

“I know,” Lois said grimly. “That’s why I wish he would wake up and see what’s under his nose.”

The editor in chief’s door opened and Perry stepped out into the newsroom, staring down anyone that dared cross his path, “Lane! Kent! My office, pronto!”

Lois and Clark glanced at one another, uncertain what to expect as they approached Perry’s office. Clark closed the door behind them, “What’s up, Chief?”

Perry didn’t say anything, choosing instead to take his seat as he tapped a ballpoint pen on the wood grain of his desk. “I, uh, I’m worried about Jack.”

Lois and Clark looked at one another once again, “Jack?” They asked in unison.

“Yeah, he was one of the ones they found in the raid at S.T.A.R. Labs. ... Well, I don’t know what to do or think. He’s naming Billy as the mastermind behind all this. I don’t think he’d do such a thing, but why would Jack lie?”

Lois and Clark exchanged a look, “Perry, where is Jack now?” Lois asked.

“I don’t know.” Perry said, raking a hand through his hair, “Jack disappeared from custody this afternoon. Everyone’s looking for him.”

“I’ll try to get a hold of Superman and see if he can help with the search,” Clark said, moving towards the door.

“That’s not why I called you in here, though.”

“Oh?” Lois asked curiously. Clark stopped, turning back to his editor.

Perry handed her a large manila folder. “It seems Bill had a few skeletons in his closet.” Perry sighed, “More than I care to admit.”

“Who is Mindy Church?” Lois asked.

“Apparently, she’s Bill Church Sr’s wife and the owner of Cost Mart Stores and every other business, legal and illegal, that Bill may have been running on the side.”

“He was married?” Clark asked surprised.

“Yeah, a real shocker for me too.” Perry nodded, “I hate to see how Billy’s going to react.”

\*\*\*

“I have poured more money into this paper than you earn in a year and you can’t do me this one favor?” Bill Church Jr fumed as he paced Mike Rogers’s office angrily.

Mike sighed, raking a hand through his hair as he tried to portray a calm he didn’t feel at the moment. “You are asking for too much, Bill. I can’t put you up. I don’t have the resources or the...”

“That is a crock and you know it. You just won’t do it.” Bill snapped.

“Yeah, you’re right. I won’t do it. The police are looking for you everywhere.” Mike told him coldly, “I can’t help you.”

“Right.” Bill nodded with a smile. With that he pulled out a silver revolver out of his pocket and aimed it at Mike Rogers, “I’m sorry to hear that, Mike.”

\*\*\*

“Start talking. You don’t want another round, do you?” Nigel smiled up at Jack.

“I don’t...” Jack winced and cowered as he anticipated the blow from Nigel’s raised hand.

But it didn’t come.

“That’s enough!” Mrs. Cox grabbed his hand before he could strike Jack. “You’re going to end up killing him.”

An eerie calm came over Nigel as he turned to face Mrs. Cox, “Would that be so bad?” He walked back towards the table where the round globe sat and reached out to touch it once more. “Our young Jack has been bounced around from foster home to foster home since he was fourteen. He’s lived as a runaway, doing only God knows what to survive. I’m sure there were days that he wished someone would take him out of his misery.”

The globe in his hands lit up and the figure of Jor-El appeared, “The act of taking a life has been forever frowned upon, no matter what culture you are from. Krypton had many wars and we saw many deaths, but to take a life without cause is punishable by death and exile.”

Nigel dropped the globe on the floor, “Good Lord...”

“Amazing.” Mrs. Cox breathed as she stared at the empty space that had just seconds ago portrayed the image of Jor-El.

\*\*\*

“What is it?” Lois asked, looking up at Clark in concern.

“Someone activated the globe again.” He whispered.

“Is it...?” Lois didn’t get a chance to finish her question because he was gone before her eyes, “...Jack?”

\*\*\*

“Mr. Turner, you offer an interesting proposal, but what makes you think I would sign with you as a partner?” Toni Taylor asked.

James smiled, “I know you don’t know me that well, Ms. Turner, but I know you. I know you live in fear of your business and your life after what happened to you before. I can offer protection against the culprits that attacked you and offer the financial backing you need to reacclimate yourself in Metropolis.”

“My current partner...I don’t think he’ll sell.” Toni said evasively.

“He’ll come around. I’ll offer him a deal he can’t possibly refuse.” James smiled.

“Lucy, what are you doing here?” Lois asked in concern when she saw her sister standing over her desk, teary-eyed. “What’s wrong?”

“I need to talk to you...alone,” Lucy whispered.

“Okay.” Lois glanced around the newsroom and noticed Jimmy looking at them with a curiosity in his eyes. “We can use the conference room.” Lucy followed her inside and she closed the door, “What’s up?”

“I don’t know what to do. I’m so careful. I’ve always been smart. I just don’t understand how I let this happen. I don’t understand how this happened, to begin with, but...”

“Lucy!” Lois snapped, trying to get a hold of her sister’s attention. “What are you talking about? What’s going on?”

“I’m pregnant,” Lucy said quickly, wincing as she said the words out loud. She took a seat and buried her face in her hands.

\*\*\*

Clark soared above the Metropolis evening sky, searching for a sign of Jack and his missing globe. The message that had played sent an eerie chill down his spine. He’d never heard a message about Krypton’s take on murder. Why would the globe be playing a message like that now?

He still had so many questions that were left unanswered.

Who would buy the globe and why? What would they do with it? Were there other messages being played that he couldn’t see?

He stopped when he realized he was outside the abandoned LexCorp building. A year ago, he’d have suspected Lex Luthor of having the globe. Now he didn’t know where to look.

\*\*\*

Jack stared at the globe before him for a long moment, pacing his thoughts as he reached out to touch the sphere. He breathed a sigh of relief when a bright yellow light emitted from the globe. The familiar image of Jor-El appeared and began to speak.

“Everything you need to know about your life, family, and

cultures on Krypton is stored in this object; a sphere portraying the maps of the different worlds throughout the galaxies...”

He removed his hand from the globe.

“Interesting.” Nigel mused. “This ‘object’ seems to be attuned to you.” Nigel leaned forward, “Play it again.”

\*\*\*

“You’re pr...pregnant?” Lois asked in a harsh whisper.

Lucy nodded violently, unable to voice her response.

“Wh...How? Whe...?” Lois took a seat next to her sister, “I didn’t think you were seeing anyone.” She finally managed.

“Not that you would know.” Lucy snipped. “I’m not. I’m not seeing anyone.”

“Then how..?”

“All I know is that I’m pregnant and it’s looking like the only time this could have happened was when the whole city got drunk on love and a crime spree was released.” Lucy snapped irritably.

Lois’ eyes widened at the implications, “Luce, you weren’t...”

“What?” Lucy shook her head, realizing what Lois was referring to, “No. That’s not what I meant. Somehow during that time...I...You don’t know?” Lucy asked in surprise.

“Know what?” Lois asked.

“Hmm. I guess I’m getting more and more surprises every day,” Lucy mused.

“That still doesn’t answer my question,” Lois said irritably.

“Well, maybe I don’t want to answer your question right now, Lois. God, this isn’t easy.” Lucy rubbed her temples with her forefinger and thumb.

“You’re right.” Lois said, “It’s not like we talk all the time or have lunch like we used to. You have your life and I have mine, but I would like to think we can still come to one another about stuff like this.”

“Now you’re trying to guilt me into telling you?” Lucy groaned.

“Well, I don’t know what it is you want from me. You come here telling me you’re pregnant and won’t say zip about who the father is. What do you want from me?”

“Um, am I interrupting?” Jimmy knocked on the door. Lois and Lucy looked towards him then back at one another.

“I think we’re done,” Lois said, standing up.

“Yeah,” Lucy said, stalking out of the conference room. “We’ve been done for a while now, I guess.”

Lois shot her a look and shook her head. “What was that about?” Jimmy asked hesitantly.

Lois glanced at him curiously, uncertain if he’d heard the conversation or not. “Um, just girl stuff.” She didn’t notice the look of disbelief on Jimmy’s face as she left the conference room.

\*\*\*

“Kal-El, our child. Under Earth’s sun, his Kryptonian calls will give him powers and abilities no Kryptonian has ever had. He is the last son of Krypton.” Jor-El’s voice was filled with emotion as he spoke.

Jack let go of the globe and placed it on the table in front of him. “Kal-El?”

Nigel smiled, “I would assume that to be Superman.”

\*\*\*

In the corner of the warehouse, Diana sat crouched in the corner, watching in rapt attention as Nigel and Jack conversed. The image of a baby being placed into a spaceship was enlightening. So much was unknown about the Man of Steel. He had been sent out to space as a baby? Had he arrived on Earth as a baby or a man?

\*\*\*

Where was the globe?

He could see the image of his father in his head. The image was just as clear as the other messages had been.

He circled around Hobb’s Bay, x-raying the various warehouses along the dock. Most of the warehouses were now

without lead lining in the paint; allowing him to examine the contents of the buildings more quickly.

<<“Everything you need to know about your life, family, and cultures on Krypton is stored in this object; a sphere portraying the maps of the different worlds throughout the galaxies...”>>

What did that mean? What was his father trying to tell him in that message?

He stopped outside of a warehouse marked ‘LexCo.’ The building was lined with lead and smelt like it had been recently painted too. “Leave it to Luthor.” He muttered under his breath. “Here goes nothing.”

\*\*\*

“So, Jamie, you from around here or just passing through?” Toni asked as they walked through the construction of the new Metro Club.

“I’ve passed through once or twice, Ms. Turner, but I’m thinking of making Metropolis my home,” James said with a smile. Toni looked at him for a moment then offered a weak smile. “Something wrong?” He asked.

She smiled, “No, it’s just you have a familiar smile.”

“Maybe I just have one of those faces.” He offered.

“Maybe.”

\*\*\*

Lois stared at the clock, worry written all over her face. Clark had been gone for several hours. She hadn’t heard anything as far as his whereabouts were concerned on the news. No one had seen him for several hours.

Irritation pulsed through her as she paced. Why didn’t he tell her where he was going? At least give her an idea of where to look if he got into any trouble. She was growing more and more worried by the second.

She debated for a split second the pros and cons of going out to look for him versus staying home and waiting for him. The list was one sided but she chose the latter.

\*\*\*

“Superman?” Jack’s voice was weak as he shook the Man of Steel’s solid form. He still wasn’t moving. “Come on, Superman, you gotta wake up. I can’t move you myself.”

The Man of Steel’s face grimaced in pain. Jack glanced around the room. A greenish hue emitted from the walls. He sniffed the air. The paint did seem to be quite strong. Maybe some fresh air would do Superman some good.

Jack winced as he tried to lift Superman over his shoulder. He was still sore from the beating he’d received from his captor. “All right, if I drop you. I’m sorry.” He whispered as she struggled to walk towards the front door. “Man, you gotta lose some weight.”

\*\*\*

Pregnant. Lucy was pregnant.

Jimmy swung once more at the punching bag hanging in front of him. They’d been drugged. They’d made a child. He was going to be a father. And Lucy was still hardly speaking to him.

What was he going to do?

\*\*\*

Jack watched as the famous Man of Steel began to move from his still position. He’d watched as Nigel and Mrs. Cox had fled the scene when Superman had charged into the warehouse at full force. Superman had advanced towards his captors and released Jack from his restraints when he had collapsed to the ground. It wasn’t long after that that the room had filled with a mysterious fog and Jack had found himself alone with an unconscious Man of Steel.

Jack pulled out the small globe from his pocket and smiled. Nigel hadn’t been quick enough to grab the globe before him when Superman had broken in. He still didn’t understand the meaning of the messages. They seemed like an advanced form of a time capsule to him.

Jack gingerly touched the cuts on his face. He’d been beaten

repeatedly over something he understood so little about. Why were these messages so important? Why did the man in the messages have the same crest as Superman? There were so many questions unanswered.

\*\*\*

The reporting of a corpse sighting in Hobb’s Bay caught Inspector Henderson’s attention. He turned the radio up and listened intently. “...woman in her mid-thirties. Hair color blonde...”

He made a u-turn at the next light and headed towards Hobb’s Bay.

\*\*\*

Where was he?

Lois peered out the window, looking for a sign. Anything that could give her a clue as to her husband’s whereabouts. There had still been no sightings of him all evening. He’d been gone for four hours now. She tried to push back the feeling of dread that had overcome her as she took a turn towards Hobb’s Bay.

\*\*\*

All Jack could do was stare. The globe floated several feet in the air, projecting the same man it had before. Superman seemed oblivious to Jack, who watched the Man of Steel rise from the cemented surface he had once been lying on. The globe remained behind Superman so as not to draw attention to itself as it projected a bright yellow light over him. Superman seemed to visibly relax as the light washed over him. He turned to face Jack and the light disappeared; the globe fell into Superman’s hand. He stared at the object for a moment then looked up at Jack, “Are you all right?”

Jack nodded mutely. What had just happened?

The sound of sirens could be heard from a distance. Superman looked at him suspiciously. “Did you call the police?”

Jack shook his head.

Before Superman could respond the slamming of a car door caught his attention. Jack looked up and was surprised to see the figure of a very angry Lois Lane advancing towards them. He was even more surprised to see the apprehension in Superman’s eyes.

\*\*\*

He was okay. He was standing there without a scratch on him. He was okay and he’d been gone for FOUR hours without so much as a peep. He was a dead man.

“Cl...” Lois caught herself when she noticed Jack sitting close by. “Su...Superman?”

“Uh, hi, Lois.” He smiled brightly at her. He knew he was in trouble. She could tell that by the apprehension she saw reflected in his eyes.

“Where the hell have you been?” She hissed angrily.

“Uh, here?” He shrugged.

What was he doing; playing games with her when she was this upset?

“Well, I figured that.” She said in-between gritted teeth.

“Superman?” The voice of Inspector Henderson caught their attention and both Lois and Clark turned to face him.

“Inspector?” Clark stepped away from her and walked towards him.

“You have another superpower you’re not telling us about?” Henderson asked.

“What do you mean?” He asked.

“The body that was just pulled out. It hasn’t even made it on the wire yet and you’re already here. What gives?” Henderson asked.

“Body?” Lois and Superman asked in unison.

\*\*\*

“I am so glad you’re all right, Jack,” Alice said, dabbing at the wounds on his face. “I can’t imagine what you must have gone through to get yourself like this.”

Jack winced as she dabbed at an open cut. “I’m...fi...ine.”

“Well, you’re real lucky Inspector Henderson cut that deal with you, Jack,” Perry said reprovingly. “I don’t ever want to hear about you getting mixed up in something like that again, ya hear?”

“Yes, sir.” Jack nodded. Perry handed him a rolled up newspaper. “What’s this?” Jack asked.

“You still need to find a job.” Perry reminded him with a wink.

\*\*\*

“Dr. Gretchen Kelly.” Lois read off the autopsy report, “Age thirty-five. Gunshot wound. Time of death, to be determined...”

Clark took the file from her and laid it on the side table next to them. “Must you read that right before bed?”

Lois smiled back at him, “I’m trying to stay focused.” She argued.

“Reading an autopsy report...”

“Preliminary report.” She corrected.

“...is no way to spend the evening.” He finished. He was quiet for a moment, opting to find solace in holding his wife close to him, resting his hands protectively over her rib cage.

“Clark?”

“Hmmm?”

“You never did tell me what happened earlier today. I mean, between Henderson and Perry and Jack you conveniently left out where you were for those missing four hours... What happened?”

“I don’t know.” Clark began slowly. “I was looking for Jack. I tried looking everywhere. I finally ended up finding him in one of those warehouses. I remember seeing Nigel there, but everything after that is a bit hazy.”

“What do you mean ‘hazy?’” Lois challenged.

“The next thing I remember is waking up outside, Jack waiting patiently.”

“Do you think it was Kryptonite?” She asked apprehensively.

“I don’t know,” Clark said, tightening his arms around her as he buried his face into her neck. “It was the strangest sensation. I felt like everything in me had been sucked out; then just as quickly I felt it all coming back to me at full force. If it was Kryptonite I wouldn’t have my powers.” He reasoned.

“True.” Lois sighed, stroking his head as she thought aloud.

“Doesn’t make any sense.”

“And that’s only part of the problem. I don’t know what happened to Nigel.” Clark reminded her.

“Where does he fit in all of this?” Lois asked. “I mean, he was Lex’s butler for crying out loud. What would he want with Jack?”

“It wasn’t really Jack he wanted. I think it was my globe.”

“But why?” Lois asked.

“I don’t know.” He sighed.

\*\*\*

Inspector Henderson stared at the large pile of files on his desk as he sifted through another equally large pile on the other half of his desk. Crime was one thing that never seemed to end in Metropolis. The crime rate had increased immensely ever since the Superman hate groups had come to life this past summer. More demonstrations against Superman’s activities in Metropolis had meant more extremists and more arrests.

He stared at the autopsy report and shook his head. What was the world coming to? Even a doctor wasn’t safe. This was the second doctor to be killed that week.

“Hey, Henderson, you got a sec?” Detective Wolf asked.

“Not really. What’s up?”

“I got a possible kidnapping case out here. She asked for you specifically.”

“Oh, for Christ’s sake, tell Lois to go home! I’m working on it!” He snapped back.

“Uh, it’s not Lane.” Detective Wolf said.

“Oh.” Henderson seemed to calm down a notch as he recomposed himself. “Who is it then?”

“Amanda Marshall. She works in the DA’s office.” Detective

Wolf explained. “She said someone stole her baby last night.”

\*\*\*

“You’re saying your son was kidnapped?” Henderson asked.

“Yes. He’s just a baby. I don’t understand why anyone would want to do such a horrible thing.” Amanda cried.

“Don’t worry, ma’am. We’ll find him and get him home safe to you.” Henderson reassured.

“Thank you, Inspector.” She sniffed.

\*\*\*

“How can you be so calm? Don’t you realize once Superman comes after me he’ll be coming after you too?” Diana hissed as she paced around Miranda’s office.

“Me?” Miranda scoffed. “Don’t be ridiculous, Diana, I wasn’t the one stupid enough to make a move against him without testing the merchandise first. You partnered up with Bill Church and made the mistake of trusting him. How do you know he’s not in police custody right now singing like a canary?”

“You worked with him too.” Diana reminded her.

“Prove it.” Miranda smiled back. “Now if you’ll excuse me I have a meeting with a client. I really can’t afford to be seen with a fugitive such as yourself.” Miranda opened the door to her office; a silent message to Diana.

“Your day will come,” Diana warned.

“And yours is already here, Diana. Please don’t come back or I’ll be forced to call the police.”

\*\*\*

The rain poured against the window panes, drumming a light rhythm along with the lightning outside. It was a sour beginning to any morning, but an even worse beginning when you were already running late.

No matter how late he already was, Jimmy Olsen just couldn’t convince himself to move from the place he stood outside Lucy Lane’s door. His arm felt like an anvil. Every time he lifted it up to knock on her door his arm fell down back to his side, still unsuccessful in its task.

He had to talk to her.

He lifted his arm once more to knock on the wooden door in front of him. His heart hammered against his chest and his throat went dry.

He was caught off guard when the door swung open. “Jimmy, what are you doing here?” Lucy asked.

He swallowed hard, “I...I...” He struggled to form his words, fighting the emotions threatening to overtake him.

“What’s wrong?” She asked.

“We need to talk.” He said hoarsely.

“Talk?” She asked skeptically.

He nodded, taking a hesitant step inside her apartment. “I know about the baby.”

\*\*\*

The next morning, Lois sat at her desk, sifting through her and Clark’s files on the attempted robbery at S.T.A.R. Labs. Something about the whole incident made no sense to her. Why would a world-famous journalist risk their career for something as frivolous as a robbery?

“What are you working on?” Clark whispered from behind her as he placed a peck on her cheek.

She smiled, turning to face him as he placed a cup of steaming coffee in front of her. “Thanks.” She took a sip of the coffee. “I’m going over this story on the break-in at S.T.A.R. Labs.” Lois gestured to the files in front of her. “Nothing makes any sense here.”

“When has ANY investigation made any sense?” He asked, teasingly.

“I’m serious.” Lois continued as Clark took a seat next to her. “How do you go from world-famous journalist to fugitive so quickly?”

“Well, maybe there’s more to it than that.”

Lois looked at him perplexed for a moment, “You mean another explanation other than the fact that she lost her mind?”

Clark took the police report from her and scanned it shaking his head. “What do we know about her other than the fact that she moonlights as an accomplice to armed robbery?”

“She’s a vulture and loves sleaze. Probably has some sort of relation to the rats in Suicide Slum.” At Clark’s reproving look, she sighed, “I guess I could have Jimmy run a background check...”

“Please contain your excitement, Lois.” Clark teased, “What gives? You’re usually chomping at the bit when it comes to investigations like this.”

Lois stared at the phone for a moment then back at her husband, “I guess I’m just...distracted.” She said.

Clark sighed, understanding the meaning. “He’ll call when he knows.” They were both sure Dr. Klein would confirm their gut feeling that Jesse and Jordan were the same person, but that didn’t make the waiting period any easier.

“I know. It’s just hard. I’m not a very patient person.” Lois said slightly deflated. “I just...I need to know. We need to know so we know how to move forward.”

“I know.” Clark smiled weakly at her.

“Lois!”

Both of their heads turned to face a fuming Lucy Lane as she stormed towards them.

“Lucy, what are you doing here?” Lois asked in concern.

“What am I doing here?” Lucy mocked, “Oh, I don’t know. Maybe because SOMEONE opened their mouth about my private business...”

“What are you talking about?” Lois asked.

“That’s okay. Play dumb.” Lucy mocked. “Did you tell everyone or just the whole newsroom?”

“Tell everyone what?” Clark asked.

“Stop trying to protect her.” Lucy snapped, “I cannot believe you! I came and told you I was pregnant because I thought you would help me; not spread it all over the place!”

“Lucy...” Lois began at the same time Clark asked, “You’re pregnant?”

Lucy stopped her tirade, noticing the stares of the newsroom, “What?” She asked the newsroom. “Haven’t you ever seen a crazy pregnant woman before?”

Lois exchanged an amused look with Clark before looking back at her sister who was glaring her down angrily. “I didn’t tell anyone you were pregnant, Lucy.”

“Then why did Jimmy come confronting me with it this morning?”

“Jimmy?” Lois shrugged, “I don’t know. Maybe he overheard us yesterday, but I don’t understand why you wouldn’t want him to.....” Realization suddenly dawned on her. “Oh. Ohhh!”

Clark opened his mouth to speak, but then noticed the look in both his wife and sister-in-law’s eyes and decided wisely to close it, opting to remain silent during their banter.

“Lucy...” Lois began, “Why didn’t you just tell me?”

Lucy shook her head, “I really don’t want to talk about it.”

“Ahem...” Allan stood behind them, clearing his throat.

Lois looked towards him, annoyed, “What is it, Allan?”

“I’m sorry to interrupt. Really, I am, but there’s a Dr. Klein on line two for you.”

\*\*\*

“What’s going on Inspector?” Detective Wolf asked as he took a seat next to him.

“I’m trying to make some sense out of this,” Henderson said, sifting through the file on his desk.

“What do you mean?” Wolf asked.

“This woman came in claiming her baby was kidnapped, but I can’t find anything documenting a birth or adoption for her. I’m not sure where to start.”

“That is a bit odd. Why don’t you check hospital records? Sometimes the state just doesn’t update their records like they’re supposed to. Takes a little while for files to be put in.” Wolf suggested.

“Maybe...” Henderson mused.

“You think it’s something else?” Wolf prodded.

“I just got this nagging feeling that there’s something else going on here.”

\*\*\*

Linda slammed her car door closed as she stomped towards Bibbo’s new bar. She needed a drink; a strong one at that. It had been a long day. Lana had adopted a baby and the brat wouldn’t stop crying. She half suspected he just didn’t like Lana. The only time he was quiet was when he was asleep.

“Buy you a drink?” Bill Church asked as he took a seat next to her at the bar.

“Sure.” Linda smiled back at him; intent on drinking the night away.

“Good choice.” Bill smiled, revealing a 9mm in his jacket pocket. “We need to have a talk about your editor, Ms. King.”

\*\*\*

Lois stared blankly at the wall in front of her as she tried to comprehend what Dr. Klein had just told them. Jesse was not Jordan. He had no genetic link to her.

“I don’t understand.” Lois said, “If he isn’t our missing son, then how the hell is he able to have Clark’s superpowers?”

“I don’t know.” Dr. Klein shrugged.

“You don’t know?” Lois fought the rage that was threatening to overtake her. “This woman goes on national television every day claiming to have Superman’s love child. Every day, I have to listen to this, Clark has to listen to this, our parents and friends; and the best you can give me is ‘I don’t know?’”

“Lois, it’s not as simple as that. I’d have to examine him myself to be able to tell you how he got his superpowers. I just don’t know.” Dr. Klein sighed, “I’m sorry.”

“Yeah, so am I,” Lois said shakily. She looked up towards the window where Clark stood, staring out at the street below them. “Come on, let’s go home.”

Clark seemed to come out of his daze and nodded, following her without a word. There was nothing left to say.

\*\*\*

Mike Rogers wasn’t an honest man. He had made many mistakes in his life. He had lied and cheated to get what he wanted in life. The one thing he sought out the most was power. Power over the media and the people. He thrived in the power he had earned by working for Intergang. What he hadn’t planned on were the repercussions of turning on Bill Church.

As he fought to breathe on the cold cement floor he wondered what his life would have been if he’d tried to be more honest. It was too late now. He swallowed through the pain as he struggled to breathe. The blood was quickly filling his lungs. He glanced at the figure above him and smiled, “I’ll...g...get...y...you...”

Bill Church knelt down to hear what he was saying. “You’re going to get me?” He scoffed. “I’d like to see you try. In chess; I’d say this is ‘Check Mate.’ I always win, Mikey.”

Mike smiled as he drew out the small blade he held in his jacket pocket and thrust it inside Bill Church’s abdomen. “I...win...Check Mate, Billy!”

\*\*\*

<< ‘Never trust a man...’>>

<< ‘No genetic link...’>>

<< ‘Superpowered baby...’>>

Lois sat in the corner of the shower stall, curled up into a ball. The tears streamed down her cheek at full force as the lukewarm water beat against her skin. Question after question raced through her mind as she tried to make sense out of Dr. Klein’s revelation from earlier that afternoon. Clark had been quiet after they left Dr.

Klein's office; opting to take a patrol around the city rather than talk to her.

It hurt.

The pain she felt when she'd first been told Jordan had died. She refused to believe Clark. Months after her son's supposed death she still refused to believe he had died. It had taken her months to get Clark to open his mind to what had really happened. When Leigh-Anne had come forward, claiming to have had a child with Superman...

<< 'Never trust a man...' >>

'No!' She mentally shook herself. 'If Jesse isn't genetically linked to me then he isn't linked to Clark. It's not possible.'

She felt a slight shiver run down her spine. She broke out of her reverie as the ice cold water struck her skin. Grimacing, she reached forward to turn off the shower. She stepped out of the shower as she wrapped a large towel around her body, trying to keep herself warm.

She slipped into an old sweatshirt of Clark's and a pair of flannel pajama bottoms then curled up beneath the comforter. The alarm clock blinked back three digits, reminding her of how long her missing husband had been gone. She tried not to focus on the time; opting to focus on trying to warm up instead.

Ignoring the pain in her chest when she thought of the huge void she felt whenever she allowed her mind to drift to her missing son only helped her focus her anger towards Clark, who was still gone. It had been four hours now. Where was he?

'He'd better have a good story...' She muttered under her breath. All of a sudden she felt a wave of nausea hit her. "Not again," she whimpered as she dashed to the restroom. It was going to be a long night.

\*\*\*

"Oh, my God!" Detective Wolf waved his hand in front of his face as he surveyed the scene. Police were everywhere. Forensics stood over where the officers on the scene had marked the locations of the bodies; trying to piece together what had happened.

Henderson just laughed, "Disgusting, isn't it?"

"What? When? How?"

"That's what these guys are here for." Henderson motioned to the officers around the room.

Wolf motioned to Clark who stood next to Henderson, "What's he doing here? I would have thought this kind of scene would be closed off to the press."

"I..." Clark stammered, trying to explain his presence.

Henderson smiled, patting Clark on the shoulder. "Kent was one of the first on the scene. He called the police."

Wolf looked from Henderson to Clark then back to Henderson again. "That so? Lucky...for you. Big exclusive."

"Detective Wolf, I'm not really..." Clark began but was cut off once again by Henderson.

"Mr. Kent understands what has to be sealed until we're done with our investigation, Wolf."

"Yeah, but does his other half understand?" Wolf pressed.

"They don't call her Mad Dog Lane for nothing."

"I wouldn't repeat that around her if I were you," Henderson warned.

"Definitely not." A familiar feminine voice said quite testily.

The three men turned to see Lois standing in the doorway of Mike Rogers' office. The expression on her face was unreadable to all but one of them. "So, what happened here?" She asked, pushing past the two officers that stood guard by the entrance.

Wolf gave an exasperated look towards Lois, but she ignored it. Henderson just smiled, used to Lois' knack for finding herself in the middle of trouble at all times. He nodded towards the two officers that stood behind her, watching her carefully; signaling them that she was 'okay.'

"Murder," Henderson said with an exasperated sigh. "Your

husband found the cleaning lady screaming at the top of her lungs and called the police."

"Oh?" Lois arched an eyebrow at Clark then turned her attention back to Henderson. "Did he? How helpful of him?"

Henderson sensed the tension in the air but chose to ignore it. Getting in the middle of a disagreement between Lois and Clark was not something he intended to do. He tried to steer clear of her temper during investigations; even more so ever since the destruction of the Planet last summer. He glanced at the folder in his hands and continued his explanation, "Anyway, it seems Mr. Church and Mr. Rogers had a disagreement about something."

"Church?" Lois asked, "As in Bill Church?"

"Yep." Henderson nodded. The tension in the air was thick and Kent didn't seem to be tempted to say anything. He looked back and forth between the couple. Lois was glaring him down, but Clark was looking anywhere but at her, readjusting his glasses as he looked around the room. The guy must have astigmatism. "Anyway, I think we're done with you, Kent. We'll call you if we need anything else. Remember; no printing the details in tomorrow's paper. I do read, ya know?"

Clark didn't say anything, silently nodding as he walked out the door.

Henderson shook his head as he watched them leave. "I'd hate to be him..."

\*\*\*

"Such a pity about Billy. I don't have anyone to share my inheritance with now." Mindy said with a sultry smile. "How will I ever understand all this business with organized crime if someone doesn't teach me?"

"You really are a piece of work, aren't you, Mrs. Church?" James Turner asked with admiration.

"You better believe it." She smiled. "My contact at the police department said they found Billy stabbed to death. Pity. With Mike Rogers gone and the Metropolis Star being taken over by Wayne Enterprises we won't be able to move forward with Operation Superman Hate Group anymore..."

"Yes, a pity. I was enjoying the destruction those groups were doing to our neighborhood alien, but all good things must come to an end eventually. Well, I guess we'll have to delegate some of the responsibility." James Turner mused, taking a long puff on his cigar. "I think I know the perfect guinea pig."

"Oh?" Mindy purred. "Do tell..."

\*\*\*

Clark sat on the couch, watching Lois pace around him as he received the third degree from her regarding his failure to include her in the investigation regarding Church.

"That still doesn't explain why you didn't call me." Lois snapped angrily. "I get the part where you found Church. I get the part where you call the police. What I don't get is why you didn't call me!" Lois snapped angrily.

"I don't know. It all happened so fast..." Clark sighed. "I wasn't really thinking about calling you."

"You get the exclusive on a story that could possibly finally break our Intergang investigation and you didn't think I'd want to know about it?" Lois pressed.

"No, I didn't, Lois. I kind of had more important things on my mind." He snapped back bitterly. He immediately regretted both his statement and his tone as soon as the sentence escaped his mouth.

She'd had things on her mind too. Jordan. He hadn't been there. He'd busied himself with Superman duties and stumbled upon Church's body in the process, but he'd left her to deal with everything by herself.

The expression on her face read several different emotions at once. Pain. Hurt. Betrayal. Anger "Well, you could have fooled me!" She snapped angrily. With that she stormed upstairs, slamming the door behind her.

“Great...” He muttered under his breath.

\*\*\*

“Partner?” Miranda looked from Mindy to Turner, trying to understand the proposal and looking for ulterior motives.

“Yes. With Billy gone I’m going to need all the help I can get. We’ve been working so well together lately, why not make it official?” Mindy purred happily.

“So, I get a cut?” Miranda asked.

“Yes. 50-50.” Mindy smiled. “What’s wrong? Don’t trust me?”

“I don’t know you that well.” Miranda reminded her.

“Sometimes those make the best partnerships.” James Turner chipped in. There was something so familiar about him, but Miranda couldn’t place it. “So, do we have a deal?”

“Deal.” Miranda lifted her glass to toast.

“To a rewarding partnership,” Turner remarked.

“Partners,” Miranda repeated.

\*\*\*

Lois sat in the corner of the room, rocking back and forth in the rocking chair next to the window. Clark carefully took a seat across from her on the window sill. She had yet to have acknowledged his presence, concentrating on the carpet below her feet instead.

He placed a hand on her knee, “Hey, are you still mad at me?”

“No.” She snapped angrily, looking up at him sharply. “I’m not mad. I’m hurt.”

“Honey...”

“You just left. You were gone for hours. I didn’t know where you were. I’m over here trying to make sense out of what Dr. Klein told us about Jordan and you just leave. Do you have any idea how much that hurt?”

“I’m sorry.” He said, kneeling down in front of her. He wrapped an arm around her. She glared at him for a moment, half debating whether she was going to allow him to touch her or not. She seemed to relax against him, allowing him to hold her. “I never meant to hurt you. I just... I don’t know. I guess I just wasn’t thinking.” His hand rested against her abdomen. He felt a lump begin to form in his throat.

He felt like he was falling apart. He wasn’t sure what was true anymore. Everything they’d been told about Jordan had been a lie. When Jesse had become the center of the media he’d been positive the only explanation for his powers was him being Jordan, but he’d been wrong. He now had two mysteries on his hand. How had Jesse gotten his powers and where was his son?

Lois seemed to sense his emotional withdrawal. She reached up to stroke his cheek. “It hurts like hell, doesn’t it?”

He just nodded, wrapping his arms more securely around her as he hungrily sought out her lips. She squealed in laughter against his lips as he lifted her up, wrapping her legs around his waist as he deepened their embrace. He held her securely in his arms as he stood up. He slowly broke off the kiss and rested his forehead against hers. He let out a sigh of relief, holding her close. “I love you so much.”

“Clark...” She gasped in pleasure when she felt his lips brush against the nape of her neck, “Oh, right there.” His hand slipped in between their bodies, expertly popping the button to her jeans open as he slipped his hand inside. “You know you... you can’t just...” She gasped in surprise when she felt the solid form of the wall brush against her back. His arms wrapped around her and he pulled her towards him; “Oh, what the hell...” She moaned in pleasure, raking her hands through his dark silky hair.

\*\*\*

An elderly man stood on the street corner of the Daily Planet, looking up into the night sky at the globe that stood above him. He would never understand how a symbol so simple could arouse such anger from him. He lifted a round object in his hand, throwing it into the globe. Glass shattered everywhere, eliciting

the echoes of the alarms going off.

The doors opened and the security officer stepped outside to survey the scene. By that time the elderly man was gone. Inside the Planet a small round object lay unnoticed, emitting a reddish glow throughout the newsroom.

\*\*\*

That evening, Bibbo Bibbowski sat at the front desk of his bar, listening in detail to the sorrowful plea a young man made to him. He grew quiet for a moment before responding. “So, you want me to hire a rabbit like you to do what exactly?” Bibbo asked, eyeing Jack suspiciously.

“I need a job. I can work. I’ll do anything. I gotta take care of my little brother. I promised.” Jack answered emotionally. He stared back at Bibbo earnestly. Would he hire him? Mr. and Mrs. White had taken him and hadn’t set a time limit on his staying with them, but he knew his time would come eventually. He had to be prepared for the inevitable.

Bibbo sighed, nodding his understanding. “I’ll tell you what, kid. I’ll start you out as a bus boy and we’ll go from there.”

“Cool.” Jack nodded. He smiled warmly back at Bibbo before he whispered, “This isn’t a cover for a criminal organization of some sort, is it?”

Bibbo just laughed. “Do I look like a criminal?” With that, he handed Jack a dusty old black bin and an apron. “You’ll be needing these.”

\*\*\*

Jimmy trudged through the newsroom the next morning, dejected as he went about his normal routine. Lucy Lane seemed to be the only thing that remained at the forefront of his mind. He wasn’t sure what to do. His childhood was a perfect example of why a child needed his or her father around, but how would he do that if Lucy didn’t want him around? She resented the fact that he saw more in their relationship than she did.

He was going to be a father.

He was going to be responsible for bringing a child into this world.

A tiny, innocent child.

He sat dejectedly at his desk and began sifting through the files on his desk. Research assignments, to-do lists, and notes from his colleagues were scattered over his desk. He moved the files to the side as he tried to make sense of the clutter, revealing an unfamiliar, glowing red object along with small shards of glass.

He looked at the unfamiliar object, lifting it up suspiciously. “What in the world?” He looked up at the window of the Planet where a maintenance crew stood, repairing the broken window. He should probably show this object to someone...

“Hey, Jimmy,” Lucy said, approaching him quietly.

Surprised, Jimmy’s head shot up, knocking over the files on his desk. “Lu..Lucy! Hi, I... I wasn’t expecting to...to..see you... uh, here.”

“I thought we should talk after last night.” Lucy began.

Jimmy’s tightened his lips, nodding understanding. She wanted to remind him of how she wanted him to have nothing to do with the baby or her. His fist tightened over the red object as his anger coursed through his veins. “Yeah.” He opened his desk drawer and placed the object inside, turning his attention back to Lucy. “So, what weren’t you clear about: the part where you want nothing to do with me or the fact that you want me to abandon my child?”

“It’s for the best.” Lucy began.

“No, it’s NOT!!” He slammed the drawer closed as he stood up angrily. “Did you ever think that maybe this happened for a reason? Maybe just maybe there’s a reason for everything? I love...”

“Would you stop it?” Lucy hissed back angrily.

“Why, what? ? I love...”

Lucy hissed back angrily. “You-you-you! That’s all I hear

from you! I'm the one that has to take care of this baby. I'm the one that has to explain why ..."

"Why, what? Why you made the decision for our baby not to have a chance at a normal family?" Jimmy pressed.

"How is it normal to watch your parents bickering nonstop? How is it normal to have a family when your parents aren't even together? Do you have any idea how much that messes with a kid's head?"

"We aren't your parents," Jimmy said calmly. He was seething on the inside, but he tried to portray a calm he didn't feel.

"Not yet." Lucy whispered, "But one day we could be and I just can't let that happen." With that, she got up and headed for the elevator. He didn't follow.

\*\*\*

The soft murmurs of a male voice slowly awoke Lois from her slumber. She attempted to stretch her arms upward only to find them pinned down. She grumbled her protests as she pushed against the solid form pinning her down.

"Morning." Clark leaned into kiss her.

She smiled against his lips, "Morning." She sighed happily as he readjusted himself so she could move her arms again. "No morning rescues?"

He shook his head. "It's been pretty quiet." He said, wrapping his arms around her more securely.

"I'm not complaining." She whispered, caressing the side of his face with her palm.

His face broke out into a megawatt smile, "Me neither."

She smiled, wrapping her arms around him, pulling him closer. She sighed contently, reveling in the feeling of skin against skin with him. His hands rested on her sides. "We've got to get going." She said, climbing out of bed and heading toward the bathroom. He was about to argue when he saw her place a hand on her mouth and race to the bathroom.

"Lois?" he followed her in the bathroom. This was more than food poisoning. He grabbed a washcloth and wet it, squatting down behind her as she finished emptying her stomach. "This isn't food poisoning." He said.

"I know." She cried, leaning on him for support. "I know." she was about to say more when another wave of nausea hit her.

\*\*\*

"So, how exactly do you get this... What do you call it again?" Mindy asked, throwing Miranda a dumb blonde expression.

Miranda sighed, "Pheromone. I used them whenever I was paid to. The pheromones ran their course and distracted the victims long enough for me to get what I wanted."

"Sounds exciting!" Mindy's eyes lit up.

"But what happens when it wears off?" Turner asked. "Surely you have a formula capable of lasting longer?"

"That's for me to know and you to find out, Mr..."

"Turner." Turner supplied.

"Right." Miranda nodded. "I really can't place it, but you look so familiar."

"He just has one of those faces," Mindy said hurriedly, changing the subject.

"Yes, I have a familiar face to everyone." Turner smiled.

"I suppose..." Miranda said.

"So, when do we run our first test on Superman?" Turner asked.

"It doesn't work on Superman," Miranda said exasperatedly.

"Oh?" Turner sniffed, "How do you know?"

"Because I've tested it countless times. No response." Miranda snapped.

"Then we'll just have to come up with something better for our neighborhood superhero," Turner responded with a smile. He picked up a copy of the National Inquisitor that portrayed the image of Jesse and Leigh-Anne. The headline read, 'Super Baby Needs Super Dad.'

\*\*\*

Lois sat in the bathroom, staring blankly at the home pregnancy test Clark had run out and got for her. She held her breath as she watched the pink dye fill the empty white square. Almost immediately two lines appeared. Two lines. She was pregnant.

She gasped, saying a silent prayer as she cried. She was going to be a mother again. She was going to have a baby. The tears fell at their own accord. She couldn't control them. Clark held her tightly, kissing her hair. It was obvious he was just as emotional as she was.

\*\*\*

Perry stared at the image of Elvis hanging on his wall, uncertain of how to respond to the news he'd just received. Bill Church Jr. had been murdered. He was unsure of how to react. A part of him missed the young man he'd watched grow up, but another part of him was unsure who 'Bill Church Jr.' really was. The past few days had been enlightening for Perry when faced with the facts Bill Henderson had shown him of Church's illegal business.

He wondered mildly if there was anyone in his life that wasn't keeping something from him.

\*\*\*

"You cannot just turn on me, Toni." Nigel hissed. "We had a deal."

Toni's expression was cold as she stared back at Nigel. "I can do whatever I want. I chose to change investors. That's my prerogative."

"But the money..."

Toni handed him back a check. "Here you are. Every cent."

Nigel read over the check she handed him; nodding as he read over it. She was right. Every cent was accounted for. "When you came to me, you said no one would back you. What changed?"

"I found someone willing to back me without quite so many strings attached," Toni said smugly.

"I seriously doubt that." Nigel sneered.

Toni pulled out a business card and handed it to him. "James Turner. He's smooth, charming, and much more even-tempered than you, Nigel. You could learn a thing or two from him."

"But the Metro Club..."

"Is no longer your business," Toni said sharply, cutting him off. "If we're done here, I have business to attend to." She turned on her heel, leaving Nigel with the business card of his replacement.

\*\*\*

Amanda was in tears as she sat in the interrogation room with Inspector Henderson. "I ... I don't understand." Amanda cried.

"Why are you questioning me like this? My son is..."

"Your son?" Henderson challenged. "What hospital did you have him at, Amanda?"

"Metropolis General Hospital..." She whispered evasively.

"Really? Are you sure?" Henderson asked.

"Inspector, you still haven't answered my question. Why are you questioning me to death? Why aren't you looking for my little boy?"

"Maybe we already found him. Maybe we didn't." Henderson answered coolly. "My biggest problem is the fact that you've been lying to me from the start."

\*\*\*

Database after database stared back at Jimmy as he went from site to site, searching for a break in the research he'd thrown himself into ever since Lucy's confrontation earlier that morning. She wouldn't even give him a chance to try and be a father to their child. Who did she think she was?

He had every right to be around his child if he wanted to. Why did she have to be so stubborn? Why did she have to...

"Jimmy?" Clark placed a hesitant hand on the young man's

shoulder, uncertain of what to expect. Jimmy had been typing fiercely into his keyboard when he had entered the newsroom. He had barely acknowledged anyone around him. Perry had been hollering his name across the room but had been unable to penetrate the mental walls around him in Jimmy's current state of mind.

"Jimmy?" Clark repeated a few octaves louder.

Jimmy spun around quickly, intent on confronting his intruder. He seemed to relax a moment when he saw Clark standing behind him. "Oh, hi, CK. I, uh, didn't even see you come in."

"So, I noticed." Clark said. Concerned, he took a seat next to Jimmy. "Are you all right?"

"Why wouldn't I be?" Jimmy asked edgily.

"No reason," Clark said, shaking his head as he stood up. "What is all this?" He motioned to the piles of folders surrounding the young man's desk.

"Background checks," Jimmy muttered.

"OLSEN!!!" Perry's voice bellowed across the room once more.

Jimmy jumped with a start, stumbling to his feet to answer his boss' call. "Coming, Chief!"

Clark watched as Jimmy scrambled towards Perry White's office, shaking his head in amusement. Whatever Jimmy had been working on had to have been important in order to block out the Chief's bellow like that. He scanned through a few of the files, reading a few of the reports. Most of the files were on Bill Church and his company, but others were of someone he hadn't heard of before. Dr. Miranda Prysstin, a chemist, known worldwide for her cosmetics. Why was Jimmy running a background check on her?

"HELP!!!" A blood-curdling scream reached Clark's ears, causing him to bring himself back to his surroundings. He looked across the newsroom for Lois then remembered she wasn't going to be in until later. She was still feeling a little under the weather. Just in case the rescue took longer than anticipated, he found a pad on her desk and quickly jotted down a note for her. A few seconds later he was gone.

\*\*\*

Lois stared at the table, silently cursing herself for agreeing to lunch with her mother. She wasn't in the mood to listen to another lecture on accepting Jordan's 'death' from her mother but here she was gritting her teeth listening to the same thing over and over again. "Lois, I'm concerned about you. You have yet to have accepted what happened to your son, you continue to hold onto this belief that he was kidnapped..."

"Mother, I really don't want to do this right now..." Lois began, but was cut off by Ellen.

"What is it with you and your sister? Why can't either of you have a real conversation?"

"I don't know. Lucy and I aren't on the best terms right now..." Lois snapped. It was really hot. She could feel that familiar tingle in her stomach. 'Not now,' She did her best to keep her stomach in check and glared at her mother. "Why do you insist on bringing Jordan up in every conversation?" She stood up from the table to leave only to be met with an intense wave of nausea.

"Lois..."

She bolted for the ladies room as she gave into the wave of nausea that had overtaken her. After emptying the contents of her stomach she rested her head against the cool tile wall. "Well, you're definitely pregnant." She muttered gloomily.

\*\*\*

"My...my...my b...baby..." Leigh-Anne cried tearfully, rocking herself back and forth as she fought to control her overflowing emotions. "He...he to...took...He...took... Jess... Jesse."

"Mrs. Stipanovic..." Inspector Henderson tried to calm her down long enough to get a statement but found it a lost cause. "I understand you're upset, but we need you to tell us what

happened. Who took your son?"

"I don't know...I..."

"Inspector, I don't think we're going to get much out of her," Superman said, approaching Henderson. He'd watched the scene unfold when he'd answered Leigh-Anne's cry for help. She'd sat helplessly in her doorway, screaming for help as she cried for her son. She hadn't been able to tell anyone what had happened. The signs of a struggle were evident in the house. Leigh-Anne had only been able to tell them that her son had been taken.

No other explanation.

\*\*\*

"Superman's child." Turner mused happily as he took the baby into his arms happily. "What a pity..."

"That kid screams louder than Lana's adopted kid at home." Linda snapped irritably. "Are we done here? I'm getting a migraine."

"Really? I think I have something for that." James Turner said, reaching into his pocket.

"Good. My head is killing me." Linda said rubbing her temples.

"No, but this will," Turner said, aiming his rifle at Linda.

"What?" Linda looked up at him, surprised to see the barrel of a gun pointed at her. "What are you doing?"

Her body fell to the floor. Jesse continued to cry. "You have to learn to be strong. You have a great empire to run one day and tough skin is essential in a Luthor." Turner cooed. Jesse continued to cry.

\*\*\*

Lois paced around her sister's office, unsure of how to even broach the subject of what she thought right now. She hadn't had any morning sickness with Jordan. They had only been 'trying' for a few weeks. She needed to talk to someone other than Clark. She missed Lucy. She missed her sister.

"Lois, what are you doing here?" Lucy asked skeptically as she entered the office.

"I...I need to talk to you." Lois began softly.

"If this is about Amanda Marshall I don't have any more information than the police do. If I had known I would have..."

"Whoa!" Lois held her hands up to signal Lucy to slow down. "What are you talking about?"

Lucy handed her a file. "You don't know?" She continued as Lois read through the file. "Amanda had worked here as a secretary. Lana had recommended her. Police arrested her earlier this morning. From what I've heard, she isn't what she appears to be. She spent years working with Dr. Benzen in a lot of black market schemes. Their favorite was slicing and dicing patients without the consent of family and selling the goods to the highest bidder." Lucy said, reading off the report she had in front of her.

Lois looked visibly sickened from his last statement. "That doesn't explain why the police have her locked up."

"Dr. Benzen's dead." Lucy shrugged. "Maybe they think she had something to do with it... Look, just be careful. I don't want you getting your hopes up."

Lois nodded. "I think it's a little late for that. Look, about what happened the other day..."

Lucy shook her head, "Lois, I really don't have time for this. I am behind on a lot of..."

"...cases." Lois finished for her. "Yeah, you're busy. Blah, blah, blah. I've heard it all before, Luce."

Lucy groaned, shaking her head miserably, "What do you want?"

"I want you to quit being so stubborn and pay attention to what you're doing."

"And just what might that be?"

"You're mad at yourself for what happened with Lex so you're refusing to let yourself fall for the same mistake again. Only this time you're cutting yourself off from any chance of a normal life

or any kind of happiness whatsoever.” Lois crossed her arms over her chest as she glared smugly back at her sister, “Am I getting warm?”

“You know you can be a real pain in the ass when you’re cocky.” Lucy snapped irritably.

“Lucy, you’re pregnant.”

“Nah, really?”

“Do you have any idea what you’re doing to Jimmy?” Lois snapped.

“It’s easier this way,” Lucy said quietly.

“Easier for whom?” Lois snapped. “You didn’t care about how you ignored all the warnings from everyone about Lex.”

“Lois...”

“You didn’t care about how you continued to give Jimmy mixed signals...” Lois continued to ramble on, ignoring Lucy’s interruption. “Somehow down the line you ended up making a baby. You need to figure out what you’re going to do and don’t you dare tell me you’re handling it on your own because I know you.”

“Why would that be so bad; to spare my kid the pain of a divorce that’s bound to happen down the line?” Lucy argued tearfully. “I don’t want my child growing up the way we did.”

“Is that what you really think, Luce? All marriage will end in divorce?” Lois asked dumbfounded.

Realizing how her statement sounded, Lucy began to backtrack. “I didn’t mean... I mean, you and Clark are... You’re not me and Jimmy.”

“And you’re not Mom and Dad.” Lois finished for her. She took a long breath, “How long do you have to make yourself suffer for everyone else’s mistakes? What happened to my little sister that believed in love and was willing to take a chance?”

“She figured out not everything has a happy ending.” Lucy snapped. “Are you done lecturing me now? I really have work to do.”

“Right.” Lois nodded, “You know hiding behind your work isn’t going to make things any better. The pain’s just going to fester until you finally snap. I wouldn’t want to be around when it does.” Lois left Lucy alone in her office to ponder her last words.

Lucy stared at the closed door, shaking her head. “What difference does it make?” She muttered to herself. “It’s not like you’re around, to begin with.”

\*\*\*

“You claim your baby was stolen?” Sheldon Bender asked skeptically, going over the notes in front of him.

“Yes, Mr. Bender. I... I don’t know why the police locked me up. I came to them for help.” Amanda cried.

“They have this bad habit of denying innocent people their rights. That’s why I’m here.”

“I appreciate that Mr. Bender, but I can’t afford...”

“A generous donor has decided to foot the bill. All you need to focus on is telling me exactly what happened when your son was taken...”

\*\*\*

“Conspiracy to commit murder.” Henderson said glumly, “Among other things.”

“So, you think she’s responsible for Dr. Benzen’s death?” Lois asked.

“From what we’ve been able to gather; yes. She was the last person to see him alive. Her DNA was found on the body. She has a history with the victim...”

“History?” Lois asked abruptly.

Henderson looked around at his surroundings, uncertain if he should continue this conversation so publicly in front of all his colleagues. The details, in this case, had only been released to a select few officers and publicly discussing the case with a well-known reporter wasn’t something he wanted to be caught doing.

“Is something wrong?” Lois asked cautiously, sensing

Henderson’s hesitancy.

“Let’s take a walk.” Henderson motioned for her to follow him.

\*\*\*

“We’re doing everything we can, Ms. Stipanovic.” Detective Wolf tried to reassure her with a supportive hand on her shoulder. “Do you know why anyone would want to take your son?”

“I...I...don...don’t...know.” She cried. “Oh, God, this is all my fault. My...my fault...”

“Your fault?” Wolf asked confused.

“If I hadn’t...If I hadn’t...My baby...My poor Jesse. This is all my fault.” She sobbed tearfully.

\*\*\*

“You are such a good baby.” Lana cooed, bringing a spoonful of strained carrots to the baby boy’s open mouth.

“Ah!” He squinted up at Lana, smacking the spoon just as the food met his taste-buds. Strained carrots splattered everywhere on her, eliciting a scream of disgust from Lana and a squeal of laughter from her son.

Lana narrowed her eyes, shaking her head in disgust. “You don’t have to be so cocky about it.”

\*\*\*

“You’re telling me that the woman you have locked up in there is the same person that kidnapped my son and you have no idea where he is?” Lois hissed vehemently as she paced around Henderson.

“All I have is my gut feeling and a lot of circumstantial...”

Lois cut him off again. “Circumstantial???” She let out a long breath before continuing. “My son has been missing for MONTHS! Nobody has done anything to lift a finger in finding him. When you FINALLY get a possible break in the case... You don’t know? It’s pretty simple, Henderson! She either has him or she doesn’t!”

“I understand you’re upset, Lois.”

“Upset? Upset doesn’t even begin to describe how I’m feeling right now.” Lois said tearfully. “Answer the question.”

“As of right now, she doesn’t have him.”

“Then what makes you think she had him to begin with?” Lois asked angrily. “How do you know it wasn’t some other crazy out there?”

“She reported her son missing.” Henderson began.

“So?”

“There’s no record of birth. I don’t know where this came from. It was sent to me from an anonymous source, but according to this file, there’s no way she could have any children.”

“Why not?” Lois asked curiously.

“It’s hard to bear children when you lack the proper equipment,” Henderson said, waving a file in front of him.

Lois took the file from him and began scanning through it. Henderson was right. Amanda had no uterus. How was she able to have a child? If she’d taken Jordan then why report him missing? “I don’t understand...”

“We’re going to find him, Lois. I promise you that.” Henderson reassured her.

“I want to talk to her.”

“I don’t think that’s such a good idea...”

“I’ll do it with or without your consent, Henderson. Your choice.” Lois hissed angrily.

“I’m not backing down on this, Lois. You and Clark are not stepping anywhere near that woman. I’ll find your son. Just trust me.” Henderson pleaded.

\*\*\*

“Thank you all for coming.” Leigh-Anne squinted into the cameras in front of her.

“Mrs. Stipanovic!” The crowd shouted towards her at once.

“Over here!”

“Where’s your son?”

“Do you suspect Superman?”

“I called ... I called this press conference for a reason.” Leigh-Anne began slowly. “I did a horrible thing. The worst thing any mother could do. I put my needs above my son’s and now I’m having to suffer for it. When Jesse was born he was a perfectly normal little boy. He was happy and that was all that mattered to me. It’s hard being a single mother, but it became even harder after a... accident.”

“A few months ago we were on a plane to Traverse City. The plane almost crashed. We were saved. After that, Jesse was never the same. I... I lied about Superman being his father. The truth is, Jesse’s father was a deadbeat dad that refused to have anything to do with either of us when he found out I was pregnant. I am so sorry for all the pain I’ve caused. Nobody deserved what I put Superman through. He had rescued me and my baby and I repaid him with betrayal.”

“I saw all the dollar signs people kept shoving in my direction and I kept telling myself it was all for Jesse, but it wasn’t right. None of it was right. Now my little boy is gone. He’s been kidnapped...”

“And I need help finding him.” Leigh-Anne broke down to tears at her last statement.

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“Interesting development; don’t you think?” Mrs. Cox asked, looking up at the television monitors.

“Indeed, but I’m still not sure I understand how this child got Superman’s powers.” Nigel mused. “He’s only six months old. He’s flying, lifting furniture.”

“Electrical storm? Some sort of transfer going on?” Mrs. Cox guessed.

“Put in a call at Lex Labs and see what we can dig up. This information might become useful if we can duplicate the process.”

“Certainly.” Mrs. Cox smiled broadly.

“Has the package been sent?”

“Yes. Inspector Henderson should be catching up to Lana Lang shortly. Once she’s in custody we can take care of things from there.” Mrs. Cox reassured him. She pulled out her cell phone and began to dial. “Yes, get me in touch with Dr. Sam Lane...”

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Clark stepped off the elevator only to be greeted by a silent newsroom glued to the television monitors. The image on the screen was that of Leigh-Anne, revealing herself to the world as a hoax.

“I kept telling myself it was all for Jesse, but it wasn’t right. None of it was right. Now my little boy is gone. He’s been kidnapped... and I need help finding him.” Leigh-Anne broke down to tears at the podium and the cameras moved away from her.

“Wow...” Jimmy said quietly. “That had to have taken a lot of guts.”

“A mother will do what they have to in times like these,” Perry said solemnly. “I sure hope they find that little boy.”

“Yeah, no kidding.” Jimmy agreed solemnly, turning to head back to his desk.

Clark stood by Jimmy’s desk, waiting to talk to him and find out what had been going on while he’d been gone. Lois was nowhere to be found and he wasn’t sure if she’d come in yet or not. “Hey, Jimmy, have you seen Lois?”

“Nah.” Jimmy shook his head. “She hasn’t been in all morning.”

Daniel from Research interrupted, “Hey, Kent, you got an Inspector Henderson on line four for you.”

Clark nodded his thanks to the young man and reached over to answer the call, “Clark Kent.”

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“Please tell me you’re joking,” Clark said as he stepped into

the interrogation room where Lois waited impatiently.

“What?” Lois asked defensively.

“What?” Clark repeated. “You seriously think Henderson would put you in the same room as the person that may or may not have kidnapped our son... ALONE?” She glared back at him, but her lack of response was enough to confirm Henderson’s story was correct. “Lois, we don’t even know if she knows where he is. She reported him missing.”

“She has to know something and I’m going to get to the bottom of this.” Lois snapped. “Who does she think she is? She seriously thinks she can report MY son missing like she’s... something to him?”

“Honey...” Clark began calmly, taking a seat next to her.

“Six months and three weeks.” She said quietly.

“I know.” He nodded, understanding what she was referring to. They’d already lost so much time with the son they’d never been given the chance to know.

“I just want it to be over. I want to be able to take him home and put him in his bed in our home where he belongs. Is that too much to ask for? It hurts. I keep going over and over that day, that week, the last six months... over and over in my mind. I can’t figure it out. What makes someone justify taking a child like that?”

“I don’t know.” Clark sighed, wrapping a protective arm around Lois as she fought valiantly to keep her composure from crumbling. She was a mess but seemed adamant about not letting anyone see it. “I just don’t understand what you think you’re going to get out of this woman. Do you really think she’s going to tell you why she took Jordan?”

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“Ain’t you a bit young to be in here?” Bibbo asked, eyeing Jimmy Olsen critically as he stepped into his bar.

Jimmy smiled broadly, pulling out his identification. “James Olsen, Daily Planet. I believe you know my friends, Lois Lane and Clark Kent?”

Bibbo nodded in recognition. “Yeah, they were... trying to help me with a problem I had with a friend.”

“Yeah, I heard,” Jimmy said solemnly. “I wanted to ask you a few questions about your friend, Red Dixon.”

“What about him? He’s dead. Not that anyone gives a damn.” Bibbo said solemnly, shaking his head. “Real shame too. That kid was going places.”

“What kind of places?” Jimmy asked.

“He had talent. That’s why he was always going over to the Metro Club on ‘Amateurs Night.’ Him and his guitar were the best of friends. Not a dry eye in the house most nights.”

Jimmy smiled as he watched Bibbo’s expression change to that of a proud father rather than a concerned friend. It was clear Bibbo had been close with Red. “When did you first find out about Red being threatened?”

“It was after the Metro Club burned down. Red saw something he wasn’t supposed to see.” Bibbo said coolly.

“Any clue on what that was?” Jimmy asked.

“May have been on that disk I gave that Inspector that was investigating his murder.” Bibbo suggested. “Red never talked about it. He said he couldn’t trust the police. Cost him his life.”

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Henderson stared uneasily at the door to the interrogation room. Detective Wolf had been in there for quite some time and he wasn’t sure if checking on him would be a good idea. He knew Wolf would be able to break Amanda. He’d sent Lois and Clark home while they worked on Amanda Marshall. Lois seriously thought he was going to let her in the same room as the woman that had kidnapped her son. That was laughable. He knew better.

He busied himself with clearing off the packages from his desk. He opened the largest package on his desk. There was no return address.

‘Inspector Henderson,  
If you want to find the missing son of Lois Lane and Clark  
Kent, go to the home of Lana Lang.  
Signed,  
A Friendly Neighbor.’  
Was this a joke?

Lana Lang? She’d worked in the DA’s office for months. She was trusted among his staff. Why would she take a baby? He sighed, raking a hand through his hair.

“Hey, Zymack!” He hollered at the Sergeant, trying to grab his attention.

The older man nodded and turned back towards him. “What can I do for you, Inspector?”

“I got a possible location on that kidnapper. I need to check something out. Want to ride?”

“Err...”

“Come on, we’ve been trying to crack this case for weeks... Let’s put this family back together.”

“Don’t try anything stupid, Henderson...” Sergeant Zymack warned.

\*\*\*

“Not Superman’s child?” James Turner mused, watching the footage on the television once more of Leigh-Anne’s story. He glanced across the room where Jesse sat, floating a few feet above the ground, playing with a few wooden blocks in his hands.

“How does she explain the super powers then, Hunky?” Mindy Church asked.

“Transference?” James Turner mused. “If Superman’s powers can be transferred...” The wheels began to turn in his mind. “Well, then this changes everything...”

\*\*\*

A sharp knock at the door caught Lana’s attention. She rolled her eyes as she stood up to answer the door. “Coming.” She groaned.

Inspector Henderson and Sergeant Zymack stood on the other side of the door with a grim expression on their face. “Lana Lang?”

“Yes?” She hesitated slightly, “What’s going on?”

“I’m going to ask you this once and I’m going to expect the truth from you. Did you participate in the kidnapping of Jordan Lane Kent?”

“What?” Lana’s expression froze. “Who told you this? Mrs. Cox? That woman doesn’t know what she’s talking about. She’s a criminal. Her and Nigel!”

Henderson and Zymack looked at each other, uncertain of what to make of her accusations.

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“How can she NOT know where he is?” Lois fumed angrily, throwing her purse to the ground as she fell against the soft cushioned couch.

“Henderson said she was claiming he was kidnapped from her,” Clark said, taking a seat next to her. She leaned back against him, stretching her legs out.

“Great. Now we have ANOTHER kidnapper to hunt down.” She groaned angrily, grabbing the throw pillow next to her and smothering her scream of aggravation. “Argh! I am so tired of all this.” She threw the pillow across the room in frustration. “I’m just tired of it. I’m tired of the deception and the lies. I just want this all to be over. I never thought I would have wanted to have a child so much until Jordan was taken from me. I swear that woman is lucky there were officers there protecting her. I probably wouldn’t have been able to restrain myself otherwise.”

Clark wrapped his arms around her as she continued to ramble on. “Now you see why Henderson didn’t want you in the same room as her?”

“I still cannot believe the nerve of that woman. How dare she act like the victim in all of this? I mean, who does she think she

is?”

“She’s obviously seriously troubled,” Clark said, tightening his arms around her.

She smiled when she felt his hands cover hers.

“So, how are you feeling otherwise?” Clark’s voice penetrated her thoughts.

She turned in his arms so she could face him, resting her head against his shoulder as she wrapped her arms around him. “Okay, I guess.”

“I know it’s a bit sooner than you expected.” He noted.

“We still have to confirm with the doctor.” Lois cut him off. “I need to make an appointment tomorrow. Don’t let me forget.”

“I won’t,” Clark reassured her. He glanced at the clock. “You may be able to catch them. Still 15 minutes till they close.”

She let out a soft sigh and shook her head, “I can’t ... Not right now. Why do you think she did it?”

“I don’t know.” His hands slipped in between their bodies, resting on her abdomen. “I don’t understand how anyone could take any child like that, or put them in danger the way she did.”

She felt her throat beginning to tighten and fought to stifle the tears that were beginning to betray her. “I’m sorry.” His arms tightened around her, pulling her close to him.

“It hurts.” She said. “It just hurts.”

“I know, baby. I’d try and find him and bring him home, but I wouldn’t know where to even begin looking.”

“I know.” She said, tightening her arms around him.

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“Transference?” Sam Lane asked, curiously. “I never knew it was possible with Superman.”

“There are a lot of things we don’t know about our friendly alien, Dr. Lane, but that’s what we need your help with.” Mrs. Cox smiled at him.

“I don’t understand why you’re coming to me. Dr. Klein has been working with him more than I have.” Sam argued.

“But you have a greater mind; more open to the possibilities that lay ahead of us. Dr. Klein is more practical.” Mrs. Cox explained.

“I’ll take a look at S.T.A.R. Labs’ file and see what I can...” He was cut off when Mrs. Cox handed him a file. “Oh? I see you already have it.”

“I always do my homework, Dr. Lane.” She smiled back at him. “When can I expect some results?”

“We are dealing with Superman here.” He acknowledged. “I should know something in about a week or two. I’ll let you know.”

“Excellent.” Mrs. Cox smiled back at him before turning to leave.

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“DNA results just came back.” Detective Wolf said, waving a file in front of him. “There is no way that baby is genetically linked to either Lana Lang or Amanda Marshall.”

Henderson smiled broadly, “Get them both charged with conspiracy in kidnapping. I’ll make the call.”

“You got it, Henderson. You want to do it in person or on the phone?” Wolf asked.

Henderson pondered a moment. “I’ll do it in person. Any idea how long that medical examiner is going to take to examine him?”

“Could be a couple hours.” Wolf winced.

“I’ll cut them a break. They’ve waited over six months to find their son. They can have him checked out themselves.” Henderson reasoned.

“You just want Lane to quit harassing the hell out of you.” Wolf teased.

“That and I get to actually deliver good news,” Henderson said.

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Clark held his wife close to him, marveling at how perfectly she fit against his frame. The soft cotton comforter was wrapped

securely around both of them as she slept. They'd made love well into the night until Lois had finally succumbed to exhaustion. Unfortunately, sleep didn't come as easy for him. He still had a hard time coming to grips with the fact that they'd caught Jordan's kidnapper.

She was nothing like what he'd expected. He'd expected a monster, someone uncaring. He'd not expected a young woman worried just as much about their son's well-being as them. What was strange was she really believed she was Jordan's mother. The reality of what she'd done had obviously not sunk in yet.

A sharp knock at the front door caught his attention. "You gotta be kidding me." He muttered.

Lois groaned sleepily, "Who is it?"

"Honey, just go back to sleep." He said.

"No." She shook her head, peeling herself out of his arms and climbing out of bed. "It could be Henderson."

He nodded, understanding her reasoning. He could easily x-ray the door and see who was on the other side, but something was stopping him. Fear? He didn't know. There was only one way to find out.

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"I don't like this, James Turner. Superman's reputation being destroyed was the biggest selling point on getting him OUT of Metropolis and away from my company. What happens if Metropolis starts accepting him again?" Mindy asked.

"My dear, we have something better than the destruction of Superman. We have a human being that has successfully survived the transfer of Superman's powers to himself. All we have to do is transfer his powers to us and we'll become unstoppable." Turner explained. "If you wanted to you could kick Superman out of Metropolis yourself."

"Keep talking..." Mindy smiled.

\*\*\*

He was beautiful. They were beautiful. His family. Lois held Jordan against her chest, refusing to let him go. He'd cried when they'd first brought him inside. Once Lois had held Jordan he stopped... almost like he KNEW, he was with his mother. He knew it was going to be an adjustment. To Jordan they were strangers. He'd been around different people for six months. He'd known someone else as 'mommy.'

Now, he lay comfortably against Lois' chest as she slept. Clark wrapped his arms securely around them. There were so many things he needed to do. He wouldn't fit in his bassinet. They would need to get a crib. Clothes, diapers... The list went on and on.

Clark felt the burning of the tears he'd suppressed for so long as they seeped out of the corners of his eyes. He was holding his son for the first time. The nagging fear that he'd had for the last month was gone. Jordan was not dead. He'd been so afraid that he'd grabbed onto hope too abruptly and that he and Lois would only be disappointed. Now, here he was with his family, just as it was always supposed to be.

\*\*\*

The next morning, Lois let out a long breath as she waited for the ultrasound technician to re-enter the room. She'd been able to get a rushed appointment this morning at the last minute. Clark held Jordan as she leaned back on the exam table.

"You okay?" Clark asked, interrupting her thoughts.

"Yeah." She sighed, readjusting herself on the uncomfortable exam bed. She placed a hesitant hand over her abdomen and looked down. "I'm scared. I haven't been paying attention... What if something's wrong? What if I'm really far along and..."

"We will handle it, I promise," Clark whispered. "We don't even know how far along you are or whether this is going to be a boy or a girl yet. Calm down."

"It just feels different," Lois said bitterly.

"It is different." He said, patting Jordan on the back.

The door opened and the ultrasound technician smiled brightly at them, "Okay, are you two ready to see your first baby pictures?"

"Ready to see your brother or sister?" Clark asked Jordan. The baby just looked up at him quizzically.

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"Eight weeks." Lois sighed happily as she looked at the sonogram. "I can't believe... I mean..."

"I know." Clark smiled happily, kissing her on the cheek. "I'll call Dr. Klein and make sure he knows in case we need his help."

"Sounds good," Lois nodded.

"Ah, ba..." Jordan squealed.

Lois smiled. "Yes, that's your baby brother or sister." She looked at her watch. "We need to swing by the Planet on the way home. I gotta grab my laptop."

"Will do." Clark nodded as they headed to the Jeep.

\*\*\*

"So, you want to explain to me exactly what you're looking for here?" Jack asked as they sifted through the files in the backroom of the Metro Club.

"You don't have to do this. The Chief'll get upset if you get arrested again." Jimmy said cautiously.

"I want to help. Bibbo's real tore up about what happened to his friend Red. After everything, he's been doing for me lately. I figure I owe him one."

Jimmy just shook his head. "I know there's more going on here that what meets the eye. This Miranda keeps popping up everywhere."

"What do think, she killed Red?" Jack asked.

"I don't know. Bibbo said Red witnessed something and it cost him his life." Jimmy said solemnly.

"Yeah," Jack nodded, grabbing another stack of folders in the dark, sifting through them one by one.

"Going a bit out of your way for research, aren't you?" Jack asked.

"I figured if I broke this story the Chief would have to give me a chance on a real story."

"Ah, trying to make your mark, huh?" Jack asked.

"Yeah."

"Too bad you won't live to see it." Toni Taylor said, flicking the light on as she opened the door to the office. She held a gun on them, "Keep your hands where I can see them."

Jack looked at Jimmy, "I guess this wasn't part of the plan, huh?"

"Uh, no."

\*\*\*

Perry White smiled as he stepped into his office that morning. He opened up the front page of the Daily Planet that portrayed a picture of Amanda Marshall and Lana Lang. The headline read, "LANE-KENT BABY HOAX REVEALED! BABY SNATCHERS ARRESTED!"

"Now, these are headlines." He mused to himself.

When he'd gotten the news last night, he'd had a hard time believing Lois and Clark. For months Lois had insisted Jordan was alive and that he had been kidnapped. Perry had attributed it to denial over the baby's death. Clark had had a hard time dealing with his son's 'death' but he'd accepted what had happened. It wasn't until a few months ago that Perry had noticed a change in the young man's attitude. Neither had told him what was going on; they both seemed more focused on finding everyone that had been in the hospital that day. Now they were at home with their son, just like they were supposed to be almost eight months ago.

The sharp ring of his phone interrupted his thoughts. "Perry White." He answered, "Oh, hi, Alice. What? No, no, I haven't... Okay. I'll call around and see what I can find out. I'm sure he's fine... Okay... Okay... Love you too. Bye, honey."

He hung up the phone in aggravation, "Damn that kid. What's he gotten himself into now?"

A knock on the door interrupted him once more. “Mr. White?”  
 “What is it, Roberto?” Perry sighed.

“I can’t find Jimmy. He was supposed to have that research on the Turner profile, but I haven’t seen him anywhere. There’s nothing on his desk. I don’t think he’s been in all morning.” Roberto said slightly annoyed.

Perry nodded, “I’ll see if I can find him.” Roberto nodded, backing out of the office. Perry sighed. “What is going on this morning?”

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Jack and Jimmy sat tied with their backs against one another. They were both unconscious and oblivious to the conversation around them.

“Kill them.” Miranda snapped angrily.

“We don’t know how much they know...” Toni argued, trying to reason with Miranda.

“They were snooping through your office. Do you really want them getting a close look at your books?” Miranda asked.

“I can’t have this linked to me.” Toni snapped coolly.

“Then get a professional.” Miranda snapped.

“If you want them gone so badly why don’t you do it yourself?” Toni challenged.

“Excuse me?” Miranda asked.

“You heard me. What’s wrong? Chicken?”

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Clark’s brow furrowed as he listened to the anguish in Perry’s voice. “Nobody’s seen either of them? Are you sure Jack isn’t just hiding out or something? Yeah, Jimmy wouldn’t do that... Okay, I’ll call around and see what I can find out. Okay, you too. Bye.”

He turned back to Lois who was sitting at the table, trying to feed Jordan baby cereal for the first time. Neither of them seemed to like it. Jordan kept spitting it back out at her, unwilling to eat any of it.

“He’s still not eating?” Clark asked gently.

Lois just nodded. “I don’t know what I’m doing wrong here.”

“Maybe he’s just not hungry?” Clark suggested. He was rewarded with a look of death. “Yeah.” He decided changing the subject was probably best. “Uh, that was Perry. Apparently, Jack never came home last night from his job at Bibbo’s.”

“Isn’t he a bit young to be working at a bar?” Lois asked, attempting to put another spoonful of cereal in Jordan’s mouth.

“Who knows?” Clark shrugged. “He also said Jimmy hasn’t shown up for work.”

“And those two are related how?” Lois prompted impatiently.

“According to Bibbo, Jimmy came in last night asking some questions about Red’s murder.”

“So, you think they’re probably together?” Lois asked.

“It’s possible. I’m going to do a scan over the city and see if I can find them. Do you need anything while I’m out?”

Lois handed him the bowl of cereal. “Yeah, find something he’ll eat.”

Clark smiled at her. She was irritated with the situation, but she still couldn’t hide the smile on her face. Waking up with his wife and son in his arms had been a dream come true. He still had a hard time believing this wasn’t a dream.

“I’ll see what I can do.” He gave her a peck on the cheek and spun into his suit, flying out the window at super speed.

He could pick up the soft whisper of his wife’s, “Be careful,” as he flew over the city.

\*\*\*

Leigh-Anne stood outside Inspector Henderson’s office with the morning edition of the Daily Planet in her hands. “Can I help you?” Detective Wolf asked, noticing her standing by Henderson’s office.

“I’m waiting to see Inspector Henderson.” She said curtly.

“He’s in a meeting with the DA this morning. I’m not sure how long he’ll be.” Detective Wolf explained. “Is there something

I can help you with?”

“Yes,” Leigh-Anne said, turning on her heel to face him, “You can put my son’s kidnapping as a priority. It’s been almost twenty-four hours. I haven’t heard anything. Police keep asking me and asking me what happened. I’ve told them five hundred times; over and over. You were able to find these reporters’ son. What about Jesse? What about my son?”

“Mrs. Stipanovic..”

“MISS,” She corrected. “I want my son.” She cried. “He’s just a baby. He can’t...”

“I promise you we are looking for him.”

“Then why are there so many police officers in here? Why aren’t they looking for Jesse? We haven’t gotten a ransom demand. We haven’t had any contact... This can’t be good.” She said, shaking her head.

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Lois watched in rapt attention as LNN played a recap of Leigh-Anne’s speech from yesterday. Clark had never told her yesterday. Leigh-Anne had finally admitted that she’d lied. She’d been pushed to do it, but she’d still admitted the truth. That was the important thing, wasn’t it? Hopefully, Metropolis would go back to normal and quit punishing her husband for something he never did. It had been heartbreaking to watch footage of him at rescues when all anyone would do was hound him about not taking responsibility for his child. If anyone knew him at all they’d know that was the last thing he’d do, but there was no way of telling the world that. They’d been forced to suffer through the scandal, unable to say anything.

Caroline Weeks’ face appeared on the screen, walking through the streets of Metropolis as she spoke. “The reaction of Metropolis to Leigh-Anne Stepanovic’s revelation yesterday has been mixed. Many understand her reasons, but others still hold Superman to blame...”

The camera switched over to a middle-aged woman with short brown hair and glasses, “I don’t understand how this changes things. Superman is responsible for that little boy having superpowers. He should help her. It can’t be easy raising a super-powered baby.”

The camera then switched over to an elderly man in a business suit, “I think it’s sad. Superman has become such a public figure that everyone wants a piece of him. How many tabloid covers have had stories about women claiming to have his children? It’s the price of publicity, unfortunately. I do feel for this woman. No mother should have to deal with the kidnapping of their child, but I am disappointed that it took her son being taken from her for her to recognize what she’d done wrong. Superman has feelings too. This can’t have been easy for him to deal with.”

The camera switched over to a man in a leather jacket with a blue bandanna over his head. “I think Superman is stupid. He could have any babe he wants, but he never takes them up on it. If I had powers like that I’d...”

Lois switched off the television, “I think that’s enough of that.” She muttered turning back to Jordan. “What do you think?”

Jordan simply smiled up at her, opting to clap his hands as best he could. She laughed. “You really are a happy baby, aren’t you? You’ve been bounced around since birth and it’s hardly fazed you.”

He just laughed again, falling back against the cushion of the couch next to her. She reached out to pick him up, but he swatted her away. It had been an ongoing battle ever since he’d been returned to them last night. They could only hold him when he wanted them to. Picking him up without consent only resulted in blood-curdling screaming from him. It tore her heart in two when he pushed her away.

She’d never thought of herself as a maternal person. She’d never pictured herself as a mother, but slowly she was finding herself comfortable in ‘mother-mode.’ She was still nervous with

the little things. Changing Jordan, feeding him, and getting him to sleep seemed like chores by themselves. When he wanted her around him; he was pleasant and playful. When he didn't want her around he grew moody and fussy.

She was still growing accustomed to his moods as he was hers. It was an adaptation that would occur over time. Time they'd been robbed of. She couldn't help but be grateful that Lana and Amanda were behind bars. If she were able to she'd probably try to strangle the both of them. Understanding Lana's part in the kidnapping had been hard. She still had yet to give a statement. Henderson said she'd had Jordan when they found her, claiming he was her son.

After all the pain they'd been through...

They'd concentrated so much attention on Leigh-Anne's son, Jesse, and they'd been looking at the wrong child the entire time. It had been hard to swallow at the time. She'd felt so stupid for focusing on the wrong baby when the real kidnapper had been right under her nose the entire time.

Amanda had been working with Lucy along with Lana. Was that when they'd decided to give Lana the baby? To protect Amanda? She groaned, rubbing her temples methodically. She was going to make herself crazy trying to understand something that couldn't be understood. Kidnapping was wrong no matter which way you looked at it, but the way they'd kidnapped Jordan...

The lies.

They'd tried to make her think her son was dead. What kind of person did that?

She swiped at the tears that had begun to fall down her face. Jordan patted on her knee, sitting next to her with his arms up for her to hold him. She smiled back at him. "Thank you, sweetie." She whispered, holding him close.

\*\*\*

Clark scanned the city, looking for any sign of Jimmy or Jack. No one had heard or seen them since last night. He hoped to find them goofing off somewhere having lost track of time, but he knew better. After a year of working with Lois, he'd learned that his first instinct was usually the right one. Right now his instinct told him they were together and they were in trouble.

The familiar streets of Hobb's Bay were empty, but that didn't mean anything. He'd learned his lesson with that a long time ago. Many criminals tried to hide their crimes from him by hiding behind lead-lined doors/ buildings. Didn't they know that was the first place he was going to look?

He continued scanning the area until he found himself hovering above the Metro Club. "Talk about déjà vu." He muttered, noticing the familiar site in front of him.

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"Where do you get off?" Miranda hissed angrily. "I help you get your clients back... I worked my butt off helping you get this club opened and this is how you repay me?"

"I never said I wasn't grateful, but I am not going to go to jail for murder because you're trigger happy." Toni snapped. "You ordered Johnny around all the time when he was running the Metro Club."

"And I miss Johnny dearly. He didn't argue with my decisions."

"Well, he's not around anymore, is he?" Toni snapped. "I'm not a thug; I'm a businesswoman. I told you before I was creating a new slate."

"So, I see." Miranda snapped, pulling a gun out of her purse. "I guess I have to take care of my own problems then."

Toni nodded, glad she was finally being heard. The last thing she heard was the echo of a shot being fired. She felt herself enveloped in a warmth she couldn't describe as the room faded to black.

\*\*\*

The building had burst into flames before he could stop the

flames from spreading. "Is everyone all right?" Clark asked as he stepped into the smoke-filled club. He had put out the fire that had begun to spread. His visual range was limited due to the smoke that had filled the room.

He got no response. He could hear four heartbeats in the room. One heartbeat, in particular, seemed to be beating awfully fast. He scanned the area once more, looking for a sign of anyone through the smoke. He took another step, brushing his foot against something solid and soft. He looked down and found Toni Taylor hunched on the floor, unconscious.

He bent down to check on her, "Ms. Taylor?" The sound of a gunshot from the next room caught his attention. Torn between investigating the gunshot and tending to Toni Taylor, he finally chose to investigate. In the next room, he was met with even more smoke, hindering his vision even more. He blew lightly against the smoke, inhaling it as he walked through the room.

It was an office of some sort with files strung all over the desk. The office looked like it had been ransacked. There was a splatter of a reddish brown substance on the wall. He couldn't be sure, but it looked like blood. His enhanced vision was of no use in situations like this. Every time he cleared the room just enough to see, more smoke filled the area, making it difficult to see the hand in front of his face. As was such now, smoke kept pouring in the room, keeping him from getting a handle on what he was walking into. "Is anyone in here?"

He got no response. He could still hear one heartbeat thumping extremely fast. The other three seemed to have slowed down immensely. That couldn't be a good sign. He blew the smoke once more, trying to clear the room so he could find whoever else may be trapped inside. Joined with the office was a conference room. He scanned the room with what enhanced vision he was capable of at the moment as the room filled with smoke once more. What he saw made his heart jump into his throat, "No..."

\*\*\*

Lois stared at the footage on the television screen entranced, unable to take her eyes off the scene. Clark had been inside the Metro Club for over an hour according to locals who had witnessed him entering the club that had been engulfed in flames. As the fire department continued to fight the flames she watched in concern. She'd seen him fight fires before. He never took more than ten to twenty minutes at a time. He always came out, bringing people out one by one. What was different now?

\*\*\*

Lucy watched the footage of the Metro Club fire, "That can't be good." She said shaking her head. "Two fires in less than a year between one another in the same building."

"Why was the Metro Club targeted before?" Mayson asked, "Refresh me."

"Intergang was trying to move in. They wanted the Metros out." Lucy explained with a grimace.

The camera focused on ambulatory workers carrying out three people on a stretcher. As the camera zoomed in on their faces Lucy felt her heart stop, "Oh, my God..."

"Hey, isn't that your friend, Jimmy?" Mayson asked.

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He still hadn't come out.

What was going on?

Lois stared at the screen in disbelief. They'd reported Jimmy and Jack to be suffering from minor gunshot wounds, but nothing serious. Nothing had been reported about Superman. The camera panned out and focused on the crowd of people around the Metro Club. One face, in particular, caught her attention. She couldn't quite place it. The expression on the woman's face seemed to be satisfied rather than concerned. She looked so familiar...

The phone next to her rang and she jumped, startled. "Hello?" The sound of Dr. Klein's voice on the other end calmed her

nerves. “What? Okay. Yeah, I’ll... I’ll be right there.” She glanced at the sleeping baby next to her in concern as she hung up the phone.

She gently picked him up and carried him with her out to the Jeep. That morning, she and Clark had gone shopping for everything they needed for Jordan, car seat, diapers, clothes, formula, baby food, toys, etc... This would be her first time taking Jordan out with her in public. She wondered briefly how he would react. As of right now, he was asleep without a care in the world. Would he be upset with her for taking him out during his nap? She had no idea what to expect. She gathered her things along with Jordan’s diaper bag Clark had put together that morning and headed to S.T.A.R. Labs.

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Turner took a long puff from his cigar, examining the view from his penthouse. “Not as good as it once was, but it’ll do.” He mused.

“I’m sure it will,” Nigel said, stepping out from the shadows.

Turner smiled at him warmly, “Do come in.” He said sarcastically.

“I’ve been trying to wrap my mind around something for the last month; ever since you came to town,” Nigel said, pacing in front of him. “How is it that a nobody such as yourself that no one has heard of is able to do so much on so little?”

“I guess it’s just luck.” James Turner smiled with a shrug, turning away from Nigel.

“No, it’s more than luck. You act as if you’ve been doing this for years... I’ve run a background check on you.”

“Have you?” Turner smiled, turning back to face him, “Anything interesting?”

“You don’t exist,” Nigel said stepping forward to face him. “Who are you... Really?”

“My name is James Turner.” Turner smiled back at him.

Nigel met his eyes with a steely gaze. His gaze was met with an, even more, sinister one. Nigel took a step back then smiled, slightly amused. “So, do tell me. How did you survive, Lex?” Turner seemed slightly taken aback, but Nigel continued, “I worked with you for years. Do you really think I don’t know you?”

“Having a suspicion and being able to prove it are two entirely different things, Nigel,” Turner said airily.

“Yes, indeed, I see I taught you well, Lex.” Nigel smiled as Turner tensed up once more when he used the name ‘Lex.’

“You?” Turner stepped towards him, staring him down. “Nobody has taught me anything. I was running things smoothly before I ever had a thought about you!”

“I wasn’t the one dumb enough to lose everything for a woman! Obviously, you weren’t educated on that chapter in business school.”

“Enough of this.” Turner sniffed, stepping away from him.

“The Lex Luthor I knew never backed down from a challenge.”

“Oh, and what challenge would that be?” Turner asked.

\*\*\*

“I don’t care who the hell you are!” Lois snapped angrily at the security guard standing outside of Dr. Klein’s office. “I have every right to...”

“You can’t bring a baby into S.T.A.R. Labs...” The guard argued.

“Why you little...”

“Lois!” Dr. Klein approached them with a concerned look. He seemed to pick up on the tension then nodded to the officer, “Mark, she’s okay.”

“But the baby...”

“Is fine.” Dr. Klein nodded, waiting for him to leave. The guard seemed to get the hint and finally left.

“Okay. What’s going on? I have never been grilled so hard

about coming to your office in my life.” Lois snapped

“We’re on a security lockdown.” Dr. Klein explained, motioning for her to follow him. After assuring himself that the proper locks were in place he continued, “I’m sure you saw the news earlier.”

“Yeah. I haven’t been able to take my eyes off of it.” Lois shook her head, trying to calm her nerves, “What is going on Dr. Klein? You call me all frantic, telling me to come down to S.T.A.R. Labs. What is so important?”

“We found Clark.” Dr. Klein said slowly. “Well, actually, he found us.” He motioned for her to follow him. “He’s in an air tight room. We’re monitoring him right now, but I’m not sure what to do...”

“Do about what? Why is he in an airtight room?” Lois asked.

“Kryptonite poisoning,” Klein answered.

“What?” Lois asked in concern.

“It was in his lungs, his skin, everything...” Dr. Klein shook his head.

“How?” Lois asked in between tears.

“I don’t know.” Dr. Klein said. “Somehow it got into his system. He said he’d inhaled the smoke several times, trying to clear the air so he could see...”

“He’s awake?” Lois asked. “Can I see him?”

Dr. Klein shook his head, “I’m afraid I can’t let you do that, Lois. The baby...”

“Clark told you?” Lois asked, uncertainly.

“That you found Jordan? Yes, he’s sitting right there,” Dr. Klein pointed at Jordan who was still asleep in his stroller, oblivious to everything around him.

“Uh, yes, but...” she shook her head, deciding to just bite the bullet. “I’m pregnant.” She whispered hesitantly.

“Oh!” Dr. Klein beamed, “Congratulations!”

“Thanks,” Lois said softly, placing a protective hand over her growing abdomen. “What do we do now? How do we get this poison out of Clark?”

“I’m trying some different treatments with what we were working on before. You remember; the tests to try and create immunity against Kryptonite for Clark...and eventually your children?”

“Yeah.” She nodded, recalling the conversation. “I remember.”

“Many of the tests I used were based on the red variation of Kryptonite. It seemed to have a canceling-out effect on the green. Unfortunately, I no longer have it in my possession.”

“Isn’t there anything else you can try?” Lois asked tearfully. “The longer that poison sits inside him the more harm it’s doing. He said he felt energized when he was in the sun... maybe sunlight will help?”

Dr. Klein sighed, nodding, “I’ll see what I can do. I’ll try and get some ideas from one of the scientists working on an alternative to chemotherapy. If we could burn it out...”

Lois nodded, “That’s good. Just do what you have to please...”

Dr. Klein nodded solemnly. “I am.” He gave a long wayward look at the sleeping baby in the car seat next to Lois. “He looks healthy.”

Lois nodded mutely, too upset to respond.

“I’ll be back in a few. Feel free to stay as long as you want.”

“Dr. Klein?” She called after him.

“Yes?”

“Thank you. I’m really glad you’re helping Clark.”

“It’s my pleasure.”

\*\*\*

Sam Lane stared at the metal doors in front of him. He’d been told that Dr. Klein was treating Superman. It was just his luck. He’d been hired to study how to transfer the super being’s powers from one body to another and here the Man of Steel lay for him to get what Sam needed from him.

\*\*\*

Perry White jerked Jimmy Olsen's desk drawers open, looking for any clue as to why he would go into the Metro Club. He'd just received the call from Alice that Jimmy had been admitted to the hospital. There was nothing Perry could do. He wasn't a blood relative. He had no contact information for the boy's mother or father. Note after note of anything but useful information was beginning to get to him. He pulled the final drawer open and was surprised to find a red glowing rock inside. "What in the world?"

\*\*\*

Lois stepped off the elevator with a heavy heart. There was nothing she could do right now, but wait and hope Dr. Klein could get the Kryptonite out of Clark's system in time. In the meantime, she could go to work and try and find the person that took the Kryptonite, to begin with. "You ready to see the bullpen, little one?" She asked.

Jordan just smiled up at her with a grin. He was oblivious to everything going on around him. She envied him. Being oblivious to the fact that someone had poisoned not only Clark but Jimmy and Jack too with Kryptonite had been a lot to handle. Dr. Klein had sun lamps on Clark right now and was waiting to hear back from Dr. Leigh about his alternative chemo methods. Burning the poison out of Clark was hard to imagine. She knew it would be painful for him, but not nearly as painful as what he was going through right now.

"Lois! What in the Sam Hill are you doing here?" Perry hollered across the newsroom before she could even step off the ramp. "Never mind! In my office!"

"Someone's in a mood," Lois muttered, carrying Jordan with her into Perry's office as she ignored the stares from her colleagues.

"Close the door," Perry said when she entered his office.

She did, taking a seat across from him, "What's up?"

"Jack and Jimmy were in a bad accident. They're in the hospital..."

"Yeah, I heard."

"I was trying to get Jimmy's mother or his father's number but I couldn't find it. I went through his desk and I found this." Perry pulled out the red rock from his desk drawer. Immediately, Jordan began crying at the top of his lungs. "Is he all right?"

"I think so." Lois said, trying to cover, "Can you put that away? I think it's scaring him..." She glanced at the rock a moment. "Why is it glowing? Perry, that's radioactive..."

"OH!" Perry nodded, understanding the concern. He quickly slammed the rock inside his desk drawer then turned back to Lois. "Are you sure he's okay?"

"Ah, ma..ma...blah..pa..." Jordan was rambling on and on as Lois pulled him out of the stroller to hold him.

"Well, someone's a chatterbox." Perry smiled at Jordan who had fisted Lois' hair tightly as she held him close. He smiled at the picture before him. "You look like you were born to be that little boy's mama."

Lois smiled weakly at him, "Really? Because I have no idea what I'm doing."

"You're just scared. The fear will subside eventually." Perry smiled reassuringly at her. "He looks so much like Clark."

"I know. It's scary." She smiled down at Jordan.

"You never gave up."

"Couldn't." Lois shook her head. "I knew he was out there somewhere."

"I'm sorry I didn't believe you, darlin'."

"Well, given the circumstances I don't blame you, Perry." Lois sighed, taking a seat with Jordan. "What was Jimmy doing with that rock?"

"That's the billion-dollar question," Perry said amused.

"I'll call Dr. Klein and have him pick it up. He'll know what to do with it." Lois said, hoping she wasn't sounding too eager.

That red rock looked like how Dr. Klein had described the red variation of Kryptonite. If that was the case, then they'd found what they needed to help Clark.

\*\*\*

Lucy stared at the footage on the screen, entranced with the scene being replayed over and over again. The waiting rooms at Metropolis General left a lot to be desired, but she wasn't here for comfort. She was here because the father of her child was in surgery having a bullet removed. She couldn't seem to stop crying.

She really cared about Jimmy. She could probably say that she even loved him, but she couldn't say she was in love with him.

She wasn't sure if she'd say she was in love with anyone ever again. After what had happened with Lex she was gun-shy about ever getting involved with anyone. Now, she was faced with the possibility of losing her best friend. She felt a hole in her heart bigger than she could ever imagine. How had she not seen how important he was to her? She kept pushing him away and pushing him away...

"Ms. Lane?" A nurse came into the room in surgical scrubs.

"Yes?"

"The doctor said to let you know he's out of surgery."

"Is he...?"

"I can't discuss his case with you, unfortunately. Family only."

"But I am family." She argued. "He's the father of my baby. I..."

The nurse nodded, "I'll talk to Dr. Lee and have him come talk to you."

Lucy nodded her thanks.

<< Family.>>

That's what they were. They'd created a child together and would have to deal with the consequences. Family had always scared her for so long. After everything that had happened during her parents' divorce she'd been fearful of putting her own child through the same hell. When Lex had proposed she'd never really thought about children with him. That was probably the first clue that they weren't meant to be together.

With Jimmy...

She had imagined her life with him several times but had never been able to get past her fear of rejection and betrayal. Lex had betrayed her. Her father had betrayed her. Every boyfriend she'd ever had had betrayed her one way or another. How was Jimmy different? They all seemed nice at first until they decided they'd taken everything they could from you.

Her ego had taken a serious nose dive after the fiasco last summer. She was still putting the pieces of her life back together. Jimmy had been there as her friend through it all, but she knew he'd wanted more. One night they had been more. She still didn't understand how that had happened. Why would someone drug an entire city to make them crazy on hormones?

\*\*\*

"Lois?" Martha knocked on the front door of the townhome but received no answer.

"Where do you think they are?" Jonathan asked.

"I don't know," Martha said, reaching under the mat to pull out a spare key. "We'll figure it out, though. We have a grandson to see."

\*\*\*

Sam Lane stared at the pale Man of Steel that lay beneath the sunlamps. He was unmoving and looked anything but super at the moment. Sam swallowed the bile that slowly began to make its presence known in his throat.

What was he doing?

Practicing experiments on Superman?

His daughter would never forgive him if she found out.

But how would she find out? No one knew. No one would ever know.

An inaudible groan of pain from Superman brought him back

to the present. The superhero was obviously in pain. What could be causing it? Sam looked at his skin and noticed the green illumination seeping from its pores.

“What in the world?” He muttered.

Sam looked up at Superman once more. The Man of Steel was unconscious.

<< “One million dollars. Your name will be plastered everywhere as a brilliant scientist making a breakthrough for all mankind. You will be known as the man that discovered how to steal Superman’s powers.>>

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a gleaming silver object.

\*\*\*

“You’re going to sit here and tell me that she knew nothing about Amanda kidnapping of the Kents’ baby?” Henderson scoffed. “Do I look like I was born yesterday?”

“Mr. Henderson, I am not a good judge of age.” Ms. Hunter said with a warm smile. “What I do know is that all you have on my client is the possession of the minor child in question that she was told to babysit for Ms. Marshall. There was no exchange of custody or kidnapping as far as my client is concerned.”

“Oh come off it!” Henderson snapped. “The first thing out of your client’s mouth when we arrested her was the blaming of some guy named Nigel. We still don’t know what she was referring to. She was in this neck-deep and you know it. Do you have any idea what kind of hell the Kents have been going through for the last few months?”

“It sounds to me like you’re a bit too close to this case, Inspector.”

“It sounds to me like you’re reaching so far your arm’s falling off, Ms. Hunter.” Henderson snapped. “You want to play hardball. Go ahead. But I’ll warn you you’ll get no sympathy from the DA or anyone else around here. You don’t kidnap the baby of two prominent citizens and get away with it.”

“You don’t try and pin false charges on someone either.”

“Possession is nine-tenths of the law.” Henderson snapped.

A knock at the door interrupted them. Mayson stood with her files in hand and a grim look on her face. “Am I interrupting something?”

“Not at all.” Ms. Hunter said briskly, turning away from Henderson. “I was just explaining to your inspector here the holes in his case.”

“Oh? Well, maybe you should enlighten me on that, Ms. Hunter because I don’t see how your client has a chance.” Mayson said with a smile. “First, your client watches as Amanda Marshall kidnaps a helpless baby and does NOTHING. Then, your client is caught by a third party and blackmailed into destroying evidence, which she did. And finally, she takes possession of the kidnapped child. Please, point out what I’ve missed.”

Ms. Hunter stared at Mayson a moment, unsure of how to proceed, “Did you say she destroyed evidence?”

“Yes. I have the video surveillance of her doing so from when she was employed at the DA’s office. What’s wrong? Didn’t your client fill you in on all of that?”

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Sam smiled as he placed the tissue sample in his pocket along with the hair sample he’d extracted from the man of steel. Duplicating his powers with the samples would soon bring fame to his name. Lois would never know. Not that he was that close to her, to begin with, but he knew if she ever found out...

“Lois...”

Sam’s head turned sharply back towards the unconscious figure beneath the sunlamps. Why did Superman just call out his daughter’s name?

\*\*\*

That evening, Lois watched in amusement as Jordan rolled himself from one end of the living room to the other. He still

hadn’t grasped the concept of crawling. He would get on his hands and knees and rock back and forth as if he was trying to move, but still was unmoving. He still found other methods of getting around on his own.

He seemed to grow more and more accustomed to her as time went on. He was constantly touching her. His little hands found her face and hair. He enjoyed fisting her hair with his little hands, tugging on her hair tightly. It hurt like hell, but it made him laugh.

Dr. Klein had sent her home after hours of waiting in his office. He’d promised to call her as soon as there was a change. The phone hadn’t rung all afternoon. When she’d arrived home she’d seen a note from Martha and Jonathan that they were in town and looking for her and Clark. She’d had no luck in trying to track them down. No phone calls. Nothing. Hopefully, they’d check back soon. She had no way of knowing if they knew about Clark yet.

She suspected they’d seen the papers on Jordan, hence the reason for their visit. Clark had tried to reach them that morning but had had no luck; the same with her family. Her father was out of the office for an undetermined amount of time. Her mother’s machine was off and Lucy was... Well, Lucy.

Lois did her best to focus on Jordan, hoping that would dull the ache she felt in her heart. She knew Clark would pull through this. He had to. So, she could yell at him for taking such a huge risk like this. He cautioned her time and time again about taking risks and not looking before she leaped. Yet, he was the one that seemed to end up under doctor’s observation more often than her. If she ever figured out how, she’d take every piece of Kryptonite on the planet and have it thrown in the sun to keep it from harming her family ever again.

A thump on her shoulder jolted her back to the present. Jordan was staring at her with a curious look on his face. “What is it, sweetie?” She asked.

He held up a red and yellow ball and hit her shoulder with it. “Oh, you want to play, huh?” She picked him up and laid him on her stomach where he slammed the ball on her shoulder once more. He clapped his hands together, congratulating himself on a job well done. “You think that’s funny?” She teased. He just beamed back at her with a broad grin. It was hard to keep a serious tone around him. He definitely had his father’s smile. She fought the tears that she knew were threatening to overtake her. “I guess it is a little funny, huh?”

He clapped his hands once more. She laughed, standing up as she held him against her chest. “You are such a big boy.” She said wistfully.

His response was a big grin spreading across his face. “You agree, huh?”

A knock at the door caught her attention. She walked over to the door with Jordan in hand. She peered through the peephole, checking on her unannounced visitor. She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw her in-laws on the other side of the door. She swung the door open, inviting them in. “Jonathan, Martha, come on in. I’ve been worried about you.”

Martha was quick to wrap both Lois and Jordan in a hug. “We had stopped by earlier but you weren’t home. We’ve been looking all over for you.” She looked around the room. “Where’s Clark? Out on a rescue?”

Lois’ face quickly fell at the mention of Clark’s name.

Jonathan took Jordan from her protective arms. “Hey, little guy.”

“What’s wrong?” Martha asked, concerned.

“I guess you two haven’t been anywhere near a television with the news on it, huh?” Lois asked.

“Why? What’s wrong?” Martha asked.

Lois pulled out the afternoon edition of the Planet. “WHERE’S SUPERMAN?”

“Oh, my...” Martha stared at the front page. “What happened?”

“He went to help find Jimmy and Jack because Perry couldn’t find them. He saw the Metro Club on fire and went in and... There was Kryptonite.” Lois could no longer hold back the tears. “I’m sorry. I know I should have told you sooner. We tried calling you this morning about Jordan, but I guess you already figured it out. We’ve both had so much going on with everything. Intergang, Lucy, Jimmy, Jordan, and the baby and then there’s that Leigh-Anne person...” She placed a hand on her growing abdomen as the tears fell down her cheeks simultaneously. She was oblivious to the shocked looks on her in-laws’ faces.

“Baby?” They asked in unison.

She stopped her rant and looked up at them through her tears, “We just found out.”

\*\*\*

Dr. Klein stared at Clark’s motionless body, checking the monitors one by one as he injected the sample of his prototype K-vaccine into the IV. He’d done this a thousand times before. He’d exposed Clark to green Kryptonite then tested a vaccine on him. The only difference was, this time, Clark’s life depended on it. Clark wasn’t conscious to tell him if it hurt or if he was sick. Dr. Klein had no way of knowing how this was affecting him.

All he could do was wait.

\*\*\*

Why would Superman call his daughter’s name in his subconscious? They said the truth came out in dreams. Maybe he was in love with her? She’d said they were friends. How good of friends were they? Sam didn’t spend that much time with Lois anymore. Ever since she moved out in her late teens their relationship had left a lot to be desired. She remained standoffish with him and he continued to make attempts every time he felt the need. He was hardly father of the year, but that didn’t mean he didn’t care about the well-being of his daughter.

If she were more than friends with Superman then she would be cheating on her husband. He wasn’t one to judge such behavior but he could try and stop her from making the same mistakes he had. He didn’t know Clark that well, but from what Lucy had said he seemed ideal for Lois.

He needed to take action. He flipped through various articles he’d collected over the years of Lois’ work. She seemed to write a lot of exclusives on the Man of Steel, but so did Clark. He was proud of the way she went after criminals. She definitely was a force to be reckoned with. It had been hard seeing her after she’d lost her baby. She was a mere shell of her former self. She reminded him of how Ellen had been after their divorce; broken.

He would not let that happen again. Whatever may or may not be going on between Superman and his daughter would come to an end now.

\*\*\*

“Lana?” Martha shook her head in shock. “I don’t understand. Why would she do something like this?”

“Who knows?” Lois shrugged. “Henderson found her with Jordan. The DA has the case now. As far as I’m concerned they can both go to hell for what they did. I’ve lost six months of his life.”

Martha placed a supportive hand on Lois. “I can’t even begin to imagine what this has been like for you two.”

Lois shrugged it off. “We got through it...the best we knew how.”

“I’m not sure I understand how Clark got Kryptonite inside him,” Jonathan said, shaking his head.

“Me neither,” Lois said, shaking her head. “Dr. Klein thinks it was in the smoke. So, something had to be burning.”

“How’s your friends?” Martha asked.

“I don’t know.” Lois shook her head. “No one’s called.”

\*\*\*

Jimmy slowly awoke to the sound of a monotone beep next to him. He felt a familiar warmth next to him. He had the most

wonderful dream. He and Lucy were married and raising their child together as a family. It was a pipe dream, but he wanted to hold onto it for as long as he could.

He slowly opened his eyes and looked around. Next to him was Lucy Lane sleeping on top of him. He smiled to himself. Maybe it hadn’t been a dream?

\*\*\*

“ARGH!”

Dr. Klein rushed into the exam room where Clark lay beneath the sunlamps. He watched in horror as small green pebbled shaped objects seeped out of his skin. He’d never seen anything like it. Clark’s body was rejecting the Kryptonite in his system and pushing it out with a force unknown to all.

“Clark?”

He received no response except for another cry of agony.

Superman was in pain but he was alive. That had to count for something, right? Hopefully, Dr. Klein would be able to call Lois soon and tell her Clark was okay. Right now was definitely not the best time, though.

\*\*\*

“A clone?” Nigel scoffed. “That’s your big plan on transferring Superman’s powers to humans?”

“I have to breed it first, but once I’m done we can transfer the powers from the clone to anyone we want,” Sam explained.

“The last time a clone was created he died.” Nigel snapped.

“But you didn’t have me in charge of the clone’s growth. Trust me.” Sam smiled. “You’ll have Superman’s powers in no time.”

<<And I’ll make sure he stays as far away from my daughter as possible>>

\*\*\*

Lois knocked on the hospital door marked, “313.” A muffled “Come in.” came from the other side of the door. She opened the door and was surprised to find Jimmy sitting in the chair beside the hospital bed.

“Hi, what are you doing out of bed?” She asked concerned.

“I just wanted to walk around a bit,” Jimmy said with a smile. “I’m okay. I’m still hooked up to this...” He gestured to the monitors next to him.

“You gave us quite a scare,” Lois said, taking a seat in one of the extra chairs.

“I know. I’m sorry.” Jimmy apologized.

“You tried to investigate a murder...without telling ANYONE what you were up to?” She prompted.

“Hey, I learned from the best.” He pointed out.

“That’s not funny.” Lois shook her head. “I’ll admit I have taken some risks I shouldn’t have to get a story.”

“Some of the time?” Jimmy scoffed.

“That’s not the point, Jimmy.” Lois snapped.

The both grew quiet. Jimmy slowly looked back at her, “Everybody keeps saying Superman disappeared after that fire. What happened to him?”

“I don’t know.” She said quietly.

He looked from her to the door then back again, “Where’s CK?”

“S.T.A.R. Labs.” She said with a smile. “He, uh, he’s trying to find out what happened to Superman and why.” She said covering. It was still the truth. He was at S.T.A.R. Labs.

“Can I ask you a question?”

“Sure.” Lois nodded.

“How’d you know CK was the one?”

Lois couldn’t hide the pained expression that crossed her face as she smiled at her young friend, “I don’t know.” She knew she was about to cry. “Everything with Clark just...it kind of hit me all at once. I was in love with him before I even knew what had happened. It just kind of snuck up on me, but when it did... I couldn’t imagine my life without him...or Jordan.”

Jimmy smiled back at her. “The Chief said Inspector

Henderson found him.”

“Yeah, they wouldn’t let me bring him with me, so I left him at home with Clark’s parents.”

“I’m happy for you guys. I know the last few months haven’t been easy for either one of you.”

“Yeah, it’s funny. I didn’t even want to be a mother until that right was taken from me. I’ve lost almost eight months of my son’s life that I will never get back.”

“I can’t even imagine what that feels like for you and CK. I...I know mine and Lucy’s situation isn’t the best...”

“You’ll work through it,” Lois said reassuringly.

“I never want to go through what you guys went through.”

“Well, the nut jobs that kidnapped him are in jail, so I think Lucy’s safe to have the baby at the hospital.” Lois joked.

Jimmy smiled, “And you.” He pointed at her abdomen.

Lois looked at him perplexed, “How did you...?”

“Congrats by the way.” He smiled, “The...uh runs to the bathroom...and the moods...Same as Lucy...and I remembered them from last year...” He shrugged.

“You’re something else, Jimmy. Full of surprises.”

“You have no idea.” Jimmy smiled back at her. She didn’t notice the packet of papers he glanced at on the side table next to the hospital bed.

\*\*\*

The pain was unbearable. He could barely move. The pain throbbed through his entire body, even down to his bones. He’d never felt anything like it. A vague memory of waking up in a hospital with his parents by his side came to mind. Even the pain he’d woken up to that afternoon so many months ago was nothing compared to what he felt at this moment. Opening his eyes proved to be a battle.

“Clark?”

\*\*\*

“You’re telling me this Miranda person tried to kill you?” Inspector Henderson asked, taking a seat next in the chair across from Toni Taylor’s hospital bed.

“Yes,” Toni said vehemently. “She shot me. She shot those kids.” She said hoarsely.

Outside the room, Lois listened in with interest. She’d stopped to catch her breath after visiting Jimmy. It had been hard to pretend Clark was fine when she knew he wasn’t. This was just another price she paid being Superman’s wife. Never being able to share everything with her friends.

“So, you’re saying Miranda was responsible for the fire at your club?” Henderson asked.

“Yes, she said she was trying to trap Superman. I don’t know how.” Toni shook her head. “She’s crazy.”

“Miranda?” Lois wondered to herself.

“We’ll see what we can find out. Until then do you have someplace you can stay?” Henderson asked.

“I don’t think I’ll be leaving anytime soon,” Toni said dryly.

“All right, I’ll check back,” Henderson said.

Lois moved away from the room as quickly as she could without drawing attention to herself. “Miranda?” She muttered to herself. This was the woman that had set a trap for her husband. She had hurt Clark. Now, Lois decided she would find her and figure out why she was coming after him.

\*\*\*

“What happened?” Clark asked as he rubbed his temples shakily. Dr. Klein had run test after test on him ever since he’d woken up that afternoon. He still was unclear of what had happened to him. The last thing he recalled was searching for Jack and Jimmy at the Metro Club.

“You absorbed quite a bit of Kryptonite in your system.” Dr. Klein explained cautiously. He looked at the leaded glass vial of small glowing green shards on his desk. “It looks like our assumption with the red variation of Kryptonite was correct. You

seem to slowly be regaining your powers.”

“Great,” Clark muttered, rubbing his wrist as he stood up. “Does that mean I’ll be back at a hundred percent again?”

“I’m not sure.” Dr. Klein explained evasively. “You see, your body’s been through quite an ordeal. We don’t know what kind of side effects that Red Kryptonite could have on you.”

“Where’s Lois?”

\*\*\*

“This has to all be connected somehow,” Henderson muttered under his breath as he scribbled his notes on his desk. “Miranda’s name keeps popping up.”

“You okay over here?” Sergeant Zymack asked, approaching Henderson’s office.

“Yeah,” Henderson muttered nonchalantly.

“You talking to yourself pretty loud. You okay?” Zymack looked at him in concern.

“It’s just been a rough few days,” Henderson explained.

“I gotcha.” Zymack nodded. “Try not to let it get you down. Look on the bright side. You cracked that kidnapping case wide open.”

“Yeah.”

“Still can’t believe all the stuff coming out of that Lana Lang’s mouth. She’s over there blaming some guy named ‘Nigel’ and a chick named ‘Cox’. Who names their kids that anyway?”

“I don’t...” He stopped a moment. “Did you say, ‘Cox’?”

“Yeah,” Zymack said, not understanding the connection. “Why?”

“If it’s the same person then there’s definitely a connection.”

\*\*\*

“Isn’t that Lex Luthor’s old butler?” Perry asked, peering over Lois’ shoulder at the screen.

Lois nodded, “Nigel St. John. He was a lot more than your typical Mr. Belvedere. He served in Her Majesty’s secret service as a rogue spy. Clark and I were beginning to research him around the time we were going after Lex, but nothing was really coming up. Everything was pointing to Lex so there really was no point.”

“So, why are you looking at him now?” Perry asked.

“This.” Lois handed him the report that had been faxed to her. “Miranda’s Fragrances?” Perry asked.

“Miranda’s name keeps coming up in our investigations. She was a trained chemist. Her name came up in Red Dixon’s murder with that disk. It came up with Toni Taylor. I know there’s a connection.”

“Connection to what?” Perry asked, still not understanding where she was headed with this.

“I don’t know,” Lois said, frustrated with herself and with her editor for questioning her. “I just know.”

“That’s usually all the explanation you’re going to get.” Clark cut in, walking up to them with two cups of coffee in hand.

“Clark! This is a surprise. I thought you were at S.T.A.R. Labs, covering the Superman disappearance.” Perry noted with a slight tone of disapproval.

“I was.” He said, taking Lois’ hand as she held it tightly. “I think I’ve gotten everything I can from Dr. Klein for the moment.”

Perry nodded, noticing Lois looking down at her lap. She was avoiding his gaze for some reason and he couldn’t figure out why. He thought it best to just walk away and let the couple deal with whatever they needed to. He was sure to hear about it through the office grapevine the next day anyway.

\*\*\*

“You want to do what exactly?” Marie Olsen asked, shaking her head as she looked up at her son.

“I want rights to my child. The only way I’m going to get them is if I have court ordered visitation.”

“You don’t know that.” His mother argued.

“Yeah, I do. Lucy wants nothing to do with me. She’s planning on having this baby alone, without me. I have to protect my child

and my rights. I'm going to sue for joint custody."

"Are you sure that's best?" his mother asked.

"It's something I have to do," Jimmy said defiantly. "Mom, I almost died. Life is too precious to count on the what-ifs. I can't count on the day that Lucy may want to allow me to be in her and the baby's life. I have to make it a guarantee."

"You may also push her away by doing this," Marie argued.

"That's a risk I'm going to have to take," Jimmy said determinedly.

\*\*\*

Lois lay content against the soft pillows of her bed, listening to the soft breathing of her young son. Clark's head rested against her abdomen, listening to their unborn child's movements with his super-hearing. She had still yet to allow Jordan to sleep in his room yet. Waking up in the middle of the night, searching for him had been hard before. Now, she needed the reassurance of seeing him when she woke up to assure herself he was really there.

"You okay?" Clark asked, wrapping his arms around her waist as he moved upward to lie next to her.

"I don't know." She said softly, reaching out towards him, to pull him closer.

"Dr. Klein said you were really mad at him." He said quietly. They hadn't talked about what she'd had to go through the last twenty-four hours while he'd been unconscious. He'd told her about the Red Kryptonite and Dr. Klein's warning.

She closed her eyes tightly as she spoke, "He wouldn't let me near you." She whispered hoarsely. His arms tightened around her as she buried her face against his chest.

"I'm sorry." He whispered, placing a protective kiss on her forehead.

"I never realized..." She murmured, shaking her head.

"Staying one step ahead of everyone, not being able to tell anyone; there's so much we hide from everyone."

"I know." He sighed, loosening his grip on her as he rolled on his back. Lois rested her head on his chest as he continued, "When I was a kid. I didn't have anyone to talk about my differences with other than my parents."

"Your parents are really wonderful." She said quietly.

"Jordan's taken quite a liking to them." She said with a lopsided grin. "He was chasing your dad, scooting around the living room all morning."

Clark smiled sadly, "I'm sorry I missed that."

"There's a lot we've both missed."

"Honey, try not to focus on all that. We have him here now. He's safe." He gave her a peck on the cheek. "That's all that matters."

Lois nodded, tightening her grip on him, "Thank you for understanding."

"What?" He asked, curious.

"About me not wanting to put him in his room just yet." She said shyly. "I just need him nearby." She was holding back tears as he held her. The high emotions of the last few days were beginning to get the best of her, but she wasn't ready to give in.

"I don't think there's anything wrong with letting him know we love him. After everything, I think that's probably best for both of you." He whispered, holding her close.

"Thank you." She whispered. His response was another peck on the cheek. "Clark?"

"Hmmm?"

"I love you." She whispered hoarsely.

"I love you too."

\*\*\*

"Cox." Henderson read from the old police file in front of him. "I knew that sounded familiar." He read the report in front of him. Lex Luthor's assistant, Mrs. Cox, had been arrested around the time they'd found the evidence to bring him down. She'd ended up getting the deal of a lifetime from the DA. In exchange for

testimony, she got to walk with only probation for twelve months. A misdemeanor. Lex Luthor had never made it to trial and she'd walked.

Now, she was possibly out there mixed up with Nigel in this kidnapping scheme, but why? What could she possibly have to gain from kidnapping the Kents' baby? And where did Miranda fit in all of this? He would get to the bottom of this.

\*\*\*

One Month Later...

Lois impatiently tapped her hand on the wood grain of her doctor's desk. She listened impatiently as she continued to 'hmm' to herself, reading over the file in front of her, "Are you going to tell us what's wrong or are you just going to sit there and say 'hmm' all day?" Lois snapped irritated.

"Lo-is,"

"It's quite all right," the doctor reassured them. "I mean, I think it will be."

"What are you talking about?" Lois asked, "Could you please get to the point? I'm getting gray hairs as we speak."

"I'm a bit concerned about your blood pressure,"

"Excuse me?" Lois asked.

"I'm not really sure what's caused it. It could be the stress you're under or the food you're eating, but your blood pressure is abnormally high,"

"And if it stays high?" Lois asked.

"Well, obviously it's not good for you or the baby. I'm going to put you on a strict diet for now and see if we can lower it, but I want you to do your best to lower the stress in your life as well,"

Lois caught the pointed look from Clark but chose to ignore it, "Fine, I'll do my best."

\*\*\*

"Help!"

The cries for help reached Clark's ears the next morning, awakening him. He looked over at his sleeping wife and son, remorse filling his being as he slipped away from them to tend to the cries. He knew Lois would understand, but the new pain he felt every time he left his son was new to him. It was hard missing any part of his life, even if those moments were only of him sleeping.

He spun into his suit, readying himself to take off into the night sky when he was struck with a sharp pain throughout his body. He winced in pain, holding his head as he willed the pain to ease. He still wasn't completely a hundred percent just yet.

"Help, Superman!"

It didn't matter. He had to help. It was better than leaving innocent people to fend for themselves when he could have helped.

\*\*\*

Lucy waited patiently for the officers to take her back to meet with Lana Lang. The news that Lana had known of Jordan's kidnapping and said nothing for so many months had been alarming. It served as another reminder for Lucy that she didn't know the people in her life as well as she thought.

Lana had deliberately sabotaged her and Mayson's work on keeping Intergang associates behind bars. Now, some of them had gone free because they were smart enough to file an appeal and the prosecution office no longer had any records to help fight the appeal.

Lucy had been stunned by Lana's actions but she'd never thought Lana would stoop so low as to be an accomplice to kidnapping her nephew. Lucy argued for months with Lois about her suspicions. She'd been convinced Lois was having trouble dealing with the loss and was in denial. She'd never thought someone would or could do something so cruel as to fake the death of a child in order to kidnap him.

"Ms. Lane, are you ready?"

Lucy looked up to see the guard waiting for her. Determination washed over her and she stood up, gathering her

things as she readied herself for the confrontation with Lana Lang.

\*\*\*

Perry stared grimly at the television screen as he prepared for another day at the Planet. A fire in Hobb's Bay. It was strange how many fires had occurred in that area in the past year. First, Lex Luthor aka 'The Boss' had been suspected, but now that the fires continued, Perry wasn't so sure.

\*\*\*

Another fire in Hobbs Bay.

Lois watched the footage of the roaring fire in concern. Clark had just dealt with a fire in the same area a month ago and now he was fighting another one. Was he strong enough? The kryptonite that had been in his system...

She shuddered involuntarily as she recalled the pain of watching him suffer and not be able to be anywhere near him. She shook her head; banishing those thoughts from her mind, "He's going to be fine." She told herself.

She looked glanced back at the screen that depicted the images of her husband and Metropolis' Fire Department fighting the fire. She felt a sense of déjà vu wash over her. She'd watched this scene over and over for the last year. What was the connection? Why was Hobbs Bay the target at all times?

Reporter mode began to take over her mind as the wheels began to turn. Something was up with these fires and she was going to get to the bottom of it. She'd been distracted these past months with the kidnapping of her son, but now that had changed. She opened her laptop and pulled out her notebook. Just because she was home taking care of Jordan didn't mean she couldn't work.

\*\*\*

"What's going on here?" Perry asked as he stepped into his office. Mr. Stern sat in one chair and James Turner sat in another.

"Good morning, Perry." Mr. Stern said with a smile, standing to shake his hand. "I hope you don't mind us borrowing your office for a few minutes. We needed to discuss some business."

"No, of course not, Mr. Stern," Perry said, hanging his coat on the coat rack as he prepared himself for the day. Curiosity got the better of him and allowed him to ask, "What kind of business?"

Mr. Stern looked at James Turner for a moment who nodded, "We're all friends here." James said.

"Well, this isn't a done deal yet, but Mr. Turner here has made an impressive offer for the Planet, and I'm thinking about selling."

\*\*\*

"You've got to be kidding me," Lana muttered under her breath when she saw Lucy Lane walk into the room.

"Don't look so surprised," Lucy said.

"Seriously?" Lana scoffed, "You're going to prosecute this case?"

Lucy fought every instinct within her to reach across the table and wring Lana's neck for all the pain she'd caused her sister. There was not a drop of remorse in her eyes. Lana had watched as Lois and Clark had suffered and now she sat here, mocking Lucy.

"Prosecute you?" Lucy arched an eyebrow at Lana. "Believe me, I'd love to do a lot more than that, but my sense of justice for you falls under 'cruel and unusual punishment.'" She stared coldly back at the woman she had been mistaken enough to once call her friend.

"Are you threatening me?" Lana scoffed.

"I'm simply stating a fact." Lucy shrugged, taking a seat across from Lana, "And to answer your question from earlier, no. I have no plans of prosecuting this case. Don't get me wrong. I would love to be there for every step of the way when Mayson throws your lying manipulative behind in prison and throws away the key, but I want to make sure you have no grounds for any kind of appeal to get out of your sentence. You made my family's life hell and you will pay for it dearly."

"You don't even talk to your sister anymore. Why do you

care? You seriously think if you go after me it'll make things better?" Lana taunted.

"My relationship with my sister is none of your business anymore, Lana."

"Why are you here? This can't be legal. I have no counsel..."

"Why do you care about the law all of a sudden? You planning on making another confession?" Lucy cornered her.

Lana stared back at her coldly, "You are messing with the wrong person, Lucy."

"Bring it on." Lucy hissed quietly. She stood up then turned on her heel, walking towards the door.

"What? You're not going to get my statement?" Lana asked.

"I'm not the prosecuting attorney. You can give it to Mayson." Lucy said snippily.

\*\*\*

Clark winced in pain as he gingerly touched the small burn beneath his armpit. It hurt. He'd saved several lives today.

The children.

Those families.

Everyone could have been killed if he hadn't shown up.

It still hurt. It was probably going to take some time to get back to normal.

"Hey, you," Lois wrapped her arms around his neck, leaning up to kiss him.

He smiled back at her, doing his best to cover up the pain he felt when her arm brushed against the hidden burn. "Hey," He glanced at her perplexed. He wasn't expecting to see her at the Planet.

"Your parents insisted on having some bonding time with Jordan. Martha practically shoved me out the door this afternoon." Lois explained when she caught his expression. "You were gone a long time. Are you okay? It hasn't been that long since..."

"I'm fine," He reassured her a bit too quickly. "It's just been a long day. I had a lot of follow-ups and catching up to do."

"Oh," Lois said quietly. He could feel her eyes on him as she followed him to his desk, "I don't mean to press. I guess everything just feels so fragile now. I mean, you would tell me if something was wrong; I know that. I guess I'm just over analyzing." She reasoned aloud.

He did his best to squash the guilt that washed over him. Worrying her was the last thing he wanted to do. He was fine. He'd survived and everything would be fine when he healed. He just wouldn't take any more risks for a few days.

"I'm fine, honey, really," He held up his hands to prove his point. "What did I miss while I was out?"

"Perry's having a moment." Lois said eying the editor's office, "Apparently, James Turner wants to buy the Planet from Mr. Stern."

"What? Why?" Clark asked. "Isn't that the same guy that's friends with Bill Church, or was?"

Lois nodded confirmation, "I'm not sure what he's up to. We really don't know that much about him."

"Yeah," Clark acknowledged quietly. He was still in pain. He wasn't used to this.

"Clark?" Lois looked at him in concern.

"Hmmm?" He looked up at her.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Lois asked.

"Yeah," He nodded, "You were saying?"

\*\*\*

Dr. Sam Lane poured over book after book as he continued his experiments with Superman's tissue. He would go down in history as the first scientist to successfully clone an entire being. Only, he wouldn't allow himself to make the same mistakes as Dr. Leek. His clone would survive and would defeat Superman; just as 'the boss' intended.

He wasn't sure what the boss' intentions were for Superman, but his were clear. He wanted Superman as far away from his

family as possible. He had created an enemy with a powerful force. Obviously, Superman was close with his daughter. How close? He'd rather not dwell on that. At this point, he wanted nothing more than to focus on the project that would make his career.

\*\*\*

"You look like you're feeling better," Lois noticed when Clark placed a kiss on her forehead from behind. His hair was damp from his shower. He wore a terrycloth bathrobe as he sat down next to her on the bed. She sat comfortably in one of his old college jerseys, going through the research they'd ordered earlier that day.

"Much," He reassured her, "I think I just needed to rest a bit. That fire was... intense." Clark said.

"Well, at least, this time, it didn't expose you to Kryptonite." She said quietly.

"I'm sorry," Clark whispered, hanging his head.

"What are you apologizing for?" She asked, "You didn't do anything wrong. You rescued Jimmy and Jack."

"How's he doing?" Clark asked.

"Good," Lois nodded. "He's ready to go back to work, or so he claims."

Clark smiled at that comment. In so many ways Jimmy was just as much a workaholic as the rest of them. "Figures,"

"Yeah," Lois glanced at the bedroom door that stood closed. "Jordan's still asleep?"

He scanned the hallway into the other room where Jordan lay sleeping in his crib. His mother had insisted on adjusting Jordan to a 'normal routine' when they'd arrived home. All of the things he'd never gotten to wear or use that were past his age had been packed up. His parents had spent the last few weeks buying new clothes and toys more appropriate for his age. He knew it was hard for Lois. He trusted his parents, but it didn't make things any easier. He wanted nothing more than to hold his son with his wife in his arms every night just as he'd done for the past month.

"He's fine," He reassured her, pulling her back against him as he whispered in her ear. He sighed in relief as he felt her body melt against his solid frame. He leaned his head down to capture her lips with his own. He felt her smile against his lips as he took the file out of her hands, laying it on the ground next to the bed.

"What? You don't want me working?" She teased.

"I have heard enough about James Turner today to last me a lifetime," He grumbled. "You need your rest."

His hand rested on her abdomen, tracing the hem of the jersey that came just below her mid-thigh. "Just because I'm pregnant doesn't mean I have to sleep all the time." She complained.

"Fine, don't sleep." He joked, "Just don't complain when you can't have any caffeine tomorrow morning."

She glared at him, slapping his chest playfully as she turned in his arms. "You don't have to rub it in."

"See? Now, you're getting cranky,"

"Oh, really?" She shot back, hitting him in the head with a pillow.

She was getting dangerously too close to hitting where the burn was. He didn't want to upset her. Seeing the burn would only spark unwarranted worry from her and after everything else she'd dealt with during the pregnancy he didn't want her stressing herself out even more unnecessarily.

He distracted her from the one-sided pillow fight the best way he knew how.

He kissed her.

Immediately, he felt her body begin to respond to his touch. "You're not playing fair." She argued half-heartedly against his lips, linking her arms tightly around his neck, pulling him in for another kiss.

"Never do," He whispered against her lips. He held his breath as her hand brushed against the burn from earlier. He knew she

was aching for more, but he couldn't. Not with how much it hurt.

"Clark," She murmured against his lips, moving to straddle him, "please," She moved his hand upward.

"Lois, I..." He was cut off by her lips capturing his once more. He could feel his body responding to her ministrations.

"Please, baby," She pleaded.

The burn was still aching. Could he do this without her seeing it? He could try. He flipped them over so that he was on top. At least in this position, he could limit the contact with his burn and keep her from seeing it.

He lowered his mouth to her growing abdomen, placing protective kisses against the skin as he continued his ministrations. "Clark," She moaned in pleasure, "Oh, Clark," She reached for the hem of the jersey, pulling it over her head and tossing it to the ground.

He moved himself upward, planting kisses against her ivory skin as he went. He needed to slow things down. "I love you so much," Clark whispered hoarsely, capturing her mouth with his own as he ran his hand down the smooth ivory skin of her back. He held her tightly against him, moaning in pleasure as she tightened her legs around him; he continued to explore the curves of her body pressed up against him.

"I love you too, Clark." Lois moaned in pleasure as he began to rain a trail of heated kisses along her collarbone. His hand gently massaged her inner thigh as he moved down her body, creating a heated path along her body. "Oh, Clark..." she murmured.

"Lois..." he murmured against her skin, losing himself in her arms. He did his best to suppress the pain he was in as he made love to her, taking in the soft moans and cries of ecstasy until he was no longer able to hold off his own pleasure any longer. "Oh, God, baby..." Feeling his legs begin to give out, he collapsed on top of her, gently rolling them on their sides so they were facing one another.

As they rolled on their sides he felt a sharp pain from beneath his armpit. It still hurt. Even in Lois' ecstasy filled haze she still seemed to pick up on the fact that something was wrong. "Clark, what's... Oh, my God!" She lifted his arm up, "What is that?"

\*\*\*

Lucy Lane rubbed her temples, attempting to calm her nerves after her confrontation with Lana Lang. What had possessed her to confront Lana? She didn't know. She had blamed herself for months over Jordan's death; then come to find out he'd never been dead. She'd confided in Lana, and befriended her. Now, she found out Lana had known where Jordan had been the whole time.

"Lucy Lane?"

Lucy looked up to see a tall man with glasses and a large clipboard in hand.

"Yes?" Lucy acknowledged.

He laid a package on her desk and smiled, "You've just been served."

\*\*\*

James Turner stared at the walls of his penthouse as he listened to the cries down the hall of young Jesse Stipanovic. "Doesn't he ever sleep?" He grumbled angrily.

Over the past month, he had performed test after test to determine what made Jesse super-powered but had still yet to find the link. Some of his scientists believed Jesse was completely human; others still believed he was fathered by Superman. Either way, Turner's patience for determining how to transfer the boy's superpowers to himself was wearing thin.

Jesse's cries grew louder and louder.

"Somebody shut that kid up!!" James hollered.

A whimper down the hall could be heard; then Jesse picked back up on his blood-curdling cries once more.

\*\*\*

"What do you mean it's from the fire?" Lois asked, gently

caressing the burn on his upper side.

Clark winced as he sat up. She was not going to be happy when she learned he knew he wasn't one hundred percent when he'd gone into that fire. "I guess, I may not have been exactly a hundred percent when I went in." He said evasively.

"May not?" Lois challenged, poking the burn once more. He winced in pain.

"Okay, I definitely wasn't a hundred percent when I went in." Clark stammered.

"You think?" Lois said sarcastically, pulling away from him. "What were you thinking?"

"I don't know," Clark said quietly.

"You don't...?"

A sharp knock on the front door cut her off, followed by the insistent ringing of the doorbell. "Who in the...?" Lois grabbed her robe and headed downstairs, followed close behind by Clark as she cursed the name of the unknown visitor. She just knew Jordan was going to wake up from the disturbance.

"What?" She barked as she swung the door open.

On the other side of the door stood Lucy Lane with a large manila envelope in her arms, "We need to talk,"

Lucy pushed past her and stepped into the brownstone. Lois glanced at the clock, shaking her head as she noticed the time, "At this time of night? It better be ..."

Lucy cut her sister off, "Important? Yeah, it is. Jimmy's suing me!"

\*\*\*

"You can't keep me here!" Miranda fumed as she stared down Detective Wolf, "I just got out of the hospital and you're accusing me of..."

"Burning down the Metro Club?" Detective Wolf prompted. "You bet. I'm sure that's just one of the many things on your list of offenses."

"I want my attorney. I'm not going to let you railroad me for crimes I didn't commit."

Detective Wolf smiled, "Sure." He pointed to the phone on the wall, "Give him a call,"

\*\*\*

"I'm sure he'll be fine," Clark reassured Lois as they walked up the steps to S.T.A.R. Labs Laboratories.

"I know your parents will take care of him. I mean, I know that in my head, but I still don't like leaving him," Lois said as they walked through the double doors, "It just feels too soon to be leaving him like this."

"This was your idea," Clark pointed out.

"Well, if anyone can figure out what's going on with you Dr. Klein can, but that doesn't mean I'm any more comfortable with leaving Jordan."

\*\*\*

"You sure Miranda won't turn on us?" Mrs. Cox asked.

"She knows what's at stake," Nigel reassured her. "Having Miranda in custody right now along with that traitor Lana Lang, suits us right now. How else will we discover what she's told about our operation and to whom?"

"Miranda's played both sides, Nigel. How do you know she's not working for Intergang to bring you down?"

"I don't." Nigel said, "All I can do is trust that she won't betray me over an old flame,"

\*\*\*

"Anything?" Clark asked, watching Dr. Klein pace around the office as he read the report in his hand.

"We know there is still some radiation in your system, but we don't know whether that means there's still Kryptonite in your blood stream or if that's just the remnants from your last exposure..." Dr. Klein thought aloud as he continued to pace.

"So, what does that mean exactly?" Lois probed.

"It means, Superman is out of commission until we are sure

he's back at a hundred percent," Dr. Klein said, shooting Clark a warning glare, "I mean it. I don't want you doing anything 'super' until we figure out what's going on,"

"But..." Clark began to argue.

"I don't care if you're rescuing a cat from a tree. The answer is 'no.'" Dr. Klein warned.

Clark looked at Lois for help, but she just shrugged. He really didn't like the smug look of satisfaction on her face.

\*\*\*

"Every test has come back with flying colors. I think we should be ready to do a test run soon." Dr. Lane said as he read the chart in front of him.

"In Metropolis?" Superman asked.

"Not quite," Dr. Lane wagged his finger at Superman. "We don't want to let the competition know what we're up to too early in the game, do we?"

"I guess not," Superman said uncertainly.

"Trust me, son, you'll have your day." Dr. Lane patted Superman on the back.

\*\*\*

"You're going to pay," Amanda hissed in the chow line behind Lana. Lana could hear her. She knew she could; regardless of her attempt to ignore her. "Do you really think you can betray me the way you did without having to answer for it,"

"Me??" Lana turned to face her, raising her voice, "You are the one that...!"

"What? What?" Amanda continued to egg Lana on.

"Hey, break it up!" The guards intervened, pinning both Amanda and Lana to the ground. "You two know the rules!"

"I oughta kill you for what you did!" Amanda shouted.

"What are you waiting for?" Lana snapped back.

\*\*\*

"Everything okay?" Clark asked when Lois hung up the phone.

"Mother wants to know why SHE hasn't been given the privilege of babysitting Jordan yet," Lois said dryly. "I really need to stop answering that phone." She took a seat next to him and glanced at the files he had on his desk, "This everything on the Churches?"

"Bill Church and his son had a shared interest in criminal activity." Clark said, handing her a file, "This is the file on Bill Church Jr's murder."

"Kind of weird how father and son die within the same year like that, huh?" Lois asked, scanning the file.

"Well, Bill Church did have heart problems," Clark reasoned.

"And his son made enemies everywhere," Lois added in disgust.

"You're not buying it?" Clark asked.

"Not for a second,"

"So, where do you want to start?" Clark asked, noting that Lois had already pulled out her notebook, getting herself into investigation mode.

"Bill Church Jr was stabbed by Mike Rogers. Bill Church Sr had a heart attack."

"What's the connection?"

"They were both neck deep in Intergang. Maybe Bill Church Sr. wasn't a victim of a bad heart. Maybe he was murdered too."

Clark caught onto where she was headed and pulled up the Planet's browser on his desktop, "Okay, let's find the connection,"

"Lex was obviously an enemy of both of theirs. Competition over territory."

"But he's dead," Clark pointed out the obvious.

"But his henchmen aren't."

"No, they're not," Henderson said, interrupting them. Lois and Clark turned towards the inspector in surprise.

"Henderson, what are you doing here?" Lois asked.

"I got an update on your kidnapers' case." He said, waving a

manila envelope in front of him.

“Go on,” Clark prompted.

Henderson shook his head, looking around, “Not here.”

\*\*\*

“You are such a big boy!” Martha crooned as she watched Jordan crawl in the sandbox. He turned back to look at her and shot her a megawatt smile before turning back to crawl towards his goal: a bright red bucket.

“Martha?” Ellen Lane’s voice reached her ears and Martha turned to see the other grandmother in Jordan’s life.

“Ellen!” Martha smiled up at her.

Ellen took a seat next to Martha, “He’s gotten so big,” She said wistfully.

“I know, we’ve missed so much.” Martha squeezed Ellen’s hand in support.

\*\*\*

“Breaking and entering,” Diana said in a sing-song tone as she stepped over the broken glass in the townhome.

“You sure about this?” Her henchman asked as he followed her.

“I’ve got to get some kind of leverage to get out of hiding.

When I was investigating Superman, Lane and Kent clammed up quicker than anything. They’re hiding something and I’m going to find out what.”

\*\*\*

“When did this happen?” Lois asked numbly.

“This morning. I just got the call. The infirmary declared her dead a little after the population’s free time. When the guards went by to check the cells Lana Lang was missing. They found her in the exercise yard choked out.”

“I...” Lois shook her head in shock, “Do-do they have any idea who – who did this?”

“Too soon to tell, but according to the warden, she and Amanda got into a big fight that morning. She’s looking pretty good for it, but things change.” Henderson shrugged.

“Yeah,” Lois nodded.

Clark placed a supportive arm around her shoulders, “Thanks for coming down, Inspector.”

“No problem,” Henderson nodded, “I figured you’d rather hear it from me than the paparazzi.”

\*\*\*

“Well, well, what do we have here?” Diana asked as she opened the bookcase that held all of Clark’s Superman suits. “Why on Earth would two well-respected journalists have all these Superman costumes hiding in their living room?”

“Role play?” Her henchman asked.

“Hmmm, don’t you wish,” She shot back, “I’m reaching for a more practical notion. I can already smell the Pulitzer.”

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“Looks like our pet project has paid off,” Mrs. Cox said as she watched the news station replaying the rescues Superman had been making around the outskirts of the city. “Why didn’t you have him go out of the country if you didn’t want Superman to run into him?”

“Because I didn’t want our reporting duo to recall Lex’s ‘son’ and put two and two together,” Nigel answered snidely, “The idea is to learn from his mistakes.”

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“I’m not sure I understand what you want me to do,” Dr. Lane stammered.

“Dr. Lane, I know you practice a lot of unorthodox methods. What’s the harm in this?”

“He’s a baby, Mr. Turner,” Sam Lane argued.

“Would you like S.T.A.R. Labs to know about your pet project with Superman?” James Turner asked.

“How did you...?”

“I know everything. I see everything. Now. Unless you’d like

a visit from the Medical Board of...”

“That’s fine!” Sam Lane interrupted, “That won’t be necessary.”

“Then we’re agreed,” James said smugly, “I want you to drain his superpowers out and give them to me,”

“I’ll get started as soon as I can,” Sam Lane smiled weakly.

“Excellent,” James smiled back, patting Sam on the shoulders, “You’ll see, this is the beginning of a wonderful partnership.”

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“This can’t be good,” Lois said, surveying the broken glass in the foyer of their townhome.

“Stay here,” Clark ordered before he began to move as close to super speed as he could get and began to check the rest of the home for any damage.

She stepped into the townhome cautiously, surveying the damage. It appeared the only damage had been to the front door and window. Everything else looked exactly how they had left it that morning. Nothing seemed out of place. It was strange.

He reappeared in front of Lois five minutes later, “Nothing’s missing.” He said grimly, “But that still doesn’t explain...” He gestured to the broken glass at his feet.

“Yeah,” Lois said, scrunching her nose up as she surveyed the damage to the foyer, “I guess we should call the police.”

“This doesn’t make any sense. Who would go to the trouble to break and enter, yet not take anything?”

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“This is a very interesting theory,” Barry laughed as he looked through the file in front of him. “Miss...”

“Dougherty,” She replied coolly, extending her hand to meet his. “Sarah Dougherty.”

“Yes, Ms. Dougherty...” Barry looked up from the file and smiled, “Where exactly did you get this?”

“You won’t know until I’m put on the air.” She replied with a smile.

“You claim to have this mysterious smoking gun that will blow Metropolis out of the water, but you just don’t seem to want to share anything about what this smoking gun is. Whose apartment is this that these pictures were taken in?”

“That would be cheating, Barry. I wouldn’t want to give too much away this early in the game.” She smiled back at him.

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“Ah!” Jordan squealed in delight as Clark picked him up, tossing him into the air. Jordan smiled up at his dad, reaching up for his spectacle covered eyes, “Whoa, buddy, not so fast.”

Jordan stuck his lower lip out, causing Clark to burst out in laughter. “Sorry, Jay, but those are not to play with.”

He handed Jordan one of the millions of soft plush toys that had been bought over the last year. Even after they’d gotten Jordan back Lois still had a hard time walking into a store without buying him something.

The front door had already been replaced along with the glass pane that had been broken. After answering an hour’s worth of questions from the investigators, Metropolis’ finest finally had left the townhome, giving him and Lois some sort of peace for the night. Lois had opted to take a shower while he got dinner ready. His parents had returned home with Jordan a few minutes afterward. After recalling the events from earlier in the night they had offered their support before his mother had headed upstairs to check on Lois. Afterward, his mom and dad decided to grab a movie, leaving him and Lois with Jordan for a few hours.

Now, here he was watching Jordan attack his glasses while he waited for Lois. She’d been a bit closed off since they’d arrived home. The day had been filled with disappointment. He knew she wanted to see Lana pay for her part in Jordan’s kidnapping, but now that day would never come. It would be just another disappointment for them. The Churches had never paid for their crimes nor had Luthor in the end. They all seemed to have a way

of evading justice.

Jordan made another move for his glasses. This time, Clark let him hold them, hoping this would satisfy his curiosity. “You are just like your mother. Curious about everything.”

Jordan shot him a megawatt smile. He seemed to enjoy the compliment, “You’re not bashful at all, are you?” Clark teased. Jordan let out a light laugh, fisting his little hand tightly around the right side of his glasses frames. “Yep, just like your mother.”

“What am I guilty of now?” Lois asked, wrapping her arms around him from behind as she placed a kiss on Jordan’s forehead, “Hi, baby. Do you got daddy’s glasses?”

Jordan laughed up at her, “You don’t need those.” She said, taking them away.

“Ama, maba, mala,” Jordan blubbered his gibberish talk as Lois handed the glasses back to Clark.

“You don’t say?” Clark smiled down at his son who was very upset about losing his father’s glasses.

“Dinner ready?” Lois asked, looking towards the kitchen.

Clark nodded, “Yeah, it’s in the oven. I was waiting for you to finish.”

“Sorry,” She gave him a peck, “I didn’t mean to take so long.”

He pulled her in for a deeper kiss, “It’s fine. Are you okay?”

The shadow that had been over her face when they’d arrived home to a break-in had returned once again. She pulled away from him as she spoke, “I’m fine.”

“Fine?” He asked. “You don’t look it.”

“I just have to come to terms with it. Just because I want someone to pay for something they’ve done doesn’t mean it’s going to happen. It’s fine.”

“Honey,” He wrapped his arm around her, pulling her against him. “You can’t obsess about this. It was a bad thing that happened, but...”

“There’s nothing we can do about it now.” Lois finished for him. “I’m fine. I guess I should probably make sure they keep Amanda Marshall on lock down too. I don’t want her killing herself or dying from a fight. Then no one will have to pay for what they did to Jordan.”

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“He’s a baby,” Sam Lane’s conscience continued to nag at him as he stared at the vials on the countertop in his office. “I can’t...”

Jesse continued to cry in the background, oblivious to the internal battle Sam was going through.

“Do I make the career move or do I make the Good Samaritan move?” He asked himself. Jesse kicked at a stack of papers on Sam’s desk, knocking half his desk’s contents to the ground. He leant down to pick everything up. It was an assortment of reports, lab data, and an old broken picture frame that was covered in dust. He gently brushed the dust off the frame and smiled at the picture. It was an old photo of himself and Ellen with his two girls. They were all grown up now, but he still thought of them as his babies.

He sighed, glancing at Jesse who smiled back at him. He couldn’t with a clear conscience perform any type of experiment on an innocent child like that. He looked at Jesse and he could see his grandson, Jordan, looking back at him. He just couldn’t do it. “Don’t worry, buddy, I’m going to get you back home real soon.”

\*\*\*

“You sure you’re ready for this, kid?” Barry asked, handing Jack a stack of files. “These all have a lot of sensitive information. It might be a bit too much.”

“I watch cable, Mr. Dunning. I’m not going to break.” Jack replied with a smile.

“Got it,” Barry nodded. “Well, get to work then.”

“You’re the boss,” Jack said with a nod. He watched as Barry left then shook his head, taking a seat at his desk to begin sorting through the files there.

The first file was a case of Elvis impersonators finding love in Elvis, claiming to be Elvis Presley and Lisa Marie reincarnated.

Jack couldn’t help but laugh at that. The next file was a cover on the crime growing in Metropolis and Superman yet to have stopped it. Jack scoffed as he read the story. It was ridiculous how people could turn on Superman the way they did. The next was a file of photos with a post-it marked, ‘unknown’. He peeled the post it back and looked at the pictures. That townhome looked oddly familiar...

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“I hate her,” Lois said, crossing her arms as she pulled the covers over her. She sighed contentedly as Clark’s arm wrapped securely around her. “I don’t know how anyone could do something so awful and try and defend what they did.”

“I don’t know,” Clark sighed, placing a kiss on her forehead as he cupped her cheek. “I don’t think there is any sense in what Amanda or Lana did to Jordan.”

“Do you think she killed Lana?” Lois asked, meeting his gaze. She saw the mixed emotions reflected back towards her. His constant belief that there was good in everyone and his pain over everything they’d suffered because of this woman.

“I can’t answer that,” He said shaking his head. She felt goose bumps begin to rise on her skin when his thumb brushed down her shoulders and back up to her jaw line. “I don’t know what she’s capable of.”

She smiled up at him, linking her arms around his neck, “Well, I guess it’s another case we can look into. Adding another charge to Amanda Marshall’s rap sheet wouldn’t exactly cause me to lose sleep,” She said softly.

“I wouldn’t want you losing sleep on any of this,” He whispered softly, capturing her lips with his. She moaned inaudibly against his lips. His hand traveled down her shoulder once more, caressing the silk of her nightgown as he caressed her soft curves, resting at her hip. He knew exactly what kind of effect he was having on her.

She smiled against his lips as he slowly broke off the kiss, “Oh, really? No losing sleep on crazy baby snatcher?”

He nodded, wrapping his arms more securely around her as he rolled himself on top of her, “It’s a rule,” He whispered mischievously as he blew against her earlobe.

Her eyes lit up, twinkling with mischief, “A rule, huh?”

He nodded, “You are the one that started making rules.” He slinked his body downward until he was eye level with her abdomen. He lifted up the hem of her silk negligee and placed a kiss against the slight bump beneath, “You are so lucky,” He whispered.

“Lucky?” Lois asked, surprised, looking down at him.

He nodded, “Not every child has the benefit of having you as their mother.” He whispered, placing another kiss on her abdomen. “Our children are so lucky to have you, Lois.”

Lois smiled at him. She could feel the sting behind her eyes of unshed tears forming. It still amazed her how easily Clark could make her melt with just a few words or an expression on his face.

She was speechless. She opened her mouth to attempt a response only to have it captured by his once more. She wrapped her arms around him, gliding her ankle up and down the back of his calf, eliciting a moan of pleasure from him. She groaned in approval as she felt the vibration of his moan against her lips. His hands slowly inched up and down her thighs, inching the hem of her negligee farther and farther upward.

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The sharp click of her heels echoed through the corridor as she made herself towards the visitor’s room. The walls were dreary, painted with years of sorrow and rage from its inmates. She shivered involuntarily as a chill ran down her spine. Never in her wildest dreams would she have thought she’d get a call like this.

The door buzzed open and the guard opened it for her, “Ms. Lane,” He nodded courteously towards her as she stepped into the room.

The door closed behind her and she looked around the small room. In the middle of the room, a table and two chairs stood opposite of one another. The familiar man sat in one chair, looking up at her shamefully, "Lucy, I can explain..."

Anger coursed through her as she listened to the familiar words escape from her father's lips. She's heard it all before. The affairs. The fights. The women. Why his practice came before his family? She'd had it.

"Explain? What's there to explain? You kidnapped that little boy..."

"No, I didn't..." He stammered, "I swear..."

"Please, don't. Not on my account." She shook her head, "If you didn't kidnap him then that means you were working with someone that did. What did you do to him?" Her hands instinctively rested on her abdomen where her unborn child was growing. "That makes you an accessory. Do you understand what that means?"

\*\*\*

A hard knock echoed through the townhome. Clark glanced at the clock as he finished tying his tie. Lois was in the bathroom giving Jordan a bath. He headed downstairs to answer the front door. He was met by a very irritated Lucy Lane, "Lucy, it's 6:00 am..." he began.

Lucy stepped inside looking around. "I know. I've been up since 4:00 am. Where's Lois?"

"Giving Jordan a bath," Clark said, pointing upstairs as he closed the door behind her.

"I'll wait," Lucy said, taking a seat in the living room.

"Okay," Clark sighed, "You want some coffee or tea?"

"No, just my sister," Lois said shaking her head. "I don't think I could eat or drink anything right now."

Clark nodded, "I'll go get her," He headed upstairs to let Lois know Lucy was here, unsure of what could be so important at six in the morning.

\*\*\*

"Exactly why should I trust a word out of your mouth?" Mindy Church asked, puffing on her cigar slowly as she leaned back in her chair. This man had approached her at one of Cost Mart's fundraisers. He'd promised her he'd be able to double her income. She'd been intrigued but suspicious at the same time.

"Why would I have a reason to lie to you?" He asked, placing a hand over hers. "I only have your interest in mind. I wouldn't want James to do something... distasteful to a creature so..."

She blushed, "Go on," She encouraged, batting her eyelashes at him.

"Elegant," He finished with a smile.

She arched her eyebrow at his use of adjective but covered her face with a broad smile, "Well, Mr. St. John, I'm not used to such compliments."

"I'm full of them, Mrs. Church, but I do have your interest at heart. If anything were to happen to you James Turner would reap all the benefits. All your businesses. All your money..."

"You do have a point," She said grudgingly, "but the point you make would also be true in the reverse."

"Reverse?" Nigel asked curiously.

"If anything were to happen to Mr. Turner I'd inherit all his assets. We are, after all, 50-50 partners." She smiled as she took another puff on her cigar, "So far, I've yet to see any reason to take Turner out. If that changes I'll keep you in mind,"

\*\*\*

"I don't think I understand," Clark shook his head as he listened to the story for what felt like the thousandth time as they stepped into the newsroom together, "Your FATHER had Jesse?"

"He turned him into Inspector Henderson and he was arrested. He's unwilling to talk or tell anyone where he got Jesse so they're charging him with kidnapping." Lucy explained slowly.

"But, how? Why?" Clark stammered, "This doesn't make any

sense."

"When does anything ever make any sense?" Lois countered.

Jimmy walked by them with the morning edition of the Planet in his hands. He stopped in front of them with a sorrowful expression on his face, "Hey, guys, I'm sorry to hear about your..." He saw Lucy and stopped, "Hey, Luce,"

Lucy ignored him, "Did you hear something?" Lois and Clark exchanged a look.

"Whatever, Lucy," Jimmy muttered.

"Oh, there it is again," Lucy said, continuing to ignore Jimmy.

Jimmy opened his mouth to say something but Lois cut him off. She held her hands up and cut him off, "I don't want to hear it. What I do want is for you to find out everything you can about what he is or was working on in the last six months. I want in on my desk by the end of the day. Got it?"

Jimmy nodded, "Yeah, I'm on it." He disappeared, heading towards the elevator to escape the explosion he knew was simmering slowly within Lois Lane.

"Thanks," Lucy sighed, grabbing her things. "I got to get going. I'll let you know if anything new happens with Dad's case."

"Thanks, Luce," Clark said. They both watched Lucy head to the elevators then turned back to one another.

"Was that really necessary?" Clark asked quietly.

"No, probably not," Lois admitted, "I just don't have the patience anymore... They're both in the wrong here."

"Think they'll get past this?" Clark asked.

Lois glanced at Jimmy and sighed, "I hope so,"

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"Everything set?" Barry asked as he prepared himself in front of the camera. "This is the moment of truth. The moment I, Barry Dunning am recognized as a real journalist."

"Whatever you say, boss," Jack said, handing him his microphone with a smile.

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Lucy Lane stared at the people walking along the street as she sipped her coffee. She'd already sent the information Mayson needed to the DA's office and called out for the rest of the day. She could feel herself falling apart. Everything she'd thought she known for certain was no more.

"You look like you could use this," a hand holding a chocolate pastry appeared in front of her eyes.

She glanced up with a watery smile, recognizing the face of the DEA Agent that had come to town a few months ago, "Agent Scardino, what are you doing here?" She asked, swiping at the tears that had begun to fall down her cheeks.

"Having a cup of coffee," He said, motioning to the coffee shop they sat outside. "Are you okay?"

"No..." She said, shaking her head as the tears began to fall. "I don't know what to do anymore."

"You want some advice?" He asked cautiously.

"Sure, why not?" She said sarcastically.

"Whatever's bothering you has obviously got you quite upset."

"Nah, really?"

"You don't have to attack everyone that tries to help you." He said lightly. "That's the hardest thing strong people battle with; admitting when they can't do it all. If you want someone to talk to..." He held his hands up and shrugged, "I'll offer a sympathetic ear."

Lucy stared at him suspiciously, "Why? What could you possibly get out of this?"

Scardino was quiet a moment, "Nothing. I don't get anything out of this, but you do. I know what it feels like to have your world come crashing in on you. I had someone there for me when I crashed and burned. You look like you need someone to be there for you."

Lucy looked at him hard and long for a moment before

speaking again. She didn't know him from Adam. He had no connection to her other than his investigation, but he couldn't judge her. He couldn't judge everything she'd done over the past year. It would be nice to talk about everything.

She swiped at the last of her tears, "Where do you want me to start?"

\*\*\*

"He needs to be taken care of," James Turner hissed angrily, "Months of planning and investment all GONE because of that law-abiding FOOL!" He threw a vase against the wall, smashing it into pieces.

"What do you want to do to Dr. Lane?" Mindy asked, "Throw him off a bridge? You can't draw attention to us because you want revenge. I didn't sign up for that kind of partnership."

"Maybe you should reexamine things then, Mrs. Church. I don't take betrayal well,"

"Really?" She challenged, "What about Dr. Lane's daughter? She betrayed you. Yet, she's still breathing, walking around. How do you explain that one?"

"How did you...?" He stammered, taken aback.

"Lets' just say I know a very talkative little birdy." Mindy shrugged, "That still doesn't answer my question, Lex."

\*\*\*

"It has come to the attention of this station that our friend, our protector, Superman is nothing but a liar. He has hidden among us, lying to us every day about who he really is." The footage of the Superman suits being revealed in the secret compartment in the townhome flashed on the screen as Barry continued, "Superman is in reality..."

"TURN that garbage OFF!!" Perry bellowed across the newsroom. The televisions quickly shut off as everyone scrambled to escape the editor-in-chief on a warpath.

Lois stood numbly in the middle of the chaos. Someone had discovered their secret. They had found Clark's suits. How would they explain this away?

"Lois?" Perry's hand brushed against her shoulder, "Are you all right?"

\*\*\*

"Making house calls now, Nigel?" Lex mused as he noted his former butler's presence in the foyer of his penthouse.

"How did you do it?" Nigel asked.

"What?"

Nigel stood up and approached Lex, motioning at his face, "This! Coming back from the dead with a new name and a new face," His voice dropped to a low whisper, "How?"

"I can't share all of my secrets. Where is the exciting element of surprise?"

"Always up for excitement, aren't you, Lex?"

Lex breathed in deeply, "It's what I was born for,"

"And it's what you'll die for if you're not careful,"

"Veiled threats?" Lex shook his head, "Really, Nigel, I thought you were better than that."

"I am," Nigel smiled, "It's your partner in crime I'm referring to,"

"She's nothing." Lex shook his head, "If she gets in the way I'll simply have her killed as always."

"If she doesn't have you killed first," Nigel reminded him.

"I didn't know you cared,"

"I don't. Chop it up to vanity. I want to be the one to cause your fall from glory once and for all and have all the world watching,"

"Challenges can be dangerous for you, Nigel. Given your age and heart problems."

"The only heart problems I have are the lack of emotions that you seem to give into all the time. I'm not the one that threw everything away for a woman..."

"She's not just any woman," Lex argued.

"You're still pining over her, aren't you?" Nigel laughed, "You died because of her and you still haven't learned your lesson. What will it take to teach you?"

\*\*\*

"Why did you cut me off the air?" Barry fumed, following Sarah across the office.

"I did what I had to do. We can't give everything away at once," She shrugged with a coy smile.

"You said that..."

"I know what I said," She said, turning on her heel to face him. "This is far beyond your realm. This is about revenge of epic proportions. I want to destroy Superman little by little. I want him fearing what will come next. I can't do that if you give away our ace in the hole. You've shown the public what they need to know for now. Let it fester and start asking questions."

"What am I supposed to do when they ask me what I was going to say?" Barry shot back.

"You tell them to keep watching and the truth will soon be clear," Sarah said with a smile.

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"You're making us work a lot harder than necessary, Dr. Lane," Sheldon Bender sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose as he removed his glasses.

"You want me to take responsibility for kidnapping that baby. I won't do it." Sam Lane argued vehemently.

"Need I remind you of the risk you're taking when you cross that line?"

"I will not be another flunky for your boss to dispose of as he wishes. If he wants to deal with me he can do so face to face like a man. Otherwise, I have nothing else left to discuss and will be seeking real counsel in my defense."

"Are you trying to get yourself killed?"

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"Why didn't you tell me?" Ellen Lane asked, shaking her head.

Lucy shrugged her shoulders as she tried to explain her actions to her disapproving mother, "I'm pregnant. I don't want a life with the baby's father, so now I'm being sued for the custody of my baby before he or she is even born."

"How can he?" Ellen shook her head, "This is so wrong on so many different levels I don't even know where to begin."

"I screwed up." Lucy shrugged, "I know."

"No, you didn't screw up." Ellen wagged her finger as she began to pace around the room. "You have done nothing wrong. It is your right to decide who you want in your life. If you don't want this baby's father in your life, then that's your prerogative. Threatening you into ...No, he can't do this!"

"He already is, mom. In one month I have to go to court and fight for my child before it's even born! I don't know what to do. Everything is falling apart. I don't know where to turn or who to trust or..." The emotions Lucy had suppressed for so long came out at full force as one by one, tears streamed down her face. "I don't know what to do."

"It's going to be all right. We're going to get through this. I promise you that." Ellen reassured.

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Jimmy stepped off the elevator, surprised to see uniformed officers and ambulatory workers in the newsroom, "What's going on?"

Perry raked a hand through his silver hair as he approached Jimmy, "Lois passed out in the middle of the newsroom,"

"What?" Jimmy looked around at the ambulatory workers and uniformed officers once more, "Is she going to be all right?"

"Only time will tell, son," Perry sighed. "They said she had pretty high blood pressure,"

"Do you think it could be connected to that show of Barry Dunning's?" Jimmy asked.

“That news market sleaze? What would that trash have to do with Lois?”

“I just meant maybe she got stressed out after seeing Barry calling Superman every name in the book; then right when he’s about to reveal this great truth about the guy the signal is cut.”

“Suspicious, but what does that have to do with Lois?” Perry asked. “I’m going to drive down to the hospital and see what I can find out. See if you can get hold of Clark?”

“Yeah, no sweat.” Jimmy nodded, following Perry into the elevator as he pulled out his cell.

\*\*\*

He’d done so many wonderful things. He’d rescued a cat from a tree. He’d saved a girl from being attacked. He’d taken the plane that had tried to land in the ocean to safe ground. He was more than ready to begin rescues locally, but his father insisted on him staying away from Metropolis; particularly the Daily Planet. He wasn’t sure what the danger could be, but his father had insisted.

\*\*\*

Later that evening, Perry found Jimmy in the main conference room buried in paperwork. He opened the door and checked on the young man. He’d been quiet ever since they’d left the hospital. Clark was sitting with Lois and his parents were with Jordan. It appeared the duo had been keeping a bit of news from them the past few days. Lois’ blood pressure was dangerously high and that combined with her pregnancy was what caused her to pass out in the newsroom. He’d have torn into both of them if he hadn’t been so worried.

“You’re working late,” Perry mused when he saw Jimmy sitting at his desk with a mountain of paperwork in front of him.

“I promised Lois I’d look into the Church connection. I got to get it done.” Jimmy said glumly.

“Jimmy...”

“She’s going to be mad. She’s been stressing about this for months. I’ve got to figure out how their deaths are connected. I promised.”

“This isn’t your fault,” Perry said, resting his hand on Jimmy’s shoulders.

Jimmy stiffened under Perry’s touch, “I enabled it. I saw how much stress she was under. I knew it wasn’t good for her or the baby. I just kept quiet. What if she dies? What if the baby dies? I don’t think Lois or CK could handle either of those scenarios.”

“You need to take a step back, Jimmy. That’s crazy talk. It’s just...”

“High blood pressure. Yeah, yeah. It can lead to other stuff that CAN kill you, Chief. Heart attack, stroke... Sound familiar?”

“That doctor was just giving us a ‘what-if’ scenario,” Perry argued. “Sitting here and burying yourself in your work isn’t going to solve anything.”

“If it gives Lois and CK one less thing to stress over; it is helping,” Jimmy said glumly. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have a lot of work to do,”

\*\*\*

“Lois?” Clark breathed a sigh of relief when he saw her open her eyes.

“Hi,” She whispered. A scratchy tone emerged as she spoke. She looked up at him in surprise, questions written all over her face.

He ignored the questioning looks and steered the conversation to a lighter topic, “How are you feeling?”

“Sore,” She said hoarsely. “I feel sore.” She began to look around the room, “Where am I?”

“Don’t panic,” He tried to reassure her. “You’re at the hospital,”

“What?”

“You passed out in the middle of the newsroom and...”

“Is something wrong with the baby? What happened?”

“I’ll go get the doctor. It’ll just take a sec,” Clark said

reassuringly.

He quickly removed himself from the room and closed the door behind him as he looked for a doctor. He wasn’t about to explain how she’d ended up on the newsroom floor.

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“You can’t be serious!” Amanda shouted at the top of her lungs as she paced around the small 4x4 cell where the prison visitations took place. “I had nothing to do with that...”

“You had a history with Lana Lang. You had a history with Dr. Benzen. Conveniently they both ended up dead. The evidence speaks for itself, Ms. Marshall. We all know you have your own sordid ethics.” Mayson said snidely.

“My client is not on trial here, Mayson.” Sheldon Bender interjected.

“Not yet,”

“You don’t have a case,” Bender shot back.

“I don’t? The woman that helped aid and abet you while you were kidnapping Jordan Kent is dead. You had plenty of opportunity in here,” Mayson said, looking around, “We’re all too aware of the crime rate behind bars... Then there’s Tony Benzen. You had an affair with him. He probably knew what you did. You had to shut him up somehow. Maybe he didn’t like what you were offering. Maybe he got tired of your games and decided to turn you in. Things got heated and you just...”

“No!” Amanda shot back.

“Then why don’t you tell me what did happen?” Mayson asked, folding her arms over her chest. “Your DNA and fingerprints are all over his corpse. Mind explaining that one?”

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“So, what am I supposed to do?” Lois asked, “Sit at home and do nothing?”

“Absolutely not. You can live your life as you see fit; just lower the stress tremendously.” Dr. Lee smiled genuinely back at her.

Lois smiled weakly up at the doctor. She was only allowed, one visitor. No children. She couldn’t see Jordan. She had to get out of here. There was no way she was going to sit around and do nothing but stare at the walls while they conducted every test known to man on her.

Her body felt numb; a tingle of dull pain ached from head to toe. Her hand rested on the small bump where her unborn child was growing. She felt the sting of unshed tears behind her eyes. She was tired. Was that from being pregnant or...

The baby. Was the baby all right?

“The baby is fine,” Dr. Lee reassured her as if reading her thoughts.

Lois visibly relaxed at the doctor’s reassurance. “I need to get out of here,” She said, pushing herself up out of the bed, “I have so much I need to...”

Dr. Lee pushed her back against the pillows. “Not so fast,”

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“How’d it go?” Lucy asked as Mayson stepped into the office with a broad smile on her face, “Or do I even need to ask?”

“Slam dunk,” Mayson said smugly, “Guilt is written all over her face. She denies it, but I know she is responsible for those murders.”

“Well, what are you waiting for then?” Lucy asked, “Charge her; lock her away and throw away the key.”

“She hasn’t even been to court about your nephew’s kidnapping yet. I can’t exactly throw away the key.” Mayson smirked.

“You know what I mean,” Lucy said.

“Yeah,” Mayson nodded, “So, I’m going to need some help with this case. You want to take second chair. I’m charging each case separately. Dr. Benzen’s is more cut and dried...” Mayson stopped when she noticed the distracted expression on Lucy’s face. “Lucy, are you okay?”

Lucy shook her head and smiled, “Yeah, I’m sorry. I just thought I ... I’m sorry I thought I saw someone I knew.”

Mayson turned back towards the glass door Lucy had been staring at. No one was over there. “Maybe you should take the afternoon off,”

“Yeah, maybe,” Lucy said hurriedly. “I’ll see you later.”

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“You really think she’ll be all right?” Martha asked concerned as she placed a supportive hand on her son’s arm.

“The doctor doesn’t want her to be released from the hospital until she’s sure Lois isn’t going to put herself at risk again. She said Lois was having trouble moving her legs,” He shook his head.

“I just feel like there has to be something more we can do,” Martha said, “Leaving her alone at the hospital...”

“I know,” Clark nodded, “but they said no visitors,” He smiled down at Jordan who was reaching for his glasses, “Oh, no, you don’t, buddy,”

“He’s just trying them on for size,” Martha teased.

Clark groaned, “Yeah, that’s just what we need now,”

“Sorry,” Martha sobered, taking a seat next to Clark on the couch, “I know you’ve been kind of on edge after that...”

“Barry Dunning got footage of this house somehow. He figured out where we keep the suits and everything. I have no idea how, but I have to find out what all he knows.”

“I thought you had Jimmy working on that,”

“I can’t tell him everything,” Clark pointed out. “Barry’s your typical tabloid sleaze and able to dodge Jimmy better than anyone.” He sighed, raking a hand through his hair as Jordan rested his head against his chest, “Lois is going to want to know what we’re doing about this mess and I don’t know what to tell her,”

\*\*\*

“She’s as beautiful as ever,” Lex mused as he watched Lucy exit the office.

“Pining over lost loves is so unbecoming,” Nigel said, his voice dripping in boredom. “Really, Lex, when are you going to learn? You have a new name, a new face, a fresh start to take this city...”

“It’s always business with you, isn’t it, Nigel?”

“That has always been the foundation of our relationship,” Nigel pointed out.

“But what is that business worth if you have no one to enjoy it with?” Lex pointed out. “No, I have a visit to make,”

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“You always seem to be showing up whenever I need you,” Lucy noticed when Dan opened the door to her apartment building for her.

“Well, I couldn’t let you struggle with those packages by yourself.” Dan Scardino smiled, “What kind of gentleman would I be?”

“I don’t know,” She said as they approached her apartment door, “I, uh, this is me.”

Dan smiled broadly at her, “Door to door service,”

She caught his gaze for a moment. There was an uncomfortable spark between them. She turned away from him. What was wrong with her? The more time she spent with Dan; the more she felt a pull towards him.

“Thank you,” She said softly, turning back to him.

“Good luck with those files. They give you quite a Charley horse.” Dan joked.

“Yeah, well, good night, Dan,” She turned to grab the box of files from him only to collide against him. She laughed quietly, “Sorry,”

“Don’t be,” He said simply before leaning in to kiss her.

A bitter bile began to form in her throat. What was she doing? She was leading him on. She pulled away from him, jerking the door to her apartment open as she raced inside, slamming the door

behind her.

\*\*\*

Three Weeks Later

It had been three weeks and Lois was still in the hospital being monitored. Clark had spent the last few weeks balancing his time between Jordan, the Planet, and the hospital. He missed her but he wasn’t going to take any chances when it came to Lois and his unborn child’s health.

“Hey,” Lois smiled up at Clark as he took a seat next to her bedside, “How’d you get in here?”

“The usual,” He smiled, gazing at the open window on the other side of the room, “How are you doing?”

“I want to go home,” She said softly, reaching up to caress his cheek. “It’s still kind of mind boggling.”

“Well, the doctor warned us about your blood pressure,” He reasoned.

“And I didn’t listen,” Lois finished for him.

“No, we didn’t listen.” He whispered, placing a kiss on her forehead. “I guess I’m so used to being invulnerable...” He shook his head in shame.

“It’s okay,” She reassured him. “How’s Jordan?”

“Sleeping peacefully. Dad had to head back to Smallville to take care of the farm, but mom stayed to help with Jordan.”

“Your mom is always coming to the rescue,” She said with a smile. “Did she come up with any plans in dealing with Barry Dunning?”

“Nothing yet,” Clark shook his head, “but I don’t want you to worry. Jimmy and I have been working nonstop on this.”

“Jimmy?” Lois asked confused.

“I haven’t told him,” Clark said before she could ask the unspoken question.

“I need to get out of here. I’ve become way too predictable.” Lois joked.

“Soon, but you need to rest and take care of yourself,” He placed a kiss on her forehead then lifted up her hospital gown to place a kiss on her abdomen, “And this little one,”

“Any word on Lucy?” Lois asked. “I still haven’t told her...”

“Once the doctor releases you, you can have her come over and tell her the good news but until then...” Clark got an all too familiar look on his face as he lifted his head up.

Lois sighed, “Let me guess? Superman?”

He smiled apologetically at her, “Sorry, honey,”

“You sure you’re going to be all right?”

Clark smiled, “Dr. Klein said everything was fine.” He reminded her.

“Go,” She said with a sigh. “Just be careful...”

“I love you,” He whispered with a kiss before ricocheting into the night’s sky.

\*\*\*

“I’m not exactly sure how all this is going to work out,” Dan said, raking a hand through his hair. “Lucy doesn’t seem that interested.”

“Nigel was right. I need to stake a claim on what’s mine. In order to control my partner, I have to make him feel powerless. He still holds a flame for his ex-fiancée. You can use your growing friendship with her to get the upper hand on him.” Mindy took a long puff of her cigar as she leaned back in her chair. “Don’t be so glum, Danny Pooh, you’re being compensated for all your work.”

“Yeah,” Dan nodded, “I just am not sure if this is going to work. She slammed the door in my face tonight.”

“That just means you’re getting to her. So, soon we will be getting to Jamie.” Mindy smiled broadly.

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“You sure you’re okay with this?” Clark asked, watching Lucy juggle with the baby wrap for Jordan as she tried to get him positioned on her chest.

“Nope, I’ve got it.” Lucy shook her head.

"If she has any trouble I'm here to help," Martha reassured. "Now, go," she pushed him out the door. "We've got it from here."

Clark sighed, closing the door behind him wearily. A lot had happened over the last few weeks that Clark had yet to share with Lois. Superman was back to a point. He still had moments of weakness when he kept himself going at super-speed for an extended period of time. Dr. Klein was convinced his latest Kryptonite antidote would work in protecting him from further exposures. The problem was the Kryptonite was still out there. They had recovered the Red variation, but not the green, and that was the most deadly.

They still had no clue whom had broken into S.T.A.R. Labs that fateful evening and stolen the meteorite. Now, with Bill Church Sr. and Bill Church Jr. dead along with many of their cohorts, it would be hard to discover the truth. He and Lois both suspected Intergang to be behind the break-in, but had been unable to prove it.

The only thing that had never made sense was why Bill Church Jr. hadn't painted the new wing of S.T.A.R. Labs with Kryptonite. He had obviously had access to it. Why not use it?

Lucy had insisted on stopping by and helping out in the afternoons when she had time to spend time with Jordan. She hadn't come to the hospital yet. She said she wasn't ready to see Lois like that, but he suspected it brought a lot of memories up.

The last few weeks had been hell for him. He had struggled to balance fatherhood with the Planet as well as readjusting to his Superman duties. His time with Jordan was always precious, reminding him even more how much he'd missed of his son's life. Clark had to force himself to focus on what he had, not what he had lost.

Lost.

Lois could have lost the baby if she'd pushed herself any further. The stress of someone threatening their family was hard enough on him; much less Lois in her already fragile state. The last few months had taken a toll on them both, but Lois mostly. Fighting to regain their son had been a battle every day. She had fought Clark tooth and nail when he'd tried to convince her Jordan had died in that hospital. She's stubbornly fought him every step of the way and proven him wrong.

Now, the stress she'd put herself through to do so was her worst enemy. Clark wasn't sure how to handle anything anymore. He was paranoid about upsetting her and losing her or the baby. The doctor had said extreme stress while she was still recovering could cause another spike in her blood pressure which could be fatal for her and the baby, but Lois wouldn't accept him coddling her either. What was he supposed to do?

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Judge Peter Ryan had sat on the bench of Metropolis Supreme Court's Judicial System for nearly twenty-five years. He had seen the best and worst of Metropolis' citizens and considered himself a fair man. The stress of handling so many lives in his hands had taken a toll on him over the years. His face portrayed a man that was older than he was. His waistline seemed to expand as his caseload doubled. It was a pattern he had grown used to over the years. So he wasn't surprised when he felt the tightening of his belt buckle when he discovered he would be hearing the case of Jesse Stiponavich's kidnapping.

"In the case of the People vs. Sam Lane, Judge Peter Ryan residing," The bailiff called out through the court.

Peter Ryan nodded at the courtroom as he took his seat, "Be seated," He nodded, peering over his glasses at the counselors. "What are the charges?"

"Accomplice to kidnapping a minor," Lucy said shakily.

"Ms. Lane?" Judge Ryan peered at her skeptically, "Please tell me you're not seriously attempting to try this case. It would be a breach of ethics in more ways than I could even begin to list,"

"No, Your Honor," Lucy said, shaking her head, "I have no

intention of taking this case. Ms. Drake was held up in court. I'm simply stepping in for the arraignment."

"See that that's all you're stepping in for," Judge Ryan said sternly. He then turned his attention to Sam Lane, "How does the defendant plead?"

"Not guilty, Your Honor," Sam Lane spoke up.

"Dr. Lane? Are you without counsel?" Judge Ryan asked, noticing the absence of an attorney by his side.

"I dismissed my attorney, your honor. He was not acting in my best interest." Sam said shakily.

"Have you not retained counsel since then?"

"I dismissed him this morning," Sam said.

"So, noted," Judge Ryan nodded, "The court will accept your plea, Dr. Lane, but have counsel by the time we begin trial. I'm sure your daughter can give you the information on all the attorneys familiar with the New Troy court system," he said with a smirk.

"Yes, Your Honor," Sam nodded.

"Good," Judge Ryan nodded, "Now that that's settled we can get back to the rest of the cases sitting on my desk. Dr. Lane? You've been without bond for the last month?"

"Yes, Your Honor,"

"Bail is set at \$10,000. The defendant is not to have any contact with any minor children under the age of eighteen. He is banned from any schools and public parks,"

"But Your Honor..." Sam tried to argue."

"Furthermore, he is to remain in the New Troy district and he is to surrender his passport. Failure to comply with these conditions will result in the re-arrest of the defendant. Is that clear, Dr. Lane?"

"Yes, Your Honor,"

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Three Weeks Later...

It had been two weeks since Lois had been discharged from the hospital. They had kept her a total of four weeks to monitor her blood pressure and the baby to make sure everything was okay. Part of her wanted nothing more than to get out of the hospital as soon as possible while the other part feared every what-if scenario that could happen. Losing more time and putting her unborn child at risk was not something she envisioned repeating. She would protect her family at all costs, even if she had to lie low for a while.

Lois had been complying with everyone's wishes that she rest and take it easy. She was beginning to feel restless and ready to dive into investigation again. Someone was out for blood, targeting her family, and she wasn't going to rest until she figured out who.

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Everything was falling into place. Soon, he would have everything he'd once had before his power and name had been stripped from him by the Daily Planet's top reporting team. James Turner felt his blood boil as he anticipated his revenge. How sweet his revenge would be. He would exploit his enemies' weaknesses and use them to his advantage. His name had had to be changed; along with his face and past.

The surgeon that had worked on him had been a genius. Nothing of his features resembled who he used to be. It was that much easier to get close with those that had once worked hard to bring his former self down. He had thought he was on top of the world when everything had come crashing down on him. He'd been forced to use threats in order to keep Lucy as his bride-to-be. That hack, Olsen, had interfered with his plans along with the overzealous Inspector Henderson. He would take care of all of them. His plans for revenge were just beginning and if anyone got in his way again they wouldn't live to tell about it.

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Mayson's heels clicked against the hard pavement as she made

her way through the wreckage of Toni Taylor's former business, 'The Metro Club.' It was hard to believe this had once been a night club. She grazed her finger against the dusty half burnt furniture as she walked through the foyer.

Toni Taylor had gone missing after Miranda's arrest. No one knew where she had disappeared to. Would this be the fate of everyone that dared to face up against Intergang? Mayson was convinced Miranda was connected to the criminal organization, even if she couldn't prove anything. Everything in her gut told her Miranda was a key to Intergang.

"May I help you?" a voice behind her interrupted her thoughts.

Mayson turned to see an elderly man in a sharp business suit, standing in the doorway of the Metro Club remains with her.

"I..." She stammered a moment before regaining her composure. She was surprised to find anyone in the Metro Club, "I'm Mayson Drake, the ADA. I'm investigating the fire that took place here."

"I thought they'd already caught the person that had done this," He mused.

"We think there might be more to this than just a simple arson." She explained, "I'm sorry, who are you?"

"Nigel," He said extending his hand to shake hers, "Nigel St. John,"

Mayson's eyebrows arched at the name, "I feel like I know you, but I can't place it," She said.

"I have one of those names. It happens; what with being British and all."

Mayson watched him as he guided her out of the Metro Club wreckage. He seemed awfully eager to keep her out of the Metro Club remains. Why?

After being escorted to her car with many subtle hints about how dangerous the neighborhood was, Mayson reluctantly left to appease her intruder. She didn't go far, however, opting to park around the corner where she could watch Nigel without being seen.

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"You seem to be doing all right," Dr. Lee began skeptically, "but I wouldn't try to push it," she added hurriedly, knowing all too well that given the freedom, Lois Lane would dive into anything feet first without looking, possibly risking her health once again.

"Define 'not pushing it'" Lois said aggravated. She'd been sitting at home for over a week and was irritated at her climbing-the-walls attitude. At this point, she'd yet to have been released to return to work and Clark refused to allow her to even pick up her laptop without the doctor's say-so. He and Perry had covered all the bases. Clark had worked half days from the day she got released from the hospital; so by the time she began to plan a way to start research on any of the stories she'd been working on, he was there to stop her. The same occurred when she called the Planet. She was deadlocked and told to get some rest.

Rest? How could she rest at a time like this? Her family was at risk. Someone was after Clark, and by relation, after herself and Jordan. They'd been inside their home and found the Suits. Ever since the footage had aired, Clark said he'd kept his Suits at his parents' house, but she still had an uneasy feeling about the entire thing. The not knowing was killing her.

"No twelve-hour days." Her doctor said firmly. "I want you resting. You're at a critical point in your pregnancy. Once you've past the first trimester you can relax a little bit more, but I don't want you taking any chances. This baby's health is at risk the more you push the limits, which is not to say the stress you put yourself through wasn't warranted." She corrected herself before Lois could chip in.

"Can I go back to work?" Lois asked eagerly.

"Well..."

"Please, you don't know what I'm going through. I'm going

crazy sitting at home with nothing to do. I have so much to do and no way of doing anything because," she pointed at Clark, "I've been banned from exerting myself with even getting the mail!"

"That might not be a bad thing." The doctor smirked.

Lois glared at Dr. Lee, "I can't take this any longer." She cried.

"Three days a week and we'll see how you're doing after that. Come see me in two weeks."

\*\*\*

"I don't understand!" Superman pouted as he paced around his 'room' angrily.

"You simply have to be patient." Mrs. Cox explained soothingly. "We came across a bit of a snag as far as your father's concerned, but we'll get him returned home to you as soon as possible."

"You're a liar!" Superman scowled, "I don't like you!"

With that he ricocheted into the air, shattering the window glass all over the room and leaving Mrs. Cox dumbfounded as far as what to do next.

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"Freedom..." Lois sighed, resting her head against the couch cushion in their living room.

"Partially..." Clark corrected. "Three days a week...half days."

"I know," Lois sighed. "As long as I'm not stuck at home with nothing to do all day, I'm happy."

"Well, as long as you're happy..." he kissed her forehead. "I've missed you." His hand rested on her growing abdomen.

Lois smiled softly, stroking his hand. "Well, now that I'm back...even if it is part-time...we can get to the bottom of who was trying to expose you. Clark, they had pictures of your suits...and the secret compartment..."

"I know." Clark nodded. "We'll get to the bottom of it. I promise," he tightened his arms around her, "but for now I just want to enjoy holding my wife and partner... You have no idea how scared I have been."

She squeezed his hand and smiled. "Me too."

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Mayson watched as Nigel left the building. He'd been adamant about not allowing her in the building and she wanted to know why. She climbed out of her car, carrying her purse close to her as she pulled out her flashlight. It was evening now, and the lights from outside would not keep the place lit the way it had been before.

She looked around the foyer once more, examining the remains. She wasn't sure what she was looking for, but whatever it was had to be big. She opened the door to one of the conference rooms. Nothing. A burnt wooden table and chairs. A scorched carpet and melted lighting fixture in the ceiling.

She flicked her flashlight off and shook her head. She wasn't finding anything that would warrant Nigel's behavior. She glanced back at the room once more before leaving, when something caught her eye.

A greenish glow came from the other end of the room. She peered through the holes in the wall that brought in the greenish light. The room next door held large walls covered in the green illuminating substance. "What in the world?"

A sharp pain against her back made her gasp, "One move and you're dead," the voice whispered.

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"What is this ACL Industries?" Lois asked, sifting through the files in her hand.

"Not sure," Clark said, pointing to a stack of files on the corner of the bed. "They've popped up before. Probably worth looking into,"

Lois nodded, placing the file on top of the stack and picked up a pen to make a note, "ACL Industries. Could be a front for

Intergang. Maybe they were laundering money through the shell company?"

Clark shook his head, "Anything's possible,"

"So, what have we got? A dead doctor...surgeon."

"Henderson said he thinks it was Amanda. Something about a break up between the two of them."

"Maybe," Lois shook her head, leaning back against his solid frame for support. "There's no telling how deep Intergang's hooks have gotten into people. I'm convinced they were behind that propaganda against you and probably that Leigh-Anne fiasco."

"And how exactly are you going to prove it? Bill Church Sr. and Jr are gone now." Clark pointed out, "It's not like they can keep committing crimes where they're at."

"There are still their cronies. If they are still operating under the Churches' command, then the Churches are still committing crimes from the grave," Lois argued.

"Something tells me this 'investigation' you're trying to start is going to last a lot longer than the three days the doctor allowed you to work," Clark said, looking down at her with a smirk.

She laughed, turning in his arms, resting her head against his chest, "I just want to make sure Intergang is shut down completely. That way," she leaned up to kiss him with a grin across her face, "we can focus," she smiled as she felt his arms encircle her waist, tightening his grasp on her, "on more important things."

\*\*\*

*I looked away  
Then I look back at you  
You try to say  
The things that you can't undo  
If I had my way  
I'd never get over you  
Today's the day  
I pray that we make it through  
Make it through the fall  
Make it through it all*

"Don't you think that's enough?" A concerned hand came over Jimmy's as he handed the shot glass back to the bartender for another round.

Jimmy scowled up at the bartender, "I'll tell you when I've had enough,"

*And I don't want to fall to pieces  
I just want to sit and stare at you  
I don't want to talk about it  
And I don't want a conversation  
I just want to cry in front of you  
I don't want to talk about it  
'Cause I'm in Love With you  
You're the only one,  
I'd be with till the end  
When I come undone  
You bring me back again  
Back under the stars  
Back into your arms*

Jimmy winced as he threw back another shot. The dull ache that continued to flow through his body seemed to ease a bit with each drink. This wasn't healthy. He knew it, but right now he didn't care.

It didn't matter who it was, Lex Luthor or a DEA Agent, he hated seeing Lucy with anyone but himself. He had told himself that the only reason it had hurt so badly was because Lex Luthor had been a criminal and he'd known she was in danger. Now, after seeing Lucy with Dan Scardino, he knew it was just jealousy. She was opening up to a complete stranger while he was pushed aside like yesterday's garbage. He hated what had happened to their relationship. There had been a time when he had been unable to go a day without talking to her, but now things had become

complicated.

She was carrying his child and wanted nothing to do with him. The only way he seemed to be able to talk to her was when they were fighting, in and out of court. The preliminary hearing would begin in a week. He had never imagined he'd be bringing his first child into such a mess.

The image of Lucy kissing Dan once more flowed to the forefront of his mind.

*Want to know who you are  
Want to know where to start  
I want to know what this means  
Want to know how you feel  
Want to know what is real  
I want to know everything, everything  
And I don't want to fall to pieces  
I just want to sit and stare at you  
I don't want to talk about it  
And I don't want a conversation  
I just want to cry in front of you  
I don't want to talk about it*

Jimmy groaned in frustration, tugging at his hair as he banged his head against the bar counter top, "Somebody hates me," He muttered.

"Hey, hey, enough of that," The bartender ordered, "I can't have you beating yourself up here. It'll hurt a lot more in the morning,"

"Can't be worse than what I'm feeling now," Jimmy muttered.  
*And I don't want to fall to pieces  
I just want to sit and stare at you  
I don't want to talk about it  
And I don't want a conversation  
I just want to cry in front of you  
I don't want to talk about it  
Cuz' I'm in love with you  
I'm in love with you  
Cuz I'm in love with you  
I'm in love with you  
I'm in love with you*

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"Tsk tsk tsk," Turner paced around the room as he looked at his intruder who sat in a chair with her hands tied behind her, "Why couldn't you just leave well enough alone?" He asked. "Now, I'm going to have to get rid of you, Ms. Drake."

"Who are you?" Mayson asked, tugging at her restraints.

"Oh, that's right, you don't remember me." He smiled, laughing at what seemed like a private joke, "Well, I like to keep a little mystery, something for you to fret over while I plan the perfect way to have you killed." He turned towards the front door, leading to the only exit. "I wouldn't recommend calling for help or fighting the restraints. The room is soundproofed and as you will become painfully aware, your restraints only tighten as you move against them." As he left the room, he laughed. "Don't worry, I'll be back."

"Great a villain with a sense of humor," Mayson muttered as she tugged on her restraints one more time before letting out a blood-curdling scream, "Help!!"

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Lucy stared out the window wistfully. There was a time when all she had to do was look up at the moon and stars and all her problems would fade away into nothingness for just that moment. It seemed now her problems had become too great for even the magic of a beautiful night's sky to erase.

<< "Invisible or fly?"

"What?" She asked her sister.

"It's a game. You choose what you'd rather do and you have to give a good reason. If your reason's good enough then your wish will come true," Lois explained to her.

Lucy looked up at her skeptically, "I don't know,"  
 "What are you, chicken?"  
 "No,"  
 "Then why don't you play?"  
 "Because I don't want to. It's stupid."  
 "Not as stupid as passing on an opportunity for a free wish."  
 Lois snapped back. She crossed her arms over her chest and looked at Lucy expectantly. "Well?"  
 "Fly," Lucy smiled up at her.  
 "Because?" Lois asked impatiently.  
 "Because then I can fly away whenever I want to," Lucy said proudly.  
 Lois rolled her eyes, "Flying is soo overrated. It's better to be invisible. Then you can walk through all the doors and see what's really going on."  
 "Why would you want to do that?"  
 "Because it's no fun being the last to know everything,">>  
 "I'd definitely choose invisible right now," Lucy said wistfully.  
 "Ms. Lane, what are you doing in my courtroom?" Judge Peter Ryan peered over his glasses at Lucy Lane, "You are too close to this case. I already warned you and ... Where is Ms. Drake? She is supposed to be handling these proceedings."  
 "I don't know, Your Honor," Lucy said apologetically, "We haven't been able to locate her. I assure you I can proceed in her absence."  
 "You can proceed ethically in the case of the same woman that allegedly kidnapped your nephew?" Judge Ryan laughed bitterly, "How gullible do you think I am?"  
 "I..."  
 "Young lady, my patience is wearing thin and I refuse to sit by while you and your office make a mockery of my courtroom. I am giving you twenty-four hours to find someone that isn't connected to this case to prosecute. Do I make myself clear?"  
 "Yes, Your Honor,"

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Clark sighed as he bore down at the files in front of him. Sam had been released on bail, but he was still nowhere near being clear of all the charges against him. Leigh-Anne was adamant about pursuing the charges. She wanted him to pay for taking Jesse, but Clark wasn't so sure if Sam really had taken him.  
 Sam Lane's story was that he had found Jesse. Clark didn't buy the story completely, but he still didn't believe Sam was capable of kidnapping. But, on the other hand, Clark wasn't sure. Sam had watched as this woman had searched for months for her son. If he'd known where Jesse was and said nothing... That was something that couldn't be ignored if it turned out Sam was behind Jesse's kidnapping.  
 Jimmy walked up to his desk with a stack of files in hand, "So, I've been doing some research on that company..."  
 "ACL Industries?" Clark prompted, "What'd you find out?"  
 "Not a whole lot. On the surface, they seem legit, but as we all know nothing is as it seems. They are connected with practically everything in Metropolis. A lot of the companies that Luthor lost when he died were bought up by ACL Industries," Jimmy explained handing a stack of files to Clark.  
 "Let me guess, the other companies were bought up by Church?" Clark asked.  
 "Bingo!" Jimmy grinned back at him.  
 "You think it's a shell company?" Clark asked, picking up on Jimmy's skepticism.  
 "Or another criminal organization," Jimmy reasoned, "Either way I can find out. Should be a piece of cake," Jimmy puffed out his chest proudly. "You're looking at the king of cyberspace. There is no firewall I can't penetrate. No security code I can't break. No..."  
 "That's great," Clark interrupted. "Why don't you get on it?"

Jimmy shook his head, "You really know how to bring a guy down when he's on a roll."  
 "Hey, I gotta bring you down to Earth some time," Clark said as he watched Jimmy head off to his desk. Jimmy just shot him a smile as he took his seat.  
 ACL Industries  
 The name had come up over and over in the last week. All the investigations they'd had into Intergang's holdings had uncovered this mysterious new company. No one knew where it had come from or what its purpose was.  
 Suspicions.  
 That was all they had to go on right now, but that was enough to keep digging.  
 A hand rested on his left shoulder and he turned around to face his editor-in-chief. Perry had a grim look on his face, "What's up, Chief?"  
 "I, uh, got a call from the DA's office. You or Lois hear from Mayson Drake last night?"  
 Clark shook his head, "No, why?"  
 "She was a no-show at court this morning. No one's heard from her all morning." Perry explained, worry written all over his face.  
 Clark nodded, "I'll call Lois, see if she has any ideas. We'll see what we can find out."  
 Perry nodded, "Just keep it on the down low. The DA doesn't want this becoming front page news if he can help it."  
 "I'm on it, Chief,"

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Despite the doctor's release Lois had worked from home to stay with Jordan. Martha had headed back to Smallville this morning and they still hadn't decided on a daycare for Jordan. Lois was still hesitant about placing Jordan in anyone else's care, but it was something they had to face.  
 "Sunshine Metropolis Childcare; the best child care facility in Metropolis," Lois read the brochure skeptically. She smirked, looking down at Jordan who sat in her lap, grabbing the colorful brochure from her hand. "What do you think?"  
 Jordan just smiled up at her and clapped his hands together, "Ah, la, ma, ba..." He gurgled happily.  
 "You think so?" Lois asked.  
 The prospect of placing Jordan in daycare scared her. Every moment she had with him was precious and she felt uneasy about leaving him with strangers. Jordan turned in her arms, reaching up to grab a stray lock of her hair that had fallen across her face, "Ah, mama la, ma..." He gurgled.  
 She smiled back at him in surprise, "Did you just say what I think you said?" She whispered.  
 He just laughed.  
 A knock at the door caught her attention and she carried Jordan with her to answer the door, "Lucy?" Lois was caught off guard to see her sister, visibly shaken, on the other side of the door. "Come on in."  
 "I can't find her. I have no idea where she is..." Lucy rambled as she paced in the foyer.  
 "Lucy, calm down. You can't find who?"  
 "Mayson. She's gone. Vanished. No one can find her. You said Clark knew how to contact Superman... maybe we should send out a search party... or..." She stopped when she saw Lois' amused expression. "Sorry. Hi," she stopped long enough to give Lois a hug. "I know I haven't been by much. Hospitals and I don't agree with each other right now... after last year..."  
 "I get it," Lois nodded, looking down at Jordan, "I think we can all empathize with that feeling. Clark already called about Mayson. Superman's looking along with the police and Henderson."  
 Lucy visibly sighed. "Oh, God what a morning..." she looked over at Jordan who was smiling at her, amused. "He's getting so

big,” Lucy said, taking Jordan’s hand with her finger.

“Almost eleven months old,” Lois said wistfully. She could feel the tears threatening to overflow.

“I can’t believe we missed so much...”

“I know,” Lois sighed, walking towards the living room with Lucy behind her. “I try not to focus too much on what we lost. It just makes me angry.”

Lucy placed a protective hand on her abdomen, “Yeah,”

“Speaking of lost time...” Lois began, pulling something out from the drawer next to the sofa. “I have some news...”

“You’re pregnant?” Lucy joked. Lois looked at her in shock. “Seriously?” Lucy laughed. “I was just teasing. You’re pregnant... Wow...”

Lois pulled out the latest ultrasound. “We were wanting to tell you sooner but me being in the hospital kind of put a damper on that. I’m about 16 and a half weeks.”

Lucy smiled, “Nineteen weeks,” she said shyly. “Well, they’ll grow up together close in age.”

“Yeah,” Lois nodded. “How are you doing?”

“Okay, I guess...Really tired. No morning sickness or anything.”

“I’m jealous. I don’t get it. I wasn’t sick at all with Jordan. With this one, I’m always sick and I feel like it’s NEVER going to end.”

“You’re paying double,” Lucy winked. “I’m sorry, Lois, but I’m so happy you’re going through this with me. We can go shopping together and...”

Lois laughed as her sister continued to ramble on about baby showers and nurseries. It was good to be able to laugh with Lucy again. She hadn’t been able to do this in what felt like ages.

\*\*\*

“The whole place has been destroyed, Dr. Lane, I’m sorry.” Clarence Drane, one of the scientists Sam had been working with on several projects at S.T.A.R. Labs followed Sam around the lab.

“It’s...it’s fine,” Sam said, surveying the damage. “I just... I have a lot of rebuilding to work on.”

“Yeah, I’m sorry, Dr. Lane.”

Sorry? Sorry didn’t even begin to describe how Sam Lane felt at the moment. His colleague had no idea what underhanded schemes he’d been working on with Intergang and ‘the boss.’ He still had no idea where the clone had escaped to in his absence, but he knew the clone wouldn’t stay hidden for long. What trouble could he be up to?

\*\*\*

Anger.

That was the only emotion he felt or understood as he watched the footage of his father being taken away in handcuffs. Why would they do such a thing? His father had done nothing and yet he was being treated like a criminal. He would make them pay. He would rescue his father from this chaos.

\*\*\*

That evening, Lucy stared at the clock irritably. “This is ridiculous,” She reached for her phone and dialed the familiar number once more.

“Hi, you’ve reached the voicemail of Mayson Drake, Senior Assistant District Attorney of New Troy. I’m unavailable at the moment but if you leave your name, number and a brief detailed message I’ll get back to you as soon as I...”

Lucy hung up the phone again. “Whatever, I’m surrounded by adolescents.” She muttered under her breath as she reached for the file on her desk, labeled ‘Samuel Lane.’

“This ought to be fun,”

\*\*\*

The next day, Lois stared at the coverage of her father’s trial. Every channel was covering the same story, and they had no problem reminding the viewers over and over again of the ordeal Leigh-Anne had gone through during Jesse’s kidnapping. It was

hard to believe her own father could be connected to something like this. She didn’t believe Sam had kidnapped Jesse, but she did believe he had knowledge of the kidnapping that he wasn’t sharing. When she had visited him in lock-up he had seemed reserved, as if he was holding something back.

The sonic boom announcing Clark’s arrival broke her from her reverie and she clicked off the television. “I know; it’s been all over the place,” Clark said as he stepped into the living room.

She smiled up at him, “Hi, you’re home early.”

“Yeah,” He took a seat next to her, “I wanted to check in. Still no word on Mayson. No one seems to be able to find her.”

“Lucy is going to have a conniption fit. Mayson is supposed to be heading up the case against Amanda too. How could she just vanish?”

“I’m not sure. Perry wants us to make this our number one priority. Apparently, everyone in the DA’s office has made calls to everyone trying to call in favors...” Clark added.

Lois shook her head fearfully, “If Mayson’s not there to prosecute Amanda...”

“Then worst-case scenario, Ryan Knox will prosecute,” Clark finished for her. He gently squeezed her shoulder, “They’re not going to drop the ball on this.”

“Ryan Knox is too busy practicing his smile for the camera and brown-nosing the mayor and every other official in this city. He doesn’t know the case. He doesn’t know the background. How is he going to keep her from getting out on bail? How is he going to make sure she never comes near Jordan again? I may not like Mayson that much, but at least she did her homework. I don’t want this case being handled like a publicity stunt waiting to blow up in everyone’s faces and another thing...”

Clark leaned in to kiss her, stopping her rambling that was headed into full Lane babble mode. “Shh,” he whispered, “You’re getting yourself worked up over all these what-ifs.”

“I’m fine,” Lois said sternly, pushing away from him. She stood up from the couch and he followed her to the kitchen where several files lay on the counter tops. She picked up the brochure she had been looking at earlier. She handed it to him.

“What’s this?”

“I thought maybe we could check it out. They seem like a great school on the outside. I figured we could take a tour and take it from there.” Lois explained quietly.

“Sunshine Metropolis?” Clark read the name of the school skeptically. She smiled back at him, “How long’s Jordan been down for his nap?”

She thought for a minute, “About thirty minutes or so,”

A sharp knock at the door interrupted her train of thought.

Clark sighed, raking a hand through his hair, “Always something. I’ll get the door while you get Jordan up. We’ll head over to this Sunshine Metropolis in a few.”

Jordan was already beginning to wake up when she entered his room. He was sitting up in his crib, playing with the plush bunny he always slept with. She picked him up, tickling his tummy for a quick laugh from him. He squealed in delight. After checking his diaper and changing him, she headed back downstairs only to find her father standing in the living room with Clark.

“I know what that judge said, but no one has the right to tell me not to be a part of my grandson’s life. I have every right to see him.” Sam argued.

“You need to leave,” Clark said firmly.

“What’s going on here?” Lois asked.

“Princess,” Sam smiled soothingly, “Perhaps, you can help talk some sense into your husband. All I want is to visit with my grandson. That’s not too much to ask, is it?”

“No, it’s not,” Lois replied coolly, “as long as you’re not ordered to stay away from children. Clark’s right, daddy, you need to leave.”

“No,” Sam shook his head.

“Excuse me?” Lois scoffed.

“This mess has destroyed everything else in my life. I refuse to allow myself to be deprived of being a grandfather.”

“You do realize you’re going to force Lois and I to call the police on you, don’t you?” Clark asked.

“Do what you must,” Sam said sternly. “I just wanted to see my grandson.”

Clark looked pleadingly at Lois. She knew he was looking at her for confirmation. Did she want him to call the police on her dad? No. Was she going to have to do so? It looked that way. Why would he do this? Why would he purposefully violate the conditions of his bail like this?

“Daddy, please don’t make me do this,” Lois pleaded, reaching for the phone.

Sam just stared blankly at the wall.

\*\*\*

“It has come to the attention of this station that our friend, our protector, Superman is nothing but a liar. He has hidden among us, lying to us every day about who he really is.” The footage of the Superman suits being revealed in the secret compartment in the townhome flashed on the screen as Barry continued, “Superman is in reality...”

Perry clicked the stop button once more and rewound the tape for the tenth time. Why would Barry Dunning allow himself to be cut off the air like that with no rebuttal? What was he up to? It had been over a month since the famous newscast had aired. There had been debate after debate on why the station had not finished the story and supposed exclusive. Many believed the story had been proven false and the station wanted to protect itself from a lawsuit, but Perry wasn’t so sure.

He reached for the phone, dialing a number he knew by heart, “Yes, I’ll hold.” He spoke gruffly into the phone as he waited to be connected, “Congressman, ... Yes, it’s Perry White... I know, I know. I just haven’t had the time. Listen, there’s something I need to look into and I need your help...”

\*\*\*

All he could do was stare blankly at the walls around him. He had done the right thing. Inside these walls he was safe; his family was safe. Nigel had made it very clear what would happen if he slipped and told someone who he’d been working for and what they’d been working on. His family would suffer.

He hadn’t been there for his family. He’d left his wife and daughters to follow his dream. His wife had become an alcoholic, raising their two daughters alone. He would stop by occasionally, but his focus had never been on his family. It had always been on his work. He dreamed of becoming a respected scientist of his field, but so far he had not been successful. Once his research in cloning studies was known he would finally have the respect he wanted, but at what cost?

\*\*\*

“You all right?” Clark asked as they reentered the townhome. Lois just gave an inaudible nod and took a seat on the couch. They’d just toured the daycare center. Jordan seemed to like the teachers well enough, but Lois had been quiet and subdued, “So, it looks like Jordan liked the school. The teachers seem nice enough.”

“Yeah,” Lois nodded, brushing back a strand of hair behind her ear.

Clark glanced down at his sleeping son, resting securely in his arms, and smiled. It had been a stressful afternoon and its stresses had definitely taken its toll on Jordan. It wasn’t even six o’clock yet and the baby had already passed out. “I hope he’s not out for the night.”

“Maybe it’ll be good for him. It’s been a hard day for him,” Lois said softly, “For all of us.”

“I know,” Clark said taking a seat next to her. “That wasn’t an easy decision for you to make.”

“Why would he purposefully break his bond agreement like that? Did he want to go back to jail?” Lois asked softly, resting her head against his shoulder. His arm instinctively wrapped around her.

“I don’t know,” Clark whispered. “I can’t make any sense out of any of this.” Jordan lifted his head up in his sleep, moving his head from one side to the other before allowing his little body to fall back against Clark’s shoulder again.

Lois smiled up at him, reaching for Jordan, “I think it’s time for someone to go to bed,” She gave him a peck, “I’ll be right back.”

Clark nodded, watching as Lois carried Jordan upstairs. He headed toward the kitchen and began preparing dinner at super speed to take his mind off the day’s events. Lois was right. It had been a hard day for all of them. Jordan had had to watch his grandfather be taken away in handcuffs. Lois had had to call the police on her own father. It still bothered Clark, the way Sam had just shown up on their doorstep, adamant about seeing Jordan. Sam knew he wasn’t supposed to be around any children until the trial was over. Why would he purposefully do something that would land him back in jail?

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“You don’t have to do that,” Lucy said, taking the bouquet of roses from Dan.

“I don’t have to, but I want to.” Dan smiled at her. “Yellow roses are supposed to be for friendship, red for passion and white for purity.”

“I notice you have one of each, so how am I supposed to tell what your intentions are with the bouquet?” Lucy asked.

“You don’t,” Dan smiled back at her, “That’s what makes things interesting.”

“I really don’t know about this,” Lucy said softly, “I mean, I don’t understand why you would even want to date me. I’m pregnant with another man’s child and...” She stopped when he placed his index finger against her lips.

“None of that matters. Let’s just go out and have a good time and not worry about the reasons you think we shouldn’t.”

Her face softened as she looked up at him, “All right.”

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“You can’t fire me, Amanda,” Bender snapped at her vehemently.

“I didn’t kill that woman. How many times do I have to say it for you to get it? Obviously, you think I’m guilty. I refuse to be represented by someone that doesn’t believe me,” She snapped back.

“Fine!” Bender retorted, grabbing his briefcase and heading to the exit, “I hope you make friends in here, because you won’t be seeing the outside for a very long time!”

“Okay, buh-bye now!” She snapped back as the door slammed shut. Amanda angrily punched the table in front of her. She hated that man. From the time he’d been assigned to her case, she’d felt like he was sabotaging her. She knew she’d been wrong. The counseling she’d been forced into had made her see that, but she wasn’t a murderer and she refused to take the fall for something she didn’t do.

There had to be at least one person who could see that. She glanced up at the night sky through the small window in the corner of the room. The clouds were darkening, showing the signs of rain. A storm was brewing.

\*\*\*

“Help!” Mayson cried as she fought against her restraints. What had that meant?

<<“You don’t remember me...”>>

Who was she supposed to remember? Why had he trapped her in this eerie cage?

\*\*\*

The rain drummed against the window panes, creating a soft

rhythm across the homes of Metropolis. Superman had already patrolled the city, assuring himself that his beloved home would be safe for the night. His attention was needed elsewhere. The storm may have broken in the skies but it was just beginning to brew elsewhere.

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“You live here now?” Detective Wolf asked, walking by Inspector Henderson’s office.

Henderson stared at the photos on the wall in front of him. Dr. Benzen’s photo was on the right. Dr. Kelly’s photo was on the left. “I’m trying to figure out the connection, but for the life of me I can’t.”

“Well, there you go,” Wolf patted him on the shoulder, “Maybe there isn’t one.”

“You don’t find it odd that two famous doctors got murdered less than six months apart from one another?” Henderson asked. “There’s something here,”

“Why don’t you try putting this energy you got trying to figure out how Dr. A is connected to Dr. B and use it in connecting the dots with Mayson Drake’s disappearance?” Wolf asked. “Try and get some sleep, will ya?”

\*\*\*

“I cannot believe you have a pair of headphones on my stomach,” Lois shook her head as she watched her husband continue to talk to their child.

“It’s music. It’s supposed to help stimulate the mind.” Clark shrugged.

“Somehow I don’t think Garth Brooks is what they were talking about,” Lois said, shaking her head.

“Hey, that is classic music.” Clark then whispered down to her stomach, “She just doesn’t like Garth Brooks,”

“You are so weird,” She rolled her eyes as she pulled the headphones off her stomach, “Enough for the night. I’m sure he or she will get plenty of music to listen to over the next few months.”

Clark grinned and began to sing the lyrics teasing her, “I’m shameless, oh honey I don’t have a prayer. Every time I see you standin’ there. I go down upon my knees. And I’m changin’ swore I’d never compromise Oh but you convinced me otherwise I’ll do anything you please.”

Lois laughed, lightly smacking him. “Don’t quit your day job,”

“Oh, really?” he laughed, wrapping his arms around her as he tried to tickle her.

“Clark!” she laughed, twisting out of his grasp, “You are going to pay for that...”

He grinned, floating a few inches out of her grasp, “Am I?”

“That is so not fair,” Lois muttered, throwing a pillow at him as he floated out of her reach once more.

Clark floated back down to her a few inches above the bed “Since when does Lois Lane play fair?” he teased, wrapping his arms around her, resting his hands on her abdomen. She smacked him lightly on the chest. He laughed, leaning his chin on her left shoulder blade as he whispered, “A few more weeks and we’ll find out for sure ... girl or boy,”

She smiled up at him with a forced smile, “I know,”

He saw the hesitation on her face and readjusted himself to tighten his embrace with her, cupping her left cheek as he looked at her, “Are you all right?”

“I’m fine, really,” She stammered, “It’s just...”

“What?” Clark asked concerned. She was stammering, unable to get her thoughts out properly, which was uncharacteristic for Lois.

“Last time we found out what Jordan was... “ She shook her head, “I don’t know. I guess I’m a bit apprehensive after everything.”

“We don’t have to find out if you don’t want to. I can wait.” He offered.

“No, I want to know. I can’t stand surprises. You know that.” He smiled broadly at her comment. That was the understatement of the year. She hated being surprised about anything. “I just have to force myself to adjust. Nothing about this pregnancy has been the same as Jordan’s. I just have to remind myself of that.”

“I know; there are still a whole lot of unknowns. How long a normal pregnancy is for us?”

“Jordan came out all right,” Lois pointed out.

“I know,” He nodded, “He’s strong, just like his mom,”

She smiled broadly up at him. “Not so bad yourself.” She leaned up to kiss him, wrapping her arms around his neck as the kiss deepened. He moaned in pleasure as she pulled him on top of her. His hand cupped her face, tracing the outline of her jaw.

Her hands raked through his hair, fingering his silky hair as they began the exploration of one another. He never got tired of kissing Lois. The feeling of her skin against his was pure bliss.

He moaned into her mouth as she lightly tugged on his bottom lip with her teeth. The tip of her tongue dipped inside his mouth, inviting him for further exploration.

“Clark...” She moaned against him.

No matter what they were going through they always seemed to find solace in one another. They’d lost that for a while, choosing to tear one another apart rather than work together. That mistake would never be made again. His life, his very existence, depended on this beautiful spitfire of a woman who made him weak in the knees every day. He’d fallen head over heels at first glance and had to fight for the love they shared now, the family they had.

She moaned as she felt his tongue trace the outline of her mouth. She moved her hands up to trace his jawline, deepening the kiss. She smiled against his mouth as she slowly slipped her tongue inside his. He moaned in pleasure, tightening his arms around her as he pressed his hard frame against her.

She moved her left leg up and down his leg. She moaned in approval as his hands gently massaged her thigh. “I love you so much.” He whispered against her lips.

She smiled up at him broadly, “I love you too...Oh!” She glanced down at her abdomen.

“What?” He placed a protective hand over her abdomen.

“I don’t know. It felt strange. Not a kick, but...”

“Hiccups?” Clark guessed.

“Yeah,” She smiled up at him. They laid together in silence, holding one another, neither wanting to break the moment. It was the first sign of movement from their unborn child thus far. Kicking and hiccups galore would be soon to follow, but this was the first sign.

“You all right?” Clark asked in concern when a faraway expression crossed over her face, “I think my father’s hiding something,” Lois said abruptly, turning to look at him.

“I know,” He sighed, “I just wish we knew what he was hiding and why he’s so scared.”

\*\*\*

“What happened?” Wolf asked, stepping through the remains of the jail cell wall.

“Superman happened,” The investigating officer said, pointing to the surveillance footage. “He just broke Dr. Lane out of here like we were the ones in the wrong. I don’t know where that guy gets off...”

“Are you sure it was him?” Wolf asked.

“Yep,” the officer nodded, “Red, blue and yellow. Big ‘S’ on the chest. I thought he was supposed to be one of the good guys. I guess not.”

\*\*\*

Lucy tugged at the hem of her suit jacket as she examined her reflection in the mirror. A month ago this suit had hung off of her; now she barely fit into it. She placed a protective hand over the small bump that had formed at her waistline. It was hard to believe

that in a few short months this bump would soon form into a baby.

A baby she would bring into the world to face the mess she'd made of her love life. Her baby's father was suing her for custody before the child had even been born. There had been a time that she had thought of Jimmy Olsen as her best friend. That was also the time that she had believed in true love and happy endings. Lex had brought her back to reality on that notion.

She had no desire to allow herself to be drawn into another man's spell the way she had with Lex, even if that meant she would spend the rest of her life alone. She was just beginning to rebuild her relationship with her sister and that would have to do for now. She couldn't take having her heart broken again.

\*\*\*

It was early morning when Jack opened the door to the archive department at Top Copy. He yawned as he made his way to the desk he'd come to be very familiar with. He'd been holed up in the archive department for the last few weeks. The research he'd been sent to do along with filing away reporters' stories had been tiresome. Along his daily route, he'd also learned from his colleagues that Sarah Dougherty's presence was not as welcome as he'd first thought. She talked a good game but had not revealed her cards yet. Many were resentful of her climb up the ladder without paying her dues. Jack wasn't sure what that meant, but he had an idea.

There was something off about her and Jack was determined to find out what it was. She was very guarded around everyone. The story she had pitched to Barry had brought the ratings up, but she still refused to divulge that last piece of the puzzle in order for him to strike gold with the viewers.

Jack had his suspicions about who Sarah was hinting at as Superman's alias, but he had no proof. He'd recognized the living room the pictures had shown. It was the same living room he'd been caught in a few months ago. An innocent man that had gone out of his way to assure that Jack and his brother were taken care of. Was it fair that his life be turned upside down for a few ratings?

\*\*\*

"You doing all right?" Clark asked, taking a seat on the edge of Lois' desk later that morning.

"I'm fine," Lois nodded, "It's just hard leaving him with anyone..."

"I know," Clark sighed, placing his hand on her shoulders. "He'll be fine."

"I think we should start looking into what Mayson was working on," Lois said, changing the subject. "She's been missing for over twenty-four hours. I'm sure the DA's office is loving this, but we need to find out what cases she was handling. Maybe someone wanted to send a message?"

"Could be," Clark nodded. "I've got a call into Mr. Knox right now,"

"Don't hold your breath," Lois muttered.

"He may surprise you,"

"Hey, Lois, CK, Henderson just called for you. He said it's urgent," Jimmy said handing them a message slip.

Clark nodded, "Thanks, Jimmy,"

"No prob,"

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"No way," Lois said, shaking her head.

"I understand where you're coming from," Henderson began.

"Do you?" Lois asked angrily. "That woman kidnapped my son and ..."

"Lois..." Clark placed a hand on her shoulder for support, a silent message for her to calm down. It still scared him whenever she got upset. The close call she'd had ...

Lois took a couple of shallow breaths before continuing, "She made everyone think he was dead. Now she wants us to HELP her?"

"What exactly are we supposed to be able to do?" Clark inquired. "We're not exactly her biggest fans. If she is being railroaded..."

"I don't buy it," Lois cut him off. "All the hiding and manipulating she did. I wouldn't put murder past her. It wouldn't surprise me if she was responsible for Dr. Benzen's murder."

"That's still under investigation," Henderson said dryly.

"I'm sure it is, but what business is that of ours? Last I checked, that was your job. She wants to cry about being railroaded, you can investigate," Lois sniped.

"She asked for you specifically," Henderson said before cocking an eyebrow at her, "And last I checked it was your job to get the exclusives. Don't you think this falls under both our jobs if she's innocent?"

\*\*\*

"You can't keep me here!" Mayson yelled at her captor. "People are looking for me,"

"Don't worry, you'll soon be moved to a more cushioned cell," Nigel snapped back.

"What do you want from me?" she cried.

"Leverage," Nigel said coolly.

\*\*\*

"What a waste of our time," Lois muttered as they stepped into the Daily Planet lobby. "I don't care what Henderson says. We are not getting sucked into that woman's lies."

Clark silently nodded as he pressed the call button for the elevator, "It's probably for the best."

Lois turned to look at him, "What?"

"Nothing," Clark shrugged, feigning ignorance.

"You think we should take the case," Lois guessed, reading him.

"I didn't say that."

"But you're thinking it," Lois glared at him as they stepped into the elevator. "I don't care. I am not doing anything to help that woman."

"Even if it turns out she's being charged with a crime she didn't commit?" Clark pressed.

Lois closed her eyes a moment, pinching the bridge of her nose as she tried to gather her thoughts.

"I've never seen you turn down a story before. Henderson is practically spoon feeding it to you," Clark said.

"You're not going to let this go, are you?" Lois asked.

"I think we should look into it; make sure the right person is being charged," Clark edged cautiously.

"Fine, but I refuse to work this story unbiased," Lois said as the bell rang announcing their arrival to the newsroom floor.

\*\*\*

Lucy stared out the window at the morning sky as Ryan Knox paced in front of her shouting out the District Attorney's plan of action on Mayson's disappearance. She never realized how gray the sky looked in the morning. Was it because they were in the city?

Her friend was missing. Mayson was the only one she'd been able to open up to about her fears regarding the pregnancy. Her mother didn't understand; her father was Dr. Sam Lane, a famous scientist with no intentions of changing himself for family. He wasn't exactly the ideal grandfather. She understood now why Lois had waited so long to tell their parents about Jordan.

*I feel it everyday it's all the same*

*It brings me down but I'm the one to blame*

*I've tried everything to get away*

*So here I go again*

*Chasing you down again*

*Why do I do this?*

Her relationship with Lois was just now getting back to where it had been. Their relationship had been strained ever since Lucy had woken up after the attack on the Planet. Seeing Lois made her

remember all the mistakes with Lex, so Lucy had gone out of her way to avoid her sister. Then there was the whole not-accepting-her-son's-death thing that had built what seemed like an immovable wall between them. She had enjoyed the time she'd spent with Lois the other day. They'd laughed like they hadn't in ages. There was still an awkwardness between them but a lot of that had to do with the lawsuit Jimmy had filed. Lucy wasn't sure whose side Lois was on regarding the custody suit and she didn't want to put her sister in a position to have to choose so avoidance was the best solution. It just hurt not being able to share everything with Lois the way she used to.

*Over and over, over and over*

*I fall for you*

*Over and over, over and over*

*I try not to*

*It feels like everyday stays the same*

*It's dragging me down and I can't pull away*

*So here I go again*

*Chasing you down again*

*Why do I do this?*

The radio played a soft song in the background. Lucy smiled at the irony. Had Mayson been there she would have been shouting at whoever had their radio on in the middle of a meeting. The plan was to pretend like they were doing everything to find Mayson and keep the press out of everything. How exactly was that supposed to happen?

*Over and over, over and over*

*I fall for you*

*Over and over, over and over*

*I try not to*

*Over and over, over and over*

*You make me fall for you*

*Over and over, over and over*

*You don't even try*

"Mr. Knox, what are we supposed to do about those reporters from the Planet that keep calling?" Knox's secretary asked.

Lucy sighed inaudibly. She already knew who was calling about Mayson's disappearance.

*So many thoughts that I can't get out of my head*

*I try to live without you, every time I do I feel dead*

*I know what's best for me*

*But I want you instead*

*I'll keep on wasting all my time*

"Nothing," Knox replied hastily. "They'll give up eventually. Remember, no press. Whoever kidnapped Mayson is obviously looking for free publicity. That's the last thing we're going to give them."

"Yeah, right," Lucy thought to herself. Little did Knox know she'd already gone to the press...her sister anyway. He didn't know what he was doing and everyone in the room knew it. Was Lucy really going to let her friend's fate fall in his hands?

*Over and over, over and over*

*I fall for you*

*Over and over, over and over*

*I try not to*

*Over and over, over and over*

*You make me fall for you*

*Over and over, over and over*

*You don't even try to*

Someone really needed to turn that radio off.

\*\*\*

"I told you Knox wasn't going to call you back," Lois remarked smugly as they sifted through several files in the Daily Planet conference room.

"I still have faith," Clark shrugged. "I like to give people the benefit of the doubt."

"He's too busy worry about his election year. He's not going

to want any bad press," Lois retorted, "Which by the way, we are known for giving."

"Only the criminals."

"Exactly," Lois winked, "He doesn't want his dirty laundry exposed."

Clark scanned the next file in front of him at super speed. "I wish we knew what we were looking for."

"Anything that Mayson's worked on in the last few months that could have gotten her kidnapped," Lois said, reaching for another file.

"What about this?" Clark pointed to the file on Dr. Benzen and handed it to her, "Henderson said he doesn't think the case is what it seems."

Lois rolled her eyes, "I'm not doing anything to help that woman."

"So you've said repeatedly," Clark sighed, raking a hand through his hair. "Isn't it possible that Amanda Marshall is not guilty of every crime she's been accused of?" Clark pressed. "And maybe, just maybe, the real killer is still out there?"

"Maybe, but highly unlikely," Lois retorted. "If Mayson was investigating a murder like this she would have had someone working with her."

"What makes you say that?" Clark asked.

"It's a dangerous case. She's smart; she wouldn't put herself in danger like that."

"Huh, kind of like you wouldn't put yourself in danger for a story? No matter how dangerous?"

Lois met his gaze and glared at him. "Point taken, but that doesn't mean Mayson would do what I do."

"You never know. Maybe you don't know her as well as you think," Clark pointed out.

"Hey, guys, I think I've got something for you," Jimmy said, entering the conference room with a large file in hand.

"Great, more files," Lois grumbled.

"What is it, Jimmy?" Clark asked.

"ACL Industries," Jimmy said simply, laying the file on the table in front of them.

"What about them?" Lois asked.

"It's a dummy company all right," Jimmy said with a broad smile, "but not for who you'd think. Did you know Luthor was married?"

"What???" Both of their heads shot up in unison.

"Arianna Carlin. They divorced a few years back, but she was set up with a pretty handsome annuity package. More recently, ACL Industries has been busy buying up every company Luthor ever owned, making it another Lex Corp."

"Are you saying Lex's ex-wife is out there picking up where Lex left off?" Lois asked.

"I've still got some calls out there to try and find out more on his ex, but that's what it looks like right now," Jimmy said.

A commotion in the newsroom caught their attention and the trio headed out into the bullpen to find out what was going on, "Benson, I want you downtown with a cameraman in tow. Find out what the Mayor plans to do about the situation. Schwartz, I want you on the fire department. What's the take on a situation like this? How do they plan on keeping the prisoners incarcerated and not running amuck in the city..."

Perry continued shouting out orders as Lois and Clark looked up at the television monitors to find the answer to their questions. Superman stood in front of the city jail as it continued to burn in flames behind him. Sam Lane stood in the background, watching the scene, "Oh, my God..."

Lois looked to her right where Clark had been seconds ago; only to find an empty space, "Be careful," She whispered in a low inaudible whisper she knew only he could hear.

\*\*\*

Letter by letter she taped the anonymous message to the sheet

of paper in front of her. Her knowledge of Superman's identity would prove an advantage. Right now she needed to remind him of who had the upper hand so as to remain safe. Intergang was still intact, but its leadership had changed and she needed protection. Protection would only come from money and power, neither of which she had right now.

\*\*\*

The air was filled with smoke. Alarms buzzed in the background as people screamed for help. Clark steadied himself as he approached the center of the chaos. The center of the chaos was a duplicate copy of himself, parading around in his Superman suit. Clark had no idea what to expect.

\*\*\*

"I'm sorry, Ms. Marshall, but I haven't heard anything back from the Kents," Henderson replied, watching Amanda's face fall through the double pane glass.

"I didn't kill her," Amanda cried, "I was angry and hurt, but I didn't kill her. I don't know how to be that... cold."

"Cold? You don't know how to be cold?" Henderson asked, skeptically.

"I know. I know I did something horrible."

"Your arraignment is..."

A blast filled the room, knocking them to the ground, unconscious.

\*\*\*

"Oh, my God." Lois held her hand over her mouth, fighting the tears that were threatening to overtake her. It was surreal to watch the scene unfold. Two Supermen fighting each other in the middle of the streets. She couldn't keep track which one was hers and which one was...

She didn't know what to call the other one.

They continued to move at super-speed across the screen, neither one of them backing down. Clark was invincible, but could he be invulnerable to his own strength? His heat vision? Could this imposter hurt him?

\*\*\*

Everything hurt. Clark threw another punch at his opponent, wincing as he felt the hard chiseled steel of his muscle meet his fist. This was nothing like the fight he'd had several months back with the clone that had come to Metropolis.

This clone was just as strong as him.

He wasn't dying.

He was stronger.

\*\*\*

Lois subconsciously placed a hand over her abdomen, gently stroking the tiny bump that had begun to form. She had the blinds in the conference room drawn as she pored over the files in front of her. She refused to allow herself to be sucked into the what-ifs. Clark was going to be fine. He always was. He was Superman.

She was still on restricted duties and Perry refused to budge on any of the conditions. She'd made several attempts to try and leave to find out more information about what was going on downtown, but Perry had stonewalled her on every attempt. Even Jimmy hadn't been very forthcoming. She had resigned herself to barricading herself in the conference room and researching anything and everything she could get her hands on that might explain the Superman double.

\*\*\*

"Everyone in positions?"

Clark's super hearing picked up on the voice of an officer a few feet away. They were surrounded by a SWAT team. The perimeter had been blocked off. He shook his head in disgust. He'd allowed himself to become a part of the destruction, "Don't you see what you're doing?"

"I'm standing up for what's right! You are an imposter, getting in my way!"

Clark winced as he found himself thrown through another

window. It was a good thing he was invulnerable. "Imposter...? Ohhh!" He fell back to the ground when he felt a sharp pain in his shoulder. He looked to the right in surprise to find his shoulder bleeding and agreen and red glow coming from the wound.

The Superman double looked around nervously as the SWAT team moved in. "This isn't over." With that he was gone.

"Far from it," Clark muttered as he struggled to stand up.

\*\*\*

Everything hurt.

The light was too bright. The unfamiliar sounds in the room irritated him. Someone was in the room with him. He couldn't place the sound. He really didn't want to wake up and face the pain, but curiosity soon won him over. Bill Henderson slowly opened his eyes to look around. He was surprised to find ADA Lucy Lane sitting in a chair on the other side of the room, patiently waiting.

"What the hell?" He grumbled, carefully moving his arms to readjust himself in the hospital bed.

"You're at Metropolis General," Lucy explained softly.

"I figured that," Henderson grumbled, lifting up his arm with the hospital bracelet attached.

"Do you remember what happened?" Lucy asked.

"I was in the visiting room, preparing to take Amanda Marshall to her arraignment," Henderson grumbled.

"And?"

"I got nothing else," He shrugged. "Listen, can you do this later? I need some pain killers right now and thinking and remembering is the last thing on my priority list,"

"Fine," Lucy shrugged, "You obviously don't care,"

He rolled his eyes irritably, "I swear, between you and your sister..." He muttered under his breath, "What? What don't I care about?"

"Your prisoner escaped,"

"What?"

\*\*\*

It had been an exhausting day. Lois rested her head against the rocking chair, holding Jordan close to her chest as she rubbed his back. She'd been covering for Clark all afternoon in between doing background information on everyone's coverage on the fight in downtown. Criminals had escaped during the altercation. After the double had disappeared Superman had been busy trying to find the escaped criminals and return them to police custody.

There was still no word on everyone who had escaped. Lois hadn't received confirmation, but she suspected Amanda Marshall was on that list. Her arms instinctively tightened around Jordan. His head turned from one side to the other, readjusting himself against her. He held a strand of her hair tightly in his fist.

Henderson would have called them by now. Lucy would have called them. No one had called.

It had been an exhausting day. She hadn't seen Clark since this morning and her anxiety was growing with every minute that passed by. Nothing was making sense. The only explanation she'd been able to find to explain the Superman double was a clone, just like before. Unlike before, though, Dr. Leek was not around, testing frogs for his experiments. One scientist was, however, linked to clone research. He was a respected scientist in the community; and he was Lois's father.

\*\*\*

Lucy heaved a sigh of relief when she closed the door to Henderson's room. The hundreds of doubts that had raced through her mind for the past few hours had now been squashed. Bill Henderson had not betrayed her. He had not helped Amanda escape. She couldn't bear it if she'd found yet another friend she couldn't rely on.

"Lucy?"

She turned to her right and saw Jimmy standing in the hallway. He looked like he'd been through hell. His clothes were

wrinkled; he looked like he hadn't gotten a decent night's sleep for quite some time, and his hair was unkempt.

She hesitated a moment, "Hi, Jimmy,"

"How is he?"

She shook her head, "He had a building fall on him. He's in pain," she shrugged.

"Yeah," He nodded, "I hope he's going to be all right."

"I'm sure he'll be fine, Jimmy,"

There was a long pause of silence between them for a moment, "How are you?" Jimmy asked.

"Fine," She nodded, "I'm fine. I'm busy. I'm keeping very very busy, but I'm fine."

Jimmy nodded, "That's good,"

"Good,"

"Well, I guess I should..." He pointed to the door she was standing in front of.

She nodded, "Oh, sorry,"

"Yeah," He nodded as he opened the door, "Take care of yourself, Luce."

\*\*\*

Clark winced in pain as he hedged his way inside the townhome. It would probably have been easier to fly through the window, but his shoulder was in extreme pain and he'd already pushed himself to the limit most of the day.

He picked up Lois and Jordan's heartbeats in the living room. She was probably furious with him for not coming back after the fight. He'd taken longer at Dr. Klein's than he anticipated. The doctor had begun testing the Kryptonite that had been lodged inside Clark's shoulder. Klein called it 'synthetic' Kryptonite. Apparently, it was the military's weapon against Superman if he ever got out of control.

He grimaced as he looked down at the bruise on his shoulder. He knew the synthetic Kryptonite definitely worked on him, but would it work on the double?

Lois was lying on the couch with Jordan resting on her chest. They were both asleep. Clark smiled wistfully at the two of them. It looked like he was in the clear of Mad Dog Lane's rage for the time being anyway.

He knelt down next to them, brushing a strand of hair out of his wife's face. He wanted to carry them upstairs to bed where they'd be more comfortable, but he didn't want to risk waking them up. He lifted her head up and took a seat at the end of the couch, allowing her head to rest on his lap. He noticed a stack of folders on the floor. He reached down to pick them up and put them on the coffee table. A manila envelope fell out onto the floor. It was sealed with no return address. He looked at it curiously. It was addressed to himself and Lois with no clue of the sender.

Jordan made a tiny grunt in his sleep. He lifted his head up in the air. For a moment Clark thought all was over and Jordan would wake up, but the baby's head fell back down to his mother's chest and a soft snore could faintly be heard.

Clark shook his head at his son's antics. Even in his sleep, he was a trouble maker, just like his mother. He placed a hand on Jordan's back, feeling the soft rhythm of his breathing. Clark sighed in relief. It didn't matter how many days or weeks or months he listened to Jordan breathing next to him; he would always have the anxiety in the back of his mind that something was going to happen to Jordan if he didn't check on him.

Would he be like this with the new baby?

Clark knew he was over-protective. Lois had warned him about being too over-protective, but he couldn't help it. His family had nearly been torn apart and it was only by a miracle that he'd been able to piece it back together.

He turned his attention back to the envelope in his hands.

"What are you doing?" Lois softly whispered, looking up at him.

"Nothing," He whispered, looking down at Lois, who had

woken up sometime during his daydreaming. "Just thinking,"

She sat up, holding Jordan close. "It's been a long day. Are you all right?"

Clark nodded, pointing to his injured shoulder, "Just bruised, but I'll be fine in a day or so."

"Bruised?" Lois asked concerned, gently stroking the shoulder he'd pointed at.

"Yeah, apparently 'synthetic' Kryptonite is the military's new weapon of choice," he explained, rubbing his shoulder as he spoke.

"Synthetic Kryptonite? What is that?"

"Something very very painful," Clark explained. "I don't know. Dr. Klein is going to run some tests and let us know. How are you?" He asked cautiously.

"Fine," She shrugged. "It's just been a long day." She rested her head against his chest.

"Where did you get this?" Clark asked, showing her the envelope.

She shrugged. "I don't know. It must have come in with the rest of the mail."

Clark ripped the seal to the envelope and a single 8x10 paper fell out. "I don't think so," He said, showing her the paper.

"What in the world?" She shot upright, grabbing the paper from him to read more closely.

"I know who you are." Clark read.

"You think it's that Top Copy sleaze, Dunning, again?" Lois asked apprehensively. "He did that news report and..."

"I don't know. This doesn't seem like his style."

"Then whose?" Lois snapped in a harsh whisper. "I'm getting a little sick and tired of the games being played."

\*\*\*

"Is there a reason why you called me out of my warm home at ten o'clock at night?" Jimmy asked as he took a seat across from Jack at the local coffee shop.

"I think I've run across something I shouldn't have," Jack said, handing Jimmy a file.

"You woke me up out of a dead sleep for a file you could have given me tomorrow?" Jimmy asked skeptically.

"This is important. I'm giving you a copy of this. I have a copy at my place. I want you to make more and hide them. This is important,"

"How important?" Jimmy flipped through the file and looked up at Jack, "Holy... Are you insane?"

"Nope, just lucky." Jack flashed him a broad smile.

"You need to go to the police."

"Oh, yeah, that's going to do me a lot of good with what I've got. I'm going to get to the bottom of this. I just need to make sure you've got my back. If anything happens..."

"Last time I had your back we ended up in a hostage situation," Jimmy pointed out.

"Hey, we got out of it just fine." Jack pointed out.

\*\*\*

"Where is she?" Nigel fumed, slamming his fists against the glowing bars.

The missing ADA was no longer anywhere in sight. What had happened? Where had she gone? Someone had been here. The door was unlocked.

How?

\*\*\*

No return address. No handwriting to compare. Even the paper and envelope were generic. There was nothing they had to go on in finding the person behind the veiled threats that had been sent their way.

Clark stared at the night sky through the ceiling, lost in thought. Lois had fallen back asleep after they'd put Jordan to bed. She hadn't said much the rest of the night. He knew the letter weighed heavily on her mind as well. He still didn't understand

how someone could have found out his secret identity.

He had worked so hard to keep Superman separate from his and Lois' lives. All the work he'd done to protect his family would be a waste if this came public. He wasn't even sure if the mysterious sender had intentions of revealing his secret or if they were just entertaining themselves with torturing him.

<<'I know who you are.'>>

That didn't give him a lot to go on.

\*\*\*

Mayson beat on the door of the nearest store she could find. She'd escaped. She'd finally escaped the hell hole she'd been trapped in. She had no idea how long she'd been there. If that woman hadn't come by and unlocked her cell there was no telling how long she would have been in there.

The door opened. "Can I help you?"

"Mr. Lane," Mayson sighed in relief, "Please, the green...that man...I"

"Whoa there. Slow down," He opened the door and gestured for her to enter. "Take a deep breath. Here, I'll get you something to drink. You don't look so good, Ms. Drake."

She nodded, taking a seat at the closest chair available, "Thank you," She said hoarsely when he handed her the glass of water.

"Why don't you start from the beginning?" Mike prompted.

"I...A man. I couldn't... Locked me inside." Her voice was cracking as she spoke. It was harder and harder to talk. She had been screaming for help over and over with no answer. She had no idea how this mysterious woman had found her but she was grateful to her.

"Okay, okay," he placed a hand on her shoulder. "Sounds like you've been through quite an ordeal. Why don't I call the police and..."

"No," She shook her head adamantly, "No one can know about this."

"But..."

"Please, let me take care of this my way, Mr. Lane." Mayson pleaded. Mike saw the fear in her eyes. Something had happened that she hadn't said and he wasn't one to force anyone to do anything they weren't comfortable in doing.

\*\*\*

A cool breeze brushed against her face, awakening Lois Lane from her midnight slumber. She looked around the room, reaching out for the warmth of her husband's arms only to find an empty space next to her. Startled by the coolness of the sheets she sat up and looked around the room. She spotted the digital clock next to the bed that read '4:45.'

It had been awhile since he'd been called away in the middle of the night. The sheets weren't even warm, so he had to have been gone for a while now. She reached for the baby monitor on the nightstand and turned up the volume a notch. She let out the breath she hadn't known she was holding when she heard Jordan's soft breathing on the other side of the monitor.

She pulled the comforter tightly around herself and allowed herself to drift back off to sleep. Things were slowly beginning to go back to normal. Whatever normal was for her and Clark.

\*\*\*

Smallville always had a calming effect on Clark whether he was just flying over it or visiting his hometown. Even in the dusk of dawn, he could feel the weight of his troubles slowly dissipate as he came in for a landing in the field behind his parents' farmhouse.

He held the old suitcase he'd traveled to Metropolis with firmly in his hands as he approached his old childhood tree house. He'd nicknamed it 'Fortress of Solitude' after spending so much time alone up there contemplating his place in the world and trying to understand why he was so different from those around him. It had taken him years to come to grips with his abilities and

find comfort in them to the point of using them to help others.

Superman had been formed to help; now his existence was threatening everything Clark held dear. The safety of his family depended upon Superman remaining separate from Clark and Lois. This mysterious threat of exposing him hung over his head, leaving him powerless to stop it. There was one thing he could do to protect his family: he would just have to learn to live without Superman in his life.

\*\*\*

He quietly closed the window behind him, locking it from the inside. He quickly changed into a t-shirt and sleeping shorts. He turned to look for Lois only to find an empty room. His super hearing picked up her heartbeat in the other room. From the sound of it, she was still asleep. He crossed the bedroom and cautiously entered his son's bedroom. He smiled at his sleeping wife. She lay in the spare bed they'd put in the room when they'd been planning for all-nighters with Jordan.

Jordan was fast asleep in his crib and Lois the same in the bed next to him. Clark knelt down next to her, softly brushing a strand of hair out of her face. He laid his hand over her right hand that rested on the small bump of her abdomen. He leaned over to plant a kiss on her cheek. The corners of her mouth twitched into a crooked smile. He had to suppress a laugh so as not to wake Jordan.

He laid in the bed next to her, holding her against him as he listened to the soft heartbeats of his wife, his son, and his unborn child. He'd dreamed of this for so long, having a family. It would be worth it to protect them. Protecting them was worth anything.

\*\*\*

Jimmy stared up at the screen as the newscaster read off the early morning reports on all the criminals that had remained on the loose. The city was officially on lock down. All citizens had been given a nine o'clock curfew for public safety. He couldn't help but laugh at the idea of having a curfew. He hadn't had a curfew since high school.

"Crazy..." He muttered to no one in particular.

"You can say that again." Perry grumbled, "What kind of nonsense is this? Curfews? I want to know what in the Sam Hill the mayor is doing about recapturing these criminals."

"I don't know, Chief," Jimmy said, shrugging.

Perry glared at him, "I wonder if there was a way we could find out. Maybe there is something... Some sort or resource that could tell us what is going on in Metropolis, in the world..." Perry's eyebrows narrowed even more as he spoke. The sarcasm in his voice was just a hint of how irritated he was with Jimmy at the moment.

"I guess I should probably..." Jimmy motioned to his computer.

"Good idea," Perry nodded.

Jimmy looked across the newsroom at the sporadic empty desks around him. "Where is everyone?"

"Johnson and Ferrah are at City Hall. Steinhall is at the Police Station and..."

"What about Lois and CK? They're usually in by now," Jimmy noted.

"I told them to take the day off," Perry said gruffly. "With that kidnapper on the loose, I don't want them trying to stress about that while they're at work."

Jimmy laughed, "Somehow I doubt they're going to go a whole day without working."

"And that's how I get my best stories out of them too," Perry said, letting out a quiet yodel as he headed back to his office.

\*\*\*

Lois hung up the phone, shaking her head. "That was Lucy."

"How's she doing?" Clark asked, dabbing at the cereal that had dribbled out of the side of Jordan's mouth.

"She said she got a call from Mayson this morning."

“Mayson?”

“Yeah, and get this. She’s claiming it was just a misunderstanding. She was just visiting friends.”

“Yeah, right,” Clark muttered. “Who’s she trying to cover for?”

“Why would she try to cover this up?” Lois asked.

“Scared, probably,” Clark shrugged, pulling Jordan out of his high chair.

“Why? She’s a prosecutor. She puts kidnapers, drug dealers, and murderers away all the time. What could possibly intimidate her? She was trying to go after Superman not too long ago.”

“Don’t remind me,” Clark shook his head at the memory of his dealings with Mayson in the beginning. She’d been convinced Superman was trouble and had done everything in her power to prove it.

“Ama, ma, ma…” Jordan gurgled, reaching out for Lois.

Clark smiled as Lois picked him up, “We could always check with Mayson ourselves, but I don’t think bugging her the day she got home is the best approach.”

“Fine,” Lois shrugged, “We’ll go visit her tomorrow,” She leaned down to kiss Jordan on the cheek, “Isn’t that right? We’ll figure out what Mayson’s hiding? Won’t we?”

“Ah.”

\*\*\*

The day at the Planet had been fairly uneventful. Jimmy had been holed up in the archives, researching background information for all of the reporters’ stories. He craved for the excitement of being a real reporter and chasing down leads, but his talents had yet to be noticed by Perry White. He’d been able to work on some stories as a reporter but nothing exciting like Lois and Clark. It was the occasional puff pieces and fluff that nobody considered real news. Lois and Clark occasionally let him tag along during their investigations. Lois said he was like a brother to her. He thought of her and Clark as family as well. That’s why it was so hard to sit on information that they needed to know. If his family wasn’t what they seemed, he’d want to know, good, bad or ugly.

He sighed, raking a hand through his hair as he took another sip of his coffee. Jack tapped him on the forehead with a pencil, “You all right?”

Jimmy shook his head, “This doesn’t feel right. Lying to everyone like this.”

“We’re not lying,” Jack argued.

“Omission is lying,” Jimmy argued.

“If this gets out before I can figure out everything that’s going on a lot of people could get hurt.”

“They’ll get hurt if they know I knew about this beforehand and didn’t tell them.”

“They’ll understand,” Jack reassured. “They may be mad at first, but in the end, they’ll understand.”

“That’s still hard to believe,” Jimmy said, “I can’t believe Lois’ father is working for Intergang.”

“You think you know people, but appearances can be deceiving. That’s why I want to check this out and make sure this is the real deal before we start blowing the whistle on all of this.”

“How do you know Top Copy isn’t just fabricating stuff to make ratings?” Jimmy asked. “They run with tabloid articles all the time.”

“I don’t,” Jack shrugged, taking a sip of his own coffee. His gaze drifted to the television monitor on the wall. Images of the escaped criminals covered the screen as the newscaster pleaded the police’s case to help catch them.

“You know, it’s kind of weird,” Jimmy noted.

“What is?” Jack asked.

“All these criminals have escaped and have been causing havoc throughout Metropolis and Superman hasn’t shown up once to help. Kind of out of character for him,” Jimmy pointed out.

“Maybe he’s been busy,” Jack shrugged.

\*\*\*

The footage on the television was the same over and over all day. Lois shook her head as she watched the faces of the wanted criminals cross the screen once more. Amanda Marshall had been one of the many escaped criminals that had taken advantage of Clark’s altercation with the Superman double. Both she and Clark thought the Superman double was more likely another clone. They had spent most of the afternoon researching cloning techniques to try and find who might be behind it, but nothing had really come to them yet. The only new name that came up in their search for scientists studying cloning was her father.

“You okay?” Clark asked, whispering in her ear as he nudged her slightly.

She turned to look up at him, “Yeah, I’m fine. This is just…” She shook her head, “Kind of hard to watch.”

“I know,” Clark nodded, pulling her against him.

She rested her hand on his upper thigh, leaning her back against his solid chest. “I guess you haven’t been able to find any sign of these guys?” She asked.

He shook his head, “No, nothing.”

“There hasn’t been anything on that Superman double either,” She commented, leaning her head back against him.

“I know. I’ve got Jimmy running through all of S.T.A.R. Labs reports trying to find anything he can about cloning studies.”

“So, we’re agreed. You think it’s another clone too?” She asked, looking back at him as she turned in his arms to face him.

He nodded, reaching over to click the remote to the television, turning it off. “Enough of that,” He muttered, “I don’t think it’s possible to explain him having all of my powers any other way. He was just as powerful as me; so it looks like whoever was doing cloning experiments has perfected the technique from Dr. Leek’s time.”

“But how would they get your DNA?” Lois asked.

Clark shrugged, “I don’t know. I haven’t been donating any hair to any auctions lately.”

Lois shook her head, “What a mess.”

“You all right?” Clark asked, resting his hand over her rounded abdomen.

“Yeah, I am just frustrated.” Lois sighed. “Are you sure you want to turn that off? There might be an update…”

“Same people on the run for the last four hours. Nothing’s changed,” Clark shook his head in aggravation. He tightened his arms around her, pulling her closer to him. “I can think of so many other things I could be doing rather than listen to that same news report over and over again.” He leaned over to place a kiss against her collarbone, holding her close to him.

She laughed, leaning her head back against him, “I think I felt the baby move.” She whispered in awe, resting her hands over his.

Clark gently moved his hand beneath her knit top, resting his palm against her rounded abdomen. A sharp poke brushed against his palm and he smiled. “Feels kind of like an elbow,” He placed another kiss on her collarbone, marveling at the feel of their unborn child moving beneath his wife’s skin. “That was definitely a foot.”

Lois laughed as he whispered a trail of feather light kisses along her neckline, “Dancing?”

Clark laughed, lifting his head up a moment as he tightened his arms around her, tightening the embrace. “Maybe,” He whispered, placing another kiss against her collarbone. “I think it has more to do with your heart rate picking up.” He felt another kick against his palm then moved his other hand to her chest so he could feel her heart beat. He then placed another kiss against her collarbone once more. Without fail, the baby kicked again. “See?”

\*\*\*

Lucy shook her head as she read the morning edition of the Daily Planet. The news of Mayson’s reappearance had been everywhere that morning. Mayson had fed the line that she’d been

with a friend and hadn't wanted to be bothered, but Lucy knew better. Her mind was elsewhere and she jumped every time she heard a loud noise. Those weren't characteristics of someone that had been relaxing for a few days with friends. Something had happened to her and she refused to talk about it, let alone admit it.

Lucy noticed a bouquet of roses sitting on her desk. Curious, she picked up the card inside the bouquet and read it, "Looking forward to reconnecting."

It wasn't signed. "That's odd," she muttered.

\*\*\*

James Turner glared at the reports in front of him angrily. Everything he'd ever owned. Everything he'd ever worked on had been systematically taken from him by this ACL Industries. He wasn't sure who was behind this underhanded deceit but they would pay. Lex Luthor had been a name feared throughout Metropolis, but now that he was starting over as James Turner it seemed he would have to teach the city to respect him again.

\*\*\*

Jimmy stared at the file in front of him, shaking his head. He had been over it and over it. All the evidence pointed to Sam Lane as the doctor that had been working on the 'Subject A.' The notes described 'Subject A' as a super powered prototype. It was no coincidence that there was a Superman double flying around Metropolis.

After he'd been given Jack's file on a possible connection between Sam and Intergang, Jimmy had taken the liberty of breaking into Sam Lane's office at S.T.A.R. Labs and make copies of his files to see if there was any further proof to link Sam to Intergang. Jimmy was hoping he wouldn't find anything, but this file wasn't exactly raising his hopes. No one knew what the Superman clone wanted or why he was here.

"Jimmy!" Perry bellowed across the newsroom. Jimmy jumped up and headed for the Chief's office.

\*\*\*

Dr. Lee scanned through the chart in her hands before looking up at Lois and Clark who waited patiently for a response from her, "Let's see," She read the chart, "It looks like your blood pressure has improved tremendously. Whatever stressors in your life caused your blackouts seem to have left. Have you been feeling the baby move?"

Lois smiled up at Dr. Lee. "It just started to become noticeable this week."

"Excellent." She made a note in Lois' chart. "Well, it looks like you're about eighteen weeks along." She commented as she poured. "If we are able to see what the baby is, do you want to know the sex of the baby?"

"Yes," Lois responded enthusiastically before Clark could even open his mouth to respond. He glanced down at Lois who smiled up at him.

"Mmmm hmm. Okay, why don't you lie back and lift up your gown." Dr. Lee instructed, "We're going to do an ultrasound..." She squeezed a gel onto Lois' abdomen eliciting a squeal of surprise from her patient. "Sorry. This stuff is a bit cold."

"No kidding," Lois muttered.

"Okay, let's see here." The doctor pulled out a small round piece that was attached to the ultrasound machine and placed it on Lois' abdomen. Immediately a quick thumping could be heard throughout the room.

"Sounds like a strong heartbeat," Dr. Lee commented.

"It's okay, right?" Lois asked nervously.

"Yes," Dr. Lee reassured her.

"Everything looks good. Your heart rate and the baby's heart rate seem to remain at an even level..."

"What about the baby's sex?" Lois asked.

Dr. Lee laughed, "Yes, let's see here." She glanced at the computer next to the bed and began clicking at the screen. They looked at the screen in silence for a moment.

Lois looked up at Clark who had been quiet most of the visit. Could he see? Did he know what it was? The anticipation was killing her.

The doctor turned to the printer and removed a roll of black and white pictures. "Here are your baby pictures."

"Well? What is it?" Lois asked impatiently.

"Congratulations, from the looks of things you two are the proud parents of a baby girl." Dr. Lee beamed. She handed Lois a moist towel, "You can use this to clean up." She then left Lois and Clark alone to look at their sonogram pictures and allow the news to sink in.

\*\*\*

"Lex Corp has found new life. The only missing piece seems to be the Daily Planet." Arianna commented as she looked at the map of Metropolis' companies.

"Is the Daily Planet a necessary asset? Lex didn't obtain it until the very end." Mindy reasoned.

"Everything is necessary!" Arianna hissed angrily. "Everything." She whispered quietly. She shook herself from her reverie, "Everything is necessary in the world of Lex Luthor, which is why we will make sure we are one step ahead of him. Do I make myself clear?"

Mindy nodded, slightly intimidated by the underlying rage that burrowed beneath Arianna's calm exterior, "Completely." She then changed the subject, "So what's the plan for getting the Daily Planet?"

\*\*\*

Lois pressed the call button to the elevator, impatiently tapping her foot against the tile floor. "This elevator takes so long."

"I thought that was a good thing sometimes," Clark teased.

Lois shot him a mock glare, "You have a dirty mind."

The elevator dinged, announcing the arrival of the elevator car. Clark leaned over to whisper, "You're the one who brought it up." The door opened and Lois and Clark entered the elevator car in silence as they waited for the elevator doors to close before resuming their conversation.

"I was making an observation," she shot back.

"So was I," Clark said, pushing her back against the corner of the elevator.

"You wouldn't," Lois teased, her eyes gleaming with mischief. "We have work to do and..." She was cut off by Clark's lips capturing hers.

"So?" He murmured against her lips, wrapping his arms around her waist, lightly massaging her rounded abdomen, "A girl."

She smiled up at him, "I know." She wrapped her arms around his neck as he recaptured her lips once more, tightening his arms around her. She gasped when he lifted her up slightly, pressing her against the elevator wall. "Clark!"

She could feel her stomach tightening as her blood rushed downward. They were treading dangerously close to the point of no return. She wanted nothing more than to have an encore performance of the previous night's activities, but they were in the elevator on the way up to the newsroom; on their way to work. They didn't have time, and neither of them had thought to pull the emergency stop.

"Oh, God," She moaned in pleasure as she felt his body press further against her.

The elevator dinged, announcing the arrival to the newsroom, "Oh, elevator!" Lois pulled away from him, straightening out her blouse, "Rain check. Definitely! Next time if you want to start something, pull the emergency stop," she reminded him as the elevator doors opened.

She ignored the catcalls being thrown their way as they stepped into the bullpen and headed towards their desks. One would think after being married for almost a year their co-workers

would be used to their public displays of affection, but there were still a few that felt the need to tease them.

“Lois, CK, how was your day off?” Jimmy asked, walking up to them with an armful of files in hand.

Lois smiled at her young friend, “Oh, you know,” She shrugged. “Were you able to get anywhere with the research on ACL Industries?” She felt like her face was flushed. Was her face flushed? Was she blushing? Could everyone tell what they had been doing not even two minutes ago? She nervously rubbed at her neck. Jimmy could probably read her thoughts right now.

“Uh, here,” Jimmy handed her the bottom files from the stack in his hand. “That’s everything I’ve got. I need to get these over to copy and...”

“No, you’re fine,” Lois waved him off, “Go. I’ve got this.” Anything to get away from him and hide over by her desk. Jimmy had a knack for having the worst timing and pointing out the obvious at the most inopportune time. She watched as Jimmy headed up the stairs to the elevator, his arms still full of files. She shook her head and then turned back to her desk.

“What have we got here?” Clark asked, whispering in her ear. She shivered slightly as she felt his breath against the nape of her neck. “You okay?”

“Yeah,” She nodded. Was she okay? Her skin was still sensitive, tingling from their encounter in the elevator. Having him this close to her made her knees weak. “Jimmy gave me everything he’s got so far on ACL Industries.” Lois handed him the files.

Clark took the files from her, flipping through them at super speed as Lois shielded him from the prying eyes of their co-workers. He stopped halfway, pulling out one of the file folders to take a better look at it.

“Find something?” she asked. “A connection to Intergang?”

“Yeah, but not what we’re thinking,” Clark shook his head, taking a seat at his desk. Lois followed him, perching herself on the edge of his desk.

He handed her the file. Lois opened it and began reading. “Oh, my God.”

“Yeah,” Clark shook his head, “I’d say he has some explaining to do.”

“Which one?” Lois asked. “Jimmy or my father?”

\*\*\*

“Mr. Turner, what is it exactly you are interested in here?” Mr. Knox asked as they walked through the hallways of the Prosecution office.

“I want to help. I want to help bring Metropolis back to what it once was. All the crime and mayhem that has taken over the city. We’re allowing Superman to do for us what our justice system should be doing in the first place. I want to change that.” James Turner explained.

“Metropolis has never been a crime-free city,” Mr. Knox argued. “I’ve been the District Attorney of this city for the last four years and since Superman came to town crime has gone down...”

“Maybe you just need a change of pace?” Mr. Turner suggested. “Is Mayson Drake around? I was hoping to speak with her about something.”

“Mayson? She’s taken a leave of absence after her disappearance last week.”

“Yes, I heard about her unfortunate predicament,” Turner said.

Ryan Knox opened the door in front of them, “Lucy, I’d like to introduce you to James Turner.”

“A pleasure,” Turner took Lucy’s hand, kissing her palm.

She jerked her hand back forcefully, “Uh, nice to meet you.”

“Mr. Turner, Lucy Lane has been working closely with Mayson Drake over the past year on all her cases. I’m sure any questions you have for Mayson can be answered with Ms. Lane.”

“What can I help you with, Mr. Turner?” Lucy asked.

“I’d like to discuss a campaign.”

“Pardon?” Lucy asked.

“A campaign for District Attorney,” Turner explained.

“Excuse me?” Ryan Knox glared at Turner, but he paid him no mind.

“I have the resources,” Turner smiled. “I’d like to have a chance to get to know both you and Ms. Drake. I believe both of you would be the best candidates.”

“Mr. Turner,” Mr. Knox argued.

“I... I don’t know what to say,” Lucy stammered.

“Don’t say anything.” Turner cut her off, handing her a business card. “I’ll be expecting you this evening at the Metro Hotel’s Dining Hall at seven.”

Lucy stared on in amazement as Turner turned to leave, Ryan Knox in tow. What had just happened?

\*\*\*

Her father had been working on a super powered clone? Lois couldn’t believe it. She knew her father had had some crackpot ideas over the years but she’d never thought he’d go to such an extreme.

Perry’s voice droned in and out during the staff meeting as she contemplated how she would confront her father, if she could even find him. He’d been broken out of prison and no one had heard from him. The clone he’d been working on had kidnapped him and there was no telling where he could be.

“I want everyone on this. Keep the city updated on every step the police are taking to ensure Metropolis’ safety,” Perry continued.

Another staff meeting full of useless information. The same speech he’d given them earlier in the bullpen. She sometimes wondered if Perry realized how much he repeated himself from meeting to meeting.

She felt a nudge on her knee. She glanced down to see a notepad on her lap.

“What’s wrong?”

Lois smiled up at Clark who was still looking at her in concern. She grabbed a pencil and quickly wrote, “My dad’s a liar.”

She then placed the notepad on his lap. A few seconds later he passed it back, “Still have to double check.”

She rolled her eyes at that. “If it looks like a duck...” She wrote.

She looked up at him and watched as he lifted up the notepad and placed it face down on the table in front of him. End of conversation, she supposed. They had so much work to do, mainly research. Intergang’s founders might be dead and gone but its presence was still very much in Metropolis and Lois was sure ACL Industries was connected.

His right hand covered her own, removing it from her lap beneath the table. She smiled up at him. Ever since this morning at the ob-gyn Clark had been more and more attentive. Seeing their child on the monitors and discovering the child Lois was carrying would be a girl was overwhelming.

He moved her hand to her knee, resting it there as his thumb lightly grazed her upper thigh. She suppressed a gasp when he guided her hand upward, stroking her upper thigh lightly until they were no longer in contact with the silk covered thighs. He released her hand, outlining the edge of her silk stockings.

She inched herself to the edge of her chair as she did her best to hide the effect Clark was having on her. He hadn’t even begun to scrape the surface of where she wanted him and she was already getting hot and bothered. Two could play this game.

She stretched her right arm across the table and knocked a pen in his lap. He caught her gaze as she reached into his lap and grabbed the pen, brushing her hand against his inner thigh as she did so. She smiled when she heard him take a sharp breath, gasping as her hand brushed against him. Oh, yes. This would be

fun. She glanced around the room to make sure no one was paying attention then, feeling bold, she slipped her hand in his lap once more...

"All right, that's it," Perry said. Everyone around them began gathering their things and making their way toward the exit.

She opened her mouth to protest but found herself with cottonmouth, unable to speak. She watched as her colleagues left the conference room one by one. All but one, anyway.

"Hey, guys," Jimmy said, taking a seat next to Clark, "You haven't by chance found an unmarked file lying around, have you?"

"Unmark-unmarked file?" Lois stammered. "What kind of unmarked file?"

She wasn't sure what he was talking about. All she could focus on was the fact that there were no longer colleagues or a meeting going on, and now she could finish what Clark had started. "I don't know," Lois said evasively.

"But..." Jimmy began to argue.

"Listen, Jimmy, can we talk about this later?" Lois cut him off, "We have a lot of ...uh, research...to do this afternoon. We'll talk later," She patted Jimmy's shoulder before pushing him out of the conference room.

"Research?" Clark caught Lois' eye, "Right research!" He made sure she was standing in front of him to keep from embarrassing himself. His arms wrapped around her from behind, resting just below her breasts. "We're really busy right now, Jimmy. We gotta call..."

"Dr. Klein..." Lois supplied.

"And... Inspector Henderson," He supplied another name for her.

"We'll talk later. Don't want to keep them waiting." With that they watched as Jimmy closed the door behind him. Clark kept a panted grin on his face as he watched Jimmy walk away. "You get the blinds," he said huskily.

\*\*\*

It was strange being out, away from the guards and other inmates. The air was much fresher outside the prison walls, the sun much brighter. Amanda walked through the remains of the condemned Metro Club. The room was filled with ashy residue. Nothing like what she'd found before when she'd found Mayson Drake there a few days ago. Whoever had been holding her captive had obviously cleaned up fast. There was no sign of the glowing cage that had been there before.

\*\*\*

"Where were we?" Lois asked as Clark pulled her in his lap. He had resumed his place in his chair and she now hovered over him, straddling him as he hiked her skirt up, exploring her flesh with his palms.

"Here," Clark murmured, brushing his lips against hers. She helped him brush his suit jacket off, tossing it to the ground. She began unbuttoning his dress shirt, running her palm against his chest.

"Oh, Clark..." she gasped when she felt him unclasp her bra from beneath her blouse.

"You are so sexy..." he whispered as he unbuttoned her blouse, exposing her to him. "...and gorgeous..." he pushed the white lace off her shoulders and watched it fall.

"Cl..." she gasped, throwing her head back in pleasure.

He pulled his head back a moment, "Shhh..." he warned.

She shuddered involuntarily against him. "Oh, God, Clark," She moaned in pleasure, raking her hands through his hair. He lifted her up in his arms, pressing her hard against him. "Oh, yes,"

He tensed in her arms for a moment. He couldn't seriously be hearing a call for help now, could he? She could feel her body crying out for release. He wasn't seriously going to leave her like this, was he?

"Clark?"

"Nothing," He murmured, "It's nothing. I just thought I heard something," He then leaned up to recapture her lips.

\*\*\*

District Attorney? Lucy shook her head in amazement. She'd always thought about climbing the ladder and one day trying for a little more, but she'd never expected it to come to her on a silver platter like this.

She was so excited she felt like she was going to burst. She reached for the phone but stopped herself midway. The first person she always thought about calling was always Jimmy. Shouldn't that tell her something?

She grabbed her purse then pressed the speaker button on her phone, "Cheryl, I'm going to take an early lunch. Can you forward all my calls?"

"Yes, Ms. Lane," Cheryl responded.

\*\*\*

"Maybe you're going about this the wrong way, Sarah," Barry argued. "Superman's obviously on to you. He knows you're not really in trouble. That's why he isn't coming,"

"Superman will come to the rescue when he's called," Diana assured him. "Just watch."

\*\*\*

"Who the hell are you?" Sarah asked in outrage.

"You called for help," Superman responded, looking around the building. "What's wrong?"

"You're not Superman," She shot back at him.

"Yes, I am," He crossed his arms in front of his chest.

"No, you're not," She shook her head as she headed back inside the building. "Nice try, but I need the real thing." With that she shut the door behind her.

Superman glared at the closed door in fury. She was mocking him. What did the other Superman have that he didn't?

\*\*\*

"Jimmy, hi," Lucy said, walking up to him in the lobby.

"Hey, Luce," Jimmy smiled weakly at him. She noticed his gaze drifted immediately toward her growing abdomen, "How are you?"

"You know," She shrugged, "Busy,"

"Yeah," Jimmy smiled. "Well, Lois and CK left about an hour ago. You can try them on their cells if you need to talk..."

"Actually, I came to talk to you,"

"To me?" Jimmy asked surprised.

"Yeah," Lucy smiled weakly, "Do you have a minute to talk?"

"I think I can steal a minute or two," Jimmy smiled at her. "What's up?"

\*\*\*

Dr. Tony Benzen had been murdered. She had cried for a week when she'd found out. So far, no one had found his murderer. They had been too occupied with framing her, Amanda Marshall, an innocent woman, for Lana Lang's murder.

She tugged at the scarf wrapped around her head self-consciously. She knew it was just nerves but she still felt so exposed out in the open. There had to be a way she could escape this life.

She'd had dreams of a wonderful life with Tony at one point. He'd promised her everything until ...

He didn't understand...

She'd done it for him. She'd done everything for him...

\*\*\*

Superman watched with his x-ray vision as Sarah and Barry disappeared down the stairwell.

<<"You're not Superman,">>

What had that meant? He was Superman. His father had told him so much.

The imposter that had attacked him was phony. He would prove it.

\*\*\*

Lois tapped her fingers impatiently against the wood grain of Dr. Klein's desk, "So, you have no idea how this could have happened?"

"I don't specialize in cloning research, Lois. That was your father's specialty and no one knows where he is."

"So, you haven't heard anything?" Clark asked. "He hasn't shown up here?"

Dr. Klein sighed, "Not that I know of. I'd think he'd be contacting you before he would me."

"Not necessarily," Lois explained, "He's always been married to his work. Family always comes last."

"Oh," Dr. Klein said quietly, uncertain of how to take Lois' confession.

"It's fine," Lois shrugged.

"So, who would know?" Clark asked, changing the subject.

"Pardon?" Dr. Klein asked.

"You said you don't know much about cloning. Who other than Lois' father does know enough about cloning to help us?" Clark asked.

Dr. Klein thought a moment. "There are a few known experts in the field." He made a few clicks on his computer, browsing the S.T.A.R. Labs database, "Dr. Luis Keating, Dr. Ronan Faust, and Dr. Isaac Mamba." He read the article he had pulled up. "Aside from your father they're the top scientists in the field."

"So, any idea where we can find any of these guys?" Lois asked.

"Well, Dr. Keating is in Russia, Dr. Faust in Japan, and...Dr. Mamba is based in Gotham," Dr. Klein read.

"Gotham?" Clark asked surprised.

"Well, you know all the research Wayne Enterprise works on for the military. They're our biggest competitor in scientific breakthroughs. Just when I think I'm onto something Bruce Wayne always beats me to the punch. He always keeps the best on staff to do so."

"Well, we owe Dr. Mamba a visit," Lois said.

"I'd be careful," Dr. Klein warned. "Dr. Mamba is a brilliant scientist, but there is a fine line between brilliance in lunacy, more so in his case."

"So, Dr. Mamba is crazy?" Clark probed.

"Some of the time," Dr. Klein answered carefully.

\*\*\*

"You wanted to talk?" Jimmy skirted nervously as he watched Lucy push her food around her plate with her fork.

"Yeah," Lucy smiled nervously up at him, "I know I'm the last person you want to hear from right now."

"No," Jimmy shook his head, "I like hearing from you. There was a time you used to actually wanted to talk to me on a regular basis."

"I know," Lucy said, brushing a stray strand of hair behind her ear, "We used to be best friends, which is what I wanted to talk to you about."

"What do you mean?"

"Jimmy, we used to be best friends. When I had a bad day or a good day you were the one I told. I miss that."

"You do?" Jimmy asked skeptically.

"Yes!" Lucy cried, "Do you have any idea how hard these last few months have been? I haven't had anyone to turn to. Lois and I just now started getting back to where we were, but it's still not the same."

"I'm sorry," Jimmy apologized, placing his hand over hers. "I know this couldn't have been easy for you." His tone seemed more rehearsed than genuine.

"I know you're still mad at me," Lucy said, pulling her hand back from his.

"You think?" Jimmy asked sarcastically, "Luce, you created this. You continue to push me away over and over again, as your friend and as more. How did you expect me to react?"

"I don't know," Lucy said, brushing a stray tear off her cheek, "I just want my friend back,"

"Me too, but it won't be the same," Jimmy explained with a sigh, "You want me to be the same carefree Jimmy Olsen I was last year. I can't do that."

"I'm not the same either," Lucy said quietly.

"I know," Jimmy nodded. "You have a lot to deal with after what happened last year, but does your healing have to include banning me from my own child's life?"

"I thought if you weren't around then you couldn't be missed," Lucy explained.

"You're so sure I'm going to disappoint you," Jimmy realized painfully. "Why?"

Lucy was quiet, looking down at her hands as she fought the tears that were threatening to overcome her. Stupid hormones. She hated not being able to control her emotions.

\*\*\*

"Hi, can I come in?" Lucy asked tearfully when Lois opened the door.

"Yeah, Luce, come on in," Lois stepped aside, motioning for her sister to come inside. "What's wrong?"

"I just sat there and broke down. What's happened to me? I don't try to fight. I just break down and cry when someone says something I don't like." Lucy paced in the foyer as Lois tried to figure out what she was talking about.

"Lucy, back up."

"Jimmy asked me why I am so convinced he's going to disappoint me, and I broke down. I don't have an answer. I've been pushing him away because I'm convinced he's going to disappoint me and I don't have a reason. I don't know why. How screwed up is that?"

"Luce," Lois began, taking a step towards her sister.

"What's wrong with me?" Lucy asked tearfully.

After Jordan's kidnapping and her shotgun wedding disaster to Lex, Lucy hadn't been able to turn to her sister in a long time. The wall that had been built between them seemed unmovable after the fiasco with Jordan had happened. It had been a juggle the last few months of two steps forward and three steps back, almost like they forgot how to be sisters and friends. At first, Lucy had felt responsible for Jordan's death, then his kidnapping. She had been there at the hospital and had done nothing, questioned nothing. She'd sat there and done nothing as Amanda Marshall had kidnapped her nephew from the nursery.

Lois had refused to contemplate any possibility that Jordan had died. They had fought for months. Lucy had been convinced her sister was in denial and now that her nephew was back home with Lois and Clark she had a hard time trying to repair their relationship to where it once was. They'd been close. When their parents had been fighting Lois had always protected her, distracting her from the fights with silly games to play.

<< "Invisible or fly?" >>

"Wrong with you?" Lois asked. "What makes you think there's something wrong with you?"

Lucy sank to the couch in tears, "I'm pregnant with my best friend's baby and instead of celebrating I'm over here pushing him away, and I don't even have a reason anymore."

"Lucy..."

"There is nothing wrong with him. I mean, anyone would be glad to have him in their life, but for some reason, I can't understand why he wants me. Why?"

Lois took a seat next to her, "Why wouldn't he?"

"What?"

"You're smart, successful, talented," Lois began, "Why wouldn't he want to be with you?"

"I'm screwed up," Lucy said, irritably.

"You're screwed up?" Lois laughed, bitterly, "I'm screwed up, Luce." Lois sighed, brushing a strand of hair behind her ear,

“Between the drama with mom and dad and the divorce and every ex-boyfriend I’ve had that has literally stabbed me in the back one way or another... And let’s not forget having my son kidnapped while I was unconscious and having everyone around me try to convince me otherwise, including my own husband. Yeah, I’m screwed up, but you don’t see me sitting here scared to face the world. You forced me to take a chance on Clark and look where it got me. I’m married with a family and I couldn’t be happier. So, I’m going to tell you, Lucy Lane, take a chance. Do you love Jimmy?”

“I don’t know,” Lucy shook her head.

“The fact that we’re having this conversation proves you do know.” Lois cut her off. “Take a chance. This last year hasn’t been easy on either of us, but you can’t give up on life. It’s very lonely.”

“I’m not you,”

“No, you’re my sister and I love you very much.” Lois smiled back at her, “Lex pulled a number on you and you crawled into a shell, afraid to face anything that came your way. You pulling away like this and constantly shutting down is only going to give him more power over you from beyond the grave. Is that what you want?”

“This has nothing to do with Lex,” Lucy snapped shakily.

“Doesn’t it?” Lois asked.

“No,” Lucy shrugged, “I am so over him. I’ve gone on dates.”

“Really?” Lois challenged.

“Really,” Lucy shot back.

“Nothing to write home about, though,” Lois noted by the expressionless look on her sister’s face.

“It wasn’t great,” Lucy edged.

“You may think you’re over Lex, but you’re not, not completely. I’m not talking about being in love or anything like that. I’m talking about something bigger... What he did...” Lois shook her head quietly, “If I hadn’t been in the hospital I’d have...”

“I know,” Lucy smiled back at her sister. “I’m lucky... I just wish I had listened to you and Clark.”

“Well, then listen to me now,” Lois said softly, hugging her sister tightly, “You have so much love to give. Don’t punish yourself for Lex’s sins. You deserve to be happy. Take a chance.”

Lucy smiled, placing a hand on her sister’s growing abdomen, “How’d you get to be so smart?”

“Life,” Lois laughed patting Lucy’s growing abdomen. “When do you find out?”

“In a few weeks... I was hoping to work this out with Jimmy and have him come as a truce, but that doesn’t seem to be happening... I delayed my anatomy scan a few weeks ago,” Lucy said wistfully. “Come with me?”

Lois nodded softly, “Of course,”

Lucy pulled back slightly, changing the subject to something less emotional for the time being. “So, what did the doctor say? Clean bill of health? Can I stop worrying about you?”

Lois smiled, “I don’t know about that but the doctor did say SHE looked great and blood pressure was stable...”

“She?” Lucy grinned ear from ear. “A little girl?”

“Yes, a little girl,” Lois smiled. “We found out today.”

“That’s wonderful,” Lucy grinned happily. “I can’t believe how fast this is going.”

“You’re going to be a great mother, Luce,” Lois encouraged her.

“How can you be sure?” Lucy asked, tearfully. “I’m so screwed up,”

“Because you care,” Lois said softly. “You care so much.”

“Maybe too much,” Lucy sighed. “I don’t know...”

“Don’t know what?” Lois prompted, confused as she watched her sister pace around the room.

“I had an offer today and I don’t know what to do,” Lucy said shakily.

“Offer?”

“James Turner wants me to run for District Attorney against Ryan Knox this upcoming election.”

“What??” Lois asked, baffled. “Luce...”

“The thing about it is... I’d love an opportunity to do something like this. It would be great...but...”

“But??”

“There’s something really creepy about him. Really familiar and creepy about the way he smiled at me.”

“Like you’d seen it before?” Lois asked.

“Yeah, how did you...?”

“That’s how Clark and I felt when Perry introduced us... I can’t place it...”

“Lois, I know this is crazy...but is it possible...?”

“What possible?” Lois asked.

“That Lex isn’t dead?”

\*\*\*

Inspector Henderson stared at the mountain of files on his desk. He had barely slept within the past few days. Crime was at an uprise and there had been no help in the Superman department in helping to calm the chaos that had taken over Metropolis since the Superman double had started the fire at the Metropolis Correctional Facility.

Most of the escapees had had connections to Intergang in one way or another. The criminal organization had quickly taken its own in, preventing the police department from bringing in any of the fugitives. The only escapees that the police had managed to take back into custody had been the small time criminals that had too many probation violations or had been habitual offenders.

“Henderson?” Detective Wolf knocked on the door to his office.

“What’s up?” Henderson asked, looking up weary-eyed at the fellow detective.

“Something... big.” Wolf stammered, “You got to see what... or who just walked through the door.”

Henderson sighed, rubbing his neck as he stood up and followed Wolf out to the lobby of the police station, “This better be good, Wolf, you saw how many reports I still have to file...” He stopped when he saw the visitor, “Dr. Lane?”

“Inspector,” Sam Lane nodded at him.

“I told you -- you wanted to see this,” Wolf said.

\*\*\*

Sarah Dougherty had brought up the ratings for Barry Dunning more in the past few months than any other producer. Barry was grateful, but he still felt a nagging insecurity in the back of his mind. There was something not quite right about the way Sarah refused the spotlight at the luncheons for making Top Copy’s ratings skyrocket. She even refused phone calls and meetings with Mindy Church and Mindy was a woman you never wanted on your bad side. It was almost like she was afraid of the spotlight, but why would she get in the television business if she didn’t want attention?

\*\*\*

Lucy let out a long breath when she pulled up to her apartment building. It had been a long day. Her back hurt. Her feet hurt. She was pretty sure once she got inside she’d begin to get hungry again. She would never understand why women considered the experience of being pregnant a gift. She was in pain most of the time with her emotions running all over the place with her hormones. She didn’t consider this a gift. She knew her child was a gift but the rest was something she’d love to give back.

After her conversation with Lois, she was even more confused about what it was she wanted to do. There was something creepy about James Turner. He reminded her of Lex and not in a good way. She clicked the automatic lock to her car and made her way up the steps to her apartment. The corridor was dimly lit but she could make out the silhouette of the average height man standing

outside her apartment. She could only guess.

“What are you doing here?” she asked when she approached the apartment door.

“I wanted to talk,” Dan smiled at her. “You got a minute?”

Her first instinct was to say ‘no’ but she decided against her better judgment to hear him out. Her conversation with Lois earlier had left her rattled, uncertain of anything she’d done or said in the past few months. Was she closing herself off from men because she still cared for Lex?

“Sure, but only for a minute.” She warned, opening the door for him to enter. She followed, closing the door behind herself.

In the corridor of her apartment complex, Jimmy stood at the bottom of the steps shaking his head as he buried his hands in his pockets and headed back out the way he came.

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“You really think she’s onto something?” Clark asked skeptically as he held Jordan up for her to dry him off.

“I don’t know. I don’t know. She was really rattled when she came over. Upset about Jimmy and the baby. She’s been so closed off from everything that happened. Either way, it’s all stemming from her and Lex’s relationship. He handed her everything she wanted on a silver platter then yanked it from her and humiliated her in front of everyone. That’s a lot to come back from. Then this Turner guy shows up acting the same way...” Lois laid Jordan down on the changing table and put his diaper on as he squirmed, trying to roll away. “You can play in a minute,” She reassured him.

“I don’t know,” Clark shook his head. “I never thought she was really in love with the guy, though,”

“He still hurt her,” Lois explained. “In love or not,” She shrugged. “It doesn’t matter. He humiliated her and played her for a fool. Jimmy pushing her isn’t going to do any good. She’s just going to pull away even more.” She finished snapping the buttons to Jordan’s pajamas and picked him up.

“I don’t know. I’m worried about her.” Lois sighed, laying Jordan down in his crib and turned the mobile on. “She’s been through so much this past year,”

“Well, hopefully, she and Jimmy can work things out. They’re talking; that’s a start, isn’t it?”

“I guess...” Lois shook her head, “Clark, you should have seen her... She was so upset. She was shaking when she was asking if it was possible Lex had survived...”

“Anything’s possible I guess...” Clark shrugged, “but highly unlikely. Turner’s up to something or sure, but I don’t know if...” Jordan yawned as he continued to watch the mobile moving around him. “I think somebody’s tuckered out,”

“Yeah, he’s just about...”

A loud incessant knocking came from downstairs, startling Jordan back to the present and away from dreamland. His lip quivered, crying as he reached up to be held.

“Who in the world is that??” Lois hissed in a harsh whisper as she held Jordan, trying to calm his cries.

Clark lowered his glasses and scanned downstairs with an amused grin when he saw the intruder. “Your mother,”

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Turner threw a vase against the wall as he reentered his penthouse. “That miserable...”

He continued his rampage, throwing objects against the wall until he was satisfied with the damage. He reached for the phone, calming himself as he took control of his voice, “I need to speak with security. My penthouse has been destroyed,”

After assuring the bumbling man over the phone that he was all right and simply needed security he hung up the phone and poured himself a Scotch. He’d waited for hours at the hotel and Lucy had never shown. That wasn’t like her. She had always kept their dates no matter what. She’d always come; now she was no longer the same person, it seemed. Or perhaps it was that she just didn’t know him anymore.

Yes, that seemed more possible. He reassured himself. He hadn’t lost his touch. He simply needed to approach things differently.

\*\*\*

Lois’ soft sighs echoed in Clark’s ears as he gently massaged her tense muscles. Ellen Lane had demanded their undivided attention earlier to plead Sam’s case to Lois and himself for help in getting him out of jail. After all the years of fighting between them, Ellen was still there to fight Sam’s battles with him. Neither he nor Lois had been able to give her an answer she was satisfied with. She had left angry, leaving them to deal with a cranky and distraught ten-month-old. Two hours later, Jordan had finally fallen asleep and now Clark was working on trying to help Lois drift off to sleep as well.

She let out a soft moan as he rolled his palm against her smooth ivory skin. He could feel his body beginning to respond to her pleasurable moans. The tension within her muscles released beneath his touch as he aimed a ray of heat vision against her back, massaging the tension out of her body. “That better?” Clark asked. She was lying on the bed with nothing but a sheet wrapped around her waist as he continued to gently massage the aches and pains out along with the tensions of the day. The battle between his brain and his hormones began to take over, becoming more and more evident with each caress.

She nodded, “That feels good,” She murmured, looking back at him. He placed a kiss against her shoulder as he continued to massage her lower back, aiming another blast of heat vision against her. “That feels better,” She laughed.

Clark smiled, “You ready for bed?”

“Not quite,” She teased, lying back down on the bed. “I think I need you to work on my back a little bit longer,”

“You need your rest,” Clark pointed out, letting her know he was onto her.

She looked back at him over her shoulder, “I know,” She moaned as his palm pressed against her vertebrae, “Mmm, that feels so good, Clark,” Her midsection lifted off the mattress slightly as her back arched against his touch. She knew exactly what she was doing to him. “Hopefully, Jordan stays asleep all night. He doesn’t cope well with his sleep schedule being interrupted,”

“Hopefully he’ll stay asleep,” he whispered, brushing his lips against the back of her shoulder.

She sighed, “I still can’t believe my mother came over here at this hour,” She glanced back at him, “You have no idea how lucky you are. Your parents don’t make you want to jump off the interstate screaming,”

“Enough with the exaggerations,” He whispered, placing a protective kiss on her cheek as he laid down next to her, rolling her over so he could wrap his arms around her.

“Who says I’m exaggerating?” Lois shot back.

“Your mother isn’t...that bad,” he hedged.

“It’s ten o’clock at night. She wanted you and me to go down to the police station and demand my father’s release and an apology from the police commissioner.” Lois reminded him.

“Okay, so she’s a bit high-strung,”

“That’s an understatement,” Lois scoffed.

“What happened to going to sleep?” He whispered in her ear.

“But I’m not tired,” She teased, wrapping her arms around his neck as she leaned up to kiss him. He groaned in approval. She pulled back from him, smiling impishly.

He cupped her cheek, “You have that ah, Looiissss,” He couldn’t suppress his surprise when she climbed on top of him, straddling him as she let the sheet fall down between their bodies, rubbing her body against his. He groaned in approval, wrapping his arms around her waist, leaning up to capture her lips.

He groaned in pleasure when he felt her chest graze against his. He could feel the soft flutter of his daughter’s movements

against his abdomen. She smiled against his lips pulling away from him, “She’s moving more and more,” she murmured.

He nodded, recapturing her lips once more, “Four more months of it to go.”

“Maybe,” Lois whispered back, pulling away from him slightly, “Jordan didn’t make it past seven months,” She linked her arms around his neck, holding him close.

Clark’s face sobered a moment, “He had a little help with that, though,”

“I know,” She whispered softly. He reached up to brush a stray tear that had escaped off her cheek.

“It’s going to be different this time,” He promised.

“I know,” she whispered, “It’s just scary. I don’t know what to expect...”

“She’s going to be fine,” He brushed his lips against hers softly, cupping her cheek as he ran a hand through her silky hair.

“Promise?” She tightened her arms around his neck as she brushed feather-light kisses against his face.

He opened his mouth to respond when he felt his body stiffen. His super hearing had kicked in. No. Not now. This wasn’t supposed to happen now. He did his best to suppress it but to no avail. He needed to bury himself in Lois; forget about the calls for help. He wasn’t Superman anymore. It wasn’t worth the risk of exposing his family. “Promise,” He deepened their kiss, guiding his hands down her body, caressing every curve. His hands rested on her bottom as he nibbled at her neckline, eliciting a moan of pleasure from her.

“Clark?”

He looked back at her, forcing himself to focus back on the task at hand.

“Are you all right?” She gently cupped his cheek.

“Never better,” He whispered, recapturing her lips.

“Clark, are you sure you’re...?” She murmured against his lips. “Oh, God, Clark,” She gasped as he began a trail of feather light kisses down her chest. She raked her hands through his hair, combing it with her fingers as he continued the pleasurable assault on her body, intent on forgetting the cries for help that echoed in his ears.

\*\*\*

Ellen Lane stormed up to Lucy when she emerged from her apartment the next morning. She’d been given the brush-off the night before by Lois and Clark, but she was sure she could appeal to Lucy in the name of ‘family.’ She had connections with the district attorney’s office and with the judge overseeing Sam’s case. She had to do something. “Lucy, we need to talk,”

“What is it, Mother?” Lucy did her best to suppress the bite in her tone.

“Your father is what’s up,” Ellen Lane followed her daughter to her car, “Do you realize he’s being charged with that little boy’s kidnapping? You know he would never do anything like that. The police commissioner owes him an apology. How could they...?”

“Mother...” Lucy snapped, irritably. “Get to the point!”

“That is no way to speak to me,” Ellen harrumphed.

“I’m sorry, but I’m running late. What do you want me to do?”

“I want you to clear your father’s name. There is no way he’s done what they’re saying he did,” Ellen argued. She looked up at Lucy’s face a moment, then at her attire, and grimaced, “You need to use lighter colors in your wardrobe. They’ll cover up the dark circles,”

Lucy bit her tongue as she opened the door to her car. “Whatever you say, Mother,”

\*\*\*

Jack tapped at the keys on the keyboard in front of him anxiously. He couldn’t shake the feeling that he was being watched. He’d been researching Sarah Dougherty for the last few weeks, trying to find out what he could about her. He knew she was hiding something, but he couldn’t put his finger on it.

After discovering no background information on Sarah he’d begun to cross-reference her known background with other people in Metropolis to try and find a connection. So far he’d found over ten thousand matches.

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“Where is it?” Jimmy mumbled under his breath as he searched his desk. Nowhere. He couldn’t find the file from S.T.A.R. Labs anywhere.

“Jimmy, you okay?” Allan asked.

“I’m...I’m fine. I just. I can’t find something...very important.” Jimmy stammered.

“Try backtracking your day,” Allan suggested. “Works for me,”

“Backtracking? It’s been more than a day...I had a pile of files I was... Oh, no,” Jimmy shook his head. “Oh, no, no, no...”

“What’s wrong?” Allan asked.

“I...I screwed up,” Jimmy said, heading for the conference room.

\*\*\*

Lois sifted through the file on her father once more, shaking her head, “I just don’t understand this. Why did Jimmy not tell us about this file? He put it in with the rest of the stuff on ACL Industries.”

“Maybe he didn’t mean to?” Clark suggested.

“Why wouldn’t he?” Lois asked.

“I don’t know,” Clark shook his head.

Jimmy knocked on the conference room door where Lois and Clark had files scattered all over the conference table, “Guys? You wanted to see me?”

Lois looked up at him with a stern look on her face, “Yeah, close the door, Jimmy,”

Nervous, he did as he was told and then asked, “So, what’s up, guys?”

“I don’t know,” Lois snapped, throwing a familiar file on the floor in front of him. “What is up? What is this?”

“I...” Jimmy stammered, “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have kept it from you, but Jack...”

“Jack?” Lois and Clark asked in unison.

“Yeah, he found the file over at Top Copy,” Jimmy explained, “Anyway, Jack wanted to make sure everything in the file was legit before I brought it to you,”

“And?” Lois pressed.

“And...?”

“And was it?” Clark pressed. “You handed this file to us without a word.”

“Oh, no, guys, I didn’t mean to give that to you.” Jimmy apologized. “I haven’t heard anything from Jack yet. I don’t know if this is some joke someone’s playing or if...”

“If my father is actually working for Intergang?” Lois finished for him. “It’s okay. You can say it.”

“Lois...”

“Get a hold of Jack and have him double check Top Copy’s files and see if there is anything else that links my father to Intergang. Then I want you to cross reference his personal files with what we have on Intergang,” Lois said.

“You got it,” Jimmy nodded, heading for the door.

“You might want to check with ACL Industries too,” Clark suggested.

“ACL Industries?” Lois asked, “Why?”

“There’s something going on with them. They have a lot of common assets. They may have more than that in common,” Clark pointed out.

\*\*\*

“How could you be so stupid??” Ellen chastised Sam as she paced in front of him.

Sam remained silent, watching Ellen pace.

“I know you wouldn’t do something like this, but you refusing

to talk isn't exactly helping things. You were obviously the fall guy for whoever was behind that poor boy's kidnapping. You need to help the police catch them. Sam? Sam, are you listening to me?" Ellen snapped.

"I'm listening, Ellen,"

"But you don't care," Ellen noted, angrily tapping her heels as she watched him resume his silence by folding his hands in front of him. "What are you doing?"

"I'm trying to meditate. It's calming," Sam replied.

"You don't have time to meditate!!"

"Ellen, just let it go. Whatever will happen is just going to happen. I can't change anything."

"Why are you so...pigheaded??" She slammed her fist on the table then turned to walk out of the visitors' room. If Sam didn't want to help himself then she wasn't going to kill herself trying to save him.

\*\*\*

One Month Later...

"What is all this?" Lucy asked when she entered Mayson's office. Every book on unknown meteorites and radioactive substances covered her desk.

"I'm just doing a little research," Mayson replied nonchalantly as she looked up at Lucy, "What's up?"

"Status update on the current fugitives," Lucy said, handing her a thick file.

"Thanks," Mayson nodded, waving her off. Lucy figured it was her cue to leave.

\*\*\*

"ACL Industries file." Jimmy handed Lois and Clark a large file.

"Is this everything?" Lois asked surprised.

"Yes," Jimmy shook his head, "ACL Industries was set up about seven years ago by the one and only Lex Luthor after his divorce as an alimony fund for an Arianna Carlin." He read off the marriage certificate.

"Any idea where this Arianna Carlin is now?" Lois asked, taking the file from him.

"Not that I can tell, but they do keep coming up with our research into Intergang. So maybe she or someone she works with is trying to make a play for power?"

"What is it with Luthors and Metropolis?" Lois asked, shaking her head.

"I guess in a way Luthor will always be haunting Metropolis," Jimmy said glumly.

"No kidding," Clark said shaking his head.

Lois noticed Jimmy's hesitancy to leave and placed the file on her desk, looking up at him patiently, "What is it, Jimmy?"

"I was just wondering, you guys are pretty close with Superman, right? I mean, you talk?" Jimmy asked.

Clark fidgeted uncomfortably in his chair. Lois smiled up at him, "Yeah, why?"

"I was just wondering if you knew what was going on with him? I mean he hasn't shown up for any calls for help in the last month." Jimmy edged.

"Maybe he's been busy?" Lois suggested.

"With what? There has been no sign of him on the radar in Metropolis or anywhere else. No one has seen the double either." Jimmy explained. "It's weird,"

Lois shot a wayward glance at Clark who was looking extremely uncomfortable at the moment. "I'll say. We'll look into it, Jimmy,"

"Tell him we miss him," Jimmy said with a smile before he got up to head towards his desk.

Lois nodded, watching her young friend leave before she turned to confront Clark. "Something you want to tell me?"

\*\*\*

Sarah opened her Rolodex, flipping from category to category

only to find it empty. She opened up her file cabinet, hoping to find some reference to the contact she was looking for only to find it empty as well. "What is going on here?" She muttered under her breath.

Her computer beeped, announcing the arrival of a new message. She clicked on the box that popped up and read the e-mail, "Metropolis Library. Urgent."

"What the hell?" She wondered aloud.

\*\*\*

"Is this really necessary?" Toni Taylor asked irritably as she tapped her fingernails against the wood grain of the conference table.

"You want to keep your attacker in prison, don't you?" Lucy asked, taking a seat across from her.

"Well, she isn't in prison, is she?" Toni asked sarcastically.

"We need to know of everything she's said to you, Ms. Taylor. When she is re-arrested... And she WILL be re-arrested... we can charge her with aggravated stalking and add an additional sentence."

"You need to keep her away from me," Toni ordered. "I have too much going on; I can't deal with this nutcase trying to come after me. If you people were doing your job..."

"I understand you're upset."

"Upset? Upset doesn't even begin to describe how I feel. I'm a slave to this city because you and your police department don't know how to keep criminals where they belong," Toni snapped testily, "Can we just get this stupid deposition over with?"

"Fine," Lucy nodded, pulling out her notebook. She nodded at the recorder who sat on the other side of the room watching her and Toni Taylor with an amused expression. "Let's begin. This is Lucy Lane, Assistant District Attorney's Office Metropolis, New Troy..."

\*\*\*

Lois sat calmly, tapping her fingers against the wood grain of the conference table. She'd listened to Clark's reasoning for giving up his alter ego. He was convinced it would protect her, Jordan, and their daughter. She could feel anger coursing through her veins and she willed herself to calm down, knowing the orders she'd had from both her doctor and Perry. She was already limited on how many days she was allowed to work; she didn't want to push herself over something so frivolous.

Clark had made boneheaded decisions before. He was obviously going to make them again and again until he learned. She felt a sharp kick in her side, reminding her of the main reason to keep herself calm. She was pregnant. She had to be responsible. She couldn't just fly off the handle like she wanted to, and she really wanted to. What was he thinking?

"Are you going to say anything?" Clark asked.

"No," She shook her head quietly.

"You're mad,"

She shrugged, "What's there to be mad about? You don't want to have an alter ego anymore. That's your decision,"

"Lois, I know you're mad. Please, just go ahead," he pleaded, "Yell at me all you want,"

"No," She shook her head, "I may not agree with your decision, but I can't make you do something you don't want to do,"

"Really?" He looked at her skeptically. He obviously wasn't buying the calm she was attempting to portray.

"Really," She nodded, "Now, I do have something to say about you not telling me, though,"

"Oh, here it comes,"

"You made this decision and you didn't even tell me? What happened to partnership; and us being a team?"

"I..." Clark began but she cut him off.

She leaned back in her chair, crossing her arms tightly over her chest as she continued her rant, "I mean, when were you

planning on telling me, when I was thrown out of an airplane again? ‘Oh, sorry, honey, I forgot to mention I don’t do that anymore?’”

“I wouldn’t let anything like that happen; you know that, Lois,”

Sarcasm dripped from her words as she spoke, “Really? You said yourself you weren’t going to BE Superman anymore, so how exactly would you stop that? Let’s forget about me for a minute. What if it was someone else? Jimmy? Lucy? Perry? I mean, seriously, Clark, what are you going to do if Superman isn’t there? You can’t rescue anyone without revealing yourself! You’re seriously going to turn your back on...on...”

“See? I knew you were going to be mad about this,” He shook his head.

Lois stood up, slamming her hands against the table, “You’re damn right I’m mad. I can’t believe you would just roll over like this. You’re just giving up?”

“No, I’m not giving up,”

“Then what would you call it?” She asked, tears in her eyes. “Because to me it looks like you’re running away and hiding so you don’t have to deal with the problem,”

“I’m not turning my back on anything; I’m making a choice. I’m not going to put you or Jordan or our daughter at risk because of a choice I made.”

“A choice YOU made? I made the same choice when I chose to marry you, Clark. You don’t think I know the risks? YOU are the one making decisions like this without even talking to ME.” She shook her head in disgust. “Nice to know where I stand, though.” She crossed her arms over her chest, shaking her head.

\*\*\*

Amanda heard footsteps coming towards the computer lounge in the Metropolis Library. She hadn’t planned on how her approach would be. When she’d seen Sarah Dougherty she’d recognized her in an instant. The specials on Top Copy that Diana Stride reported were always her favorites. It hadn’t been a huge leap to guess she’d gone into hiding after the incident at S.T.A.R. Labs. Amanda had been surprised by how close to home Diana had gone into hiding. She was working at the same company she had before. How did no one recognize her?

“I don’t suppose you know anything about this?” Sarah asked, holding up a printed copy of the e-mail she received when she closed the door to the computer lounge.

Amanda smiled, standing to her feet. “Nice to see you, Diana.”

“What did you just call me?”

“Might want to make yourself comfortable,” Amanda gestured to the seat next to her. “We have some business to discuss,”

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Lucy flipped through the police report in front of her, “So, he turned himself in? Has there been any change to his case? It’s been a month and no one seems to be moving this case in either direction.”

“I don’t know,” Henderson shrugged. “He was very cooperative. He claims the clone was working on its own. I’m willing to back you on any recommendation you’d like...”

“Uh, thanks. Clone?”

“The Superman double?” Henderson prodded.

“Oh, right,” She nodded, realizing what he was referring to. “So, what now?”

“It’s up to Mr. Knox and the judge. Do they want to charge him with escape or not? He still has to face the charges of kidnapping,”

“He didn’t do that,” Lucy argued. “He wouldn’t,”

“Like I said, he’s going to have to go to court and face the music first.” Henderson shrugged.

\*\*\*

“You can’t extort me into helping you,” Diana sneered.

“Oh, I believe I can,” Amanda tapped her hand against the large stack of file folders in front of her. “Your files are very interesting. Every detail on every contact you have made with Intergang.”

“What makes you think I won’t just kill you?”

“Because you’re a smart woman. You know I wouldn’t have called you down here without covering my bases first. I’ve made copies.”

“I’m sure.” Diana crossed her arms over her chest.

“You know it’s a nice touch, blackmailing Superman by threatening to reveal his identity. You don’t even know it; do you?”

“I...”

“If I had information like that I’d have already pulled the card out. You don’t have any proof. You think you know, but you don’t have anything. Any world famous journalist knows better than to be the first one to point the finger without any proof.”

“You don’t know anything about the game, Ms. Marshall, you’re a nurse.”

“Maybe I’m wrong, but I’d think you’d choose something a bit more creative than evasive stories about Superman’s supposed secret identity in order to boost your ratings. People are going to get tired of the games and start a riot. They’re going to want someone to blame and that person is you. What good is that going to do when you’re supposed to be lying low?”

\*\*\*

Jack picked up an unmarked package on his desk. He wasn’t sure where it had come from or who it was for. There was no address or return address. It was simply marked as ‘private’. Too bad he had a hard time respecting other people’s privacy.

\*\*\*

Turner stared at his reflection in the mirror. Everything he’d worked so hard for had been taken from him. His power; his good name; his face and even his identity. He had lost so much over the last year, but he was determined to get it back, no matter what. Lucy Lane had played him for a fool, refusing him over that gofer, Jimmy Olsen. He would soon return the favor. Everyone that had wronged him would feel what he felt; loss.

He smashed his fist through the reflection staring back at him, a reflection he did not know, that no one knew. James Turner would create the same stronghold on Metropolis that Lex Luthor had and no one would be able to stop him from having what he wanted most -- revenge.

\*\*\*

Lucy stared expectantly at her sister, uncertain of how she would react and how to brace herself. They were sitting in her office and she had just told Lois about their father’s case. How would Lois react to the DA’s office stalling on this case? There was no telling with Lois anymore. Her emotions had been on a roller coaster ever since last year. Everything that had happened that day when the Daily Planet had been bombed had changed her sister in more ways than she cared to admit. The rift between them that had built when Jordan had been kidnapped had been hard to repair, but slowly they were beginning to repair the damage. Lucy just hoped she wasn’t due for another fight with her sister.

“Can you say something, please?” Lucy pleaded, watching Lois expectantly.

“I don’t know what to say,” Lois shook her head, “I don’t understand why...Is there anything you can do?”

“I don’t know,” Lucy replied, “Daddy just turned himself in last month; now he’s waiting to go to trial. At first they were trying to rush the case and now Knox is trying to stall...I don’t know what I can do.”

“Any idea what the judge is going to do?” Lois asked.

“No,”

Lois pulled out the folder Jimmy had given them, “I think you should have a look at this. I don’t think it’ll compromise you any

since you're not involved in dad's case,"

"What is it?"

"There's a lot he's hiding,"

Lucy flipped open the folder, skimming through the files, "Where did you get this?"

"Jimmy," Lois said hoarsely.

\*\*\*

Nothing.

Mayson had done research on every type of stone and metal she could find, but nothing seemed to match the description of what she'd seen in that room. She could still feel her skin crawl and the cold sweats from when she was trapped in that cage. That horrible cage.

She had to figure out what she had been exposed to. The threats that had been made to her during her captivity continued to haunt her, but also made her more and more determined to find those responsible and bring them to justice.

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"You are being ridiculous, Lucy, I'm fine," Lois argued. She sat on the exam table as Dr. Lee checked her blood pressure once more.

"Dizzy spells don't count as 'fine' to me," Lucy snapped back.

Dr. Lee removed the armband and glanced at the blood pressure monitor once more shaking her head, "No, they don't," She interrupted the sister argument. "What part of 'take it easy' are you not understanding? Your blood pressure is ridiculous."

"I am taking it easy," Lois argued. Lucy let out a sarcastic scoff and Lois shot her a glare, "I am!"

Dr. Lee shook her head, not believing her, "Once a week," She ordered firmly, "I want you in my office once a week so we can monitor you and the baby's blood pressure. No stress. If you're going to work, desk duty only,"

"But..."

"No," Dr. Lee cut her off, "I'll see you next week," She left the room, leaving Lois and Lucy to continue their argument in peace.

"Great," Lois muttered. "Why did you have to drag me to the hospital?"

"You were the one complaining about being dizzy," Lucy reminded her. "It's not that bad. Last time you let your blood pressure get so bad you went unconscious; I wasn't going to allow that to happen again,"

Lois closed her eyes, willing herself to calm down. "I know, I know. I just hate this place,"

"I know, sis," Lucy sighed, putting an arm around her sister's shoulders, "Come on, let's get you out of here,"

\*\*\*

"Oh, Pookie, you're such a charmer," Mindy blushed, leaning up to kiss him. This mysterious stranger that had shown up after Cost Mart's reopening ceremony had been a yummy surprise when her driver had had trouble changing her car tires. How did all tires go flat all at once? It was a bit coincidental, but she didn't want to think about that now.

She'd been a widow for a few months and it had been a long time since she'd seen any man worth pursuing.

He pulled back from her, lifting up a glass of red wine, "A toast," He offered, "To fate."

"To fate," she agreed, clinking their glasses together.

\*\*\*

Clark skimmed through his latest article, tapping his pencil against his desk. He hated fighting with Lois. It had been two hours since she'd left and she hadn't given any hint as to where she was going. He knew better than to go out looking for her; she'd only get angrier at him, but given her knack for getting into trouble he couldn't help but be concerned.

Perry had assigned him to cover the reopening of Cost Mart under 'new' management. Clark wasn't sure how much he was

buying the words of Bill Church's widow and there was something off about James Turner. Clark wasn't sure if he'd go as far as Lucy had in her accusation that Turner was like Luthor, but there was something that didn't sit right with him. Clark couldn't put his finger on it but something about Turner felt familiar and not in a good way.

The elevator dinged. Clark looked up, startled, expecting to see Lois. Jack exited the elevator carrying a large manila envelope in his arms. "Jack," He called as the young man made his way down the steps that lead into the bullpen, "what are you doing here?"

Jack grimaced, but took a moment to force a smile in his direction. "Hey, Clark, is Jimmy around?" He scanned the newsroom nervously.

"Maybe," Clark said hesitantly. Jack seemed distracted as he continued to look around for Jimmy, "What's up?"

"I really don't know," Jack shifted nervously under Clark's gaze.

Jimmy approached Jack from behind, carrying a file folder of his own, "Hey, Jack, what are you doing here?"

"I was just wondering the same thing," Clark gave Jack a look, "Mind telling me what's going on here?"

Jimmy looked from Clark to Jack's nervous expression, "CK's cool. Jack. They already know."

"Know what?" Clark asked.

"A lot more than what we thought," Jack said, handing the folder to Clark. "It came this morning, unmarked."

\*\*\*

Mindy Church rested her head against the soft plush cushions of her loveseat. She nursed her drink as she felt the serenity of sleep overtake her. It was a strange fog that overtook her. She couldn't quite place it, but the feeling was so familiar...

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"You are so stubborn," Lucy sighed, following Lois out of the elevator and into the newsroom.

"And you're overbearing," Lois shot back, taking a seat at her desk. "You didn't have to follow me in."

"Everything okay over here?" Jimmy asked, walking up to them.

"Fine," Lois said haughtily.

"Absolutely," Lucy nodded, crossing her arms over her chest.

"Great," Jimmy said, looking back and forth between them. "I think we got some more on the Intergang angle."

"What kind of angle?" Lucy asked. Jimmy's body language changed slightly, stiffening as she spoke to him. Lucy arched her eyebrow at him, "Something wrong?"

"I'm fine," Jimmy said hurriedly.

Lois sensed quite a bit of tension in the air between Jimmy and Lucy. She had thought they had worked their differences out, but apparently not. She spotted Clark and Jack exiting out of the conference room, heading their way. She felt bad for the way she'd blown up at Clark earlier. It couldn't be easy making a decision like this. She placed a protective hand over her abdomen. She'd had to make many decisions in regards to her family's safety over the past year. She'd allowed her career to suffer and buried herself into the search for her son. Clark had pleaded with her to stop, but she had known what she was doing was right. Maybe she should give Clark the benefit of the doubt?

"Hey, you're back," Clark said walking up to them.

"Yeah," Lois smiled half-heartedly at him. "I went to check on Lucy, and found out Daddy turned himself in this morning,"

"That's a good thing, right?" Clark asked skeptically.

"Depends on how you look at it," Lucy said, "What's this angle Jimmy's being so evasive about?"

"Well, it does concern your father so you might as well know," Jack spoke up, handing her the manila envelope.

"What is this?"

“Your copy,” Clark said, shaking his head. “Fun reading,”

“Translation?” Lucy prompted.

“Intergang’s file on your father,” Clark supplied with a tight-lipped expression.

“Oh,” Lucy sank down into the seat next to Lois’ desk.

“Should I bring Mayson the file?”

“Read it and see what you want to do with it,” Clark answered. “Some things you may not want a part of the public record.”

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“Is it done?” Turner asked, closing the door to his office.

Dan smiled proudly, taking a seat in the large plush chair across from Lex’s desk. “She didn’t even see it coming.”

“Excellent,” Turner mused, “Be sure she didn’t suspect a thing.”

“No,” Dan shook his head. “I was in disguise so she didn’t recognize me.”

“Pretty soon we should be mourning the tragic loss of my partner. I will, of course, give a speech of my condolences as I inherit every penny in her name.”

“You’re in her will?” Dan asked, amused.

“Business arrangement,” Turner smiled.

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“I can’t believe my dad was working with Intergang,” Lois sighed, rolled her neck lightly as she brushed her suit jacket off her shoulders. “I mean, how could he stoop so low?”

“I don’t know... maybe he didn’t realize who he was working for or... What is this?” Clark asked, pointing to the puncture mark on her shoulder with a mild bruise around it.

She grimaced slightly. She’d forgotten to mention her and Lucy’s side trip to Dr. Lee’s this afternoon, “It’s nothing,”

“That doesn’t look like nothing,” he said, leaning down to take a closer look.

“It’s just from when they took some blood from me. It’s fine.”

“That was over a week ago. It’s still bruised,” Clark argued.

“It was from this afternoon,” Lois said quietly.

“This afternoon???” Clark asked, confused.

“I had gone over to Lucy’s earlier this afternoon. She overreacted when I started having a mild dizzy spell and ordered me to go the hospital,”

“You were at the hospital?” Clark asked, edgily. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Lucy was paranoid. I’m fine. The baby’s fine.” Lois reassured, placing his hand over her abdomen for emphasis.

“What did the doctor say?” Clark asked, ignoring her reassurances.

“I need to watch my stress levels,” She smiled up at him. He sighed, raking a hand through his hair as he began to pace, “Clark, I’m fine,”

“You keep saying that, but you forget you were ‘fine’ until you passed out from all the stress you had been under. I’m not going to let that happen again.”

“I’m not going to let that happen again either,” She reassured him. “Seriously, it was nothing.” She placed a hand on his chest, resting her head against it.

“That’s just it,” he said, shaking his head. “It’s not ‘nothing’ to me. You should have told me,”

Lois sighed, “I got sidetracked with everything going on when I got back. It slipped my mind until now.”

“You have to be more careful,” Clark said, shaking his head.

“There are too many anomalies with this pregnancy. We still don’t know much about...” Lois placed a hand over his lips to keep him from talking further.

“I know,” she said shakily. The more he spoke the more she felt the small doubts and fears creeping up to the forefront of her mind. “I’m fine; the baby’s fine. Can’t that be enough for now?”

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Lucy waited outside the Daily Planet, tapping her shoe against the pavement as she waited for the light to change so she could cross the street to the parking garage. Jimmy stepped out of the Daily Planet lobby, looking around nervously before quietly asking, “You need a lift?”

“Hah, he speaks,” she said sarcastically.

Jimmy rolled his eyes, “You don’t have to get sarcastic with me, Luce,”

“You’ve been ignoring me all day. I got more conversation out of your friend, Jack than you,” Lucy spat, “So pardon me if I’m not jumping for joy at our little conversation at the end of the night.”

“Yeah, well, pardon me if I’m not jumping for joy at your relationship with some other guy!” Jimmy spat back.

“What are you talking about?” Lucy fumed angrily.

“The guy at your apartment?”

“Whata are you stalking me now?” Lucy asked angrily.

“Call it bad timing,” Jimmy corrected. “You can’t give us a chance but you’re jumping into bed with...”

Lucy slapped him across the face as hard as she could, “How dare you!” She looked up to see the light had changed. She glared at him, “Stay the hell away from me,”

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“Nah, Nah,” Jordan argued when Lois laid him down in his bed to go to sleep.

“Yes, yes,” Lois argued back. “Bedtime,”

“Nah, Nah,” Jordan finished, a cross expression on his face as he folded his arms over his chest.

Clark couldn’t help but laugh, “About as stubborn as you,”

“Bed,” Lois repeated when Jordan tried to sit up once more.

“Nah, Nah,”

“You are impossible,” Lois muttered shaking her head. She then glared at Clark who was having a hard time containing his laughter, “And you aren’t helping, daddy,”

Clark knelt down to look at Jordan, “Better do what mommy says, Jordan, she means business,” Jordan threw his hands up in the air as if he was giving up then lay back down in his bed, crossing his arms over his chest. “You are your mother’s son.”

Jordan yawned, rubbing his eyes as he shook his head in defiance, continuing to fight sleep. “Come on, let’s let him get some rest.” Clark ushered her out of the bedroom, closing the door behind him.

He followed Lois into their bedroom, wrapping his arms around her waist, which seemed to be growing every day. “So, about earlier,”

Lois sighed, stepping out of his arms, “I still don’t agree with it. I think it’s wrong.”

“You think it would be right for someone to put our family on the front page of every tabloid, exposing Jordan and our daughter to that?” Clark asked, following her into the bathroom. He leaned up against the doorframe, watching as she prepared for bed.

“I think it could be dealt with,” Lois said, looking back at him.

“I’m not going to say it’s okay for you to just stop doing something that has been a part of you for so long. What kind of example does that teach?” She asked, turning to face him with her arms crossed over her chest.

“Lois,” He breathed.

“I’m never going to be ‘fine’ with you giving up. That’s not you. You’ve never given up on anything from the first time we’d met.”

He smiled broadly, “You were a challenge to keep up with,”

“Were?” She challenged.

“Still are,” He corrected himself, wrapping his arms around her, “I love you, you know that, right?”

“I never doubted that you did,” She said, linking her arms around his neck, “That you’re willing to sacrifice so much, means so much to me, but you can’t give up Superman. He’s too much a

part of you; a part of us and our family,”

“But,” He began to argue but stopped when she placed a finger against his lips.

“No ‘buts,’” she said, shaking her head as she stepped out of his arms. “You have a gift that no one else has and you can’t waste it by hiding, afraid of what might happen. You could have been exposed by Lex Luthor so many times when we began going after him, but you weren’t. When we started going after Church there were so many instances where so many things could have gone wrong...”

“Yeah, but Intergang’s still in operation,” Clark pointed out.

“And we’ll bring them down just like we did with Lex,” she said. “But we can’t do that if you’re too busy looking over your shoulder, paranoid about some evasive expose that some nobody keeps threatening. It’s been how many months? Still nothing,”

She pulled her knit top over her head, tossing it into the hamper. She recognized the heat of desire reflecting from her husband’s eyes but continued to change, reaching for the white silk negligee hanging on the back of her vanity chair. “You’re very distracting,” she scolded, turning away from him as she reached behind her to unclasp the fastening to her satin bra.

“Am I?” He asked with a smirk, leaning up against the door frame as he continued to watch her. “Well, I happen to be the one that thinks you, my dear wife are very distracting,” he remarked, reaching out to help remove the strapless bra, replacing it with his palms.

“Clark,” She breathed, leaning back against his solid frame. She gasped in surprise when she felt the effect of both hands gently caressing her breasts with his hands. She glanced hazy eyed into the mirror, watching as their child moved beneath her skin. She smiled back at him, turning her face to look at him. “I’m not that distracting,” she argued.

She removed his hands from her, reaching once more for the negligee that had fallen to the ground when he had surprised her. She unzipped the zipper to her skirt, allowing it to pool around her ankles as it fell to the ground. She stepped out of the dark fabric, kicking it to the side.

“Very, very distracting,” He murmured, resting his hands on her waist as he slipped a thumb beneath the elastic of her lace panties.

“I love it when you wear these,” he murmured huskily. She laughed as she watched his hands roam up and down her body. It was arousing to watch how turned on he could become by a simple pair of lace panties. She glanced at her reflection in the mirror as she watched his hands roam all over her body, up and down her legs, caressing the elastic of her panties.

“Clark, I’m trying to get ready for bed,” she argued half-heartedly as she watched him lower his head to her chest, brushing his lips against her swollen nipples. “Clark.” She raked her hands through his silky hair, fisting it as his lips sealed around her right mound.

“Waste of time,” He murmured against her skin, “We both know it’s only going to end up on the bedroom floor.”

“Maybe,” She breathed, brushing her hand against his. She moaned in pleasure as he slipped his hand beneath the elastic of the lace that covered her hips. “Maybe I like having you take these off of me,” she teased as his palms brushed against her flesh mounds once more, squeezing them gently one by one. “You can’t say you don’t enjoy it,” she teased, running her palm against him from behind.

“Lois,” he hissed.

She turned in his arms, pulling away from him, “I told you, you’re very, very distracting,” She breathed. “I need to...”

“So do I,” He smiled back. God, that smile always got her. He scooped her up in his arms, wrapping her legs around his waist as he carried her further into the large space of their master bathroom. “Shower?” He asked with an evil grin.

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“Any idea what happened?” Henderson asked as he watched the ambulance fly out of the parking lot with Mindy Church’s body inside.

“I don’t know,” Wolf shook his head. “We got a 911 call about Mindy Church being unconscious in her penthouse. The units responded and notified ambulatory services. We’re not sure what exactly happened but it doesn’t look like a break-in. She was alone if that helps.”

“Not really,” Henderson shook his head.

“You want to take a look around?” Wolf pointed to the penthouse above them.

“Let’s do this,” Henderson said, opening the door.

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Diana jabbed the elevator button repeatedly. She could feel her blood boiling with every second that passed until the elevator doors opened on the floor of James Turner’s penthouse. She ripped open the doors as she barged in. “You!” She snapped her fingers. “We have unfinished business!”

He looked up in shock, surprised by the outburst as he pushed himself away from the blonde that was keeping him entertained at the moment. “What in the ...?”

“We had a deal,” Diana snapped glaring at him with arms crossed over her chest. She arched an eyebrow at the unwanted company sitting on the ivory desk Turner was seated at. “Do you mind? This is a bit personal!”

Turner glared at Diana before nodding his agreement for the young blonde to leave. In a huff, she gathered her things and left, slamming the door behind her. “Well, you have my undivided attention, Diana.”

“I told you not to call me that,” she warned, pacing in front of him, “You and I had a deal.”

“And I plan to deliver,” Turner reassured, “Don’t be so paranoid. I know you want your reputation back, but I had to do things a bit unorthodox as far as Mindy’s concerned.”

She pulled out a copy of the Daily Planet and threw it down on his desk, “Unorthodox? Look what we have here, ‘Church Widow Poisoned.’ Who do you think they’ll be looking at first? She doesn’t have a husband anymore. No family. What’s left is her business partner, Mr. TURNER. How exactly do you plan to get your hands on Intergang when you’re behind bars and I’m on the run again?”

“I was careful,”

“Apparently not careful enough because she’s still ALIVE!!” Diana hissed throwing the paper at him.

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“It was a close call,” Dr. Stevens said, shaking his head.

“Is she coherent enough to give a statement?” Henderson asked.

“She’s still unconscious,” Dr. Stevens shook his head. “I’m not even sure how lucid she’ll be when she comes to.”

“You’d be surprised,” Inspector Henderson sighed. “Please keep us posted.” He handed Dr. Stevens his card.

“You got it.”

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Lois yawned, stretching her arms over her head. She could still feel the room spinning after last night. A broad smile spread across her lips as she reached out for the warmth of Clark’s body. She frowned as her hands reached the lukewarm sheets next to her. She sat up, looking around the bedroom.

“Hey, I didn’t mean to wake you.” Clark stood across the room, fully dressed for work.

“Where are you going?” She asked sleepily, glancing at the clock as she sat up wrapping the cotton sheet more securely around her body.

Clark walked towards her. “I thought you could get some rest, maybe work from home,” he suggested as he walked towards her.

Her first instinct was to argue with him, but she caught herself. She could see the concern reflecting in his eyes. “

Please don’t tell me you’re fine. Dizzy spells don’t constitute as ‘fine.’” Clark added with a twinkle in his eyes.

“Okay,” she agreed. “You’re right.” He seemed a bit surprised that she’d caved so easily, “I’ll work from home; see what I can find out about this Intergang to connection to Daddy.”

“Good,” he nodded. “I’ll keep you updated on what’s going on; just promise me no half-baked plans, or breaking and entering.”

Lois rolled her eyes, “That was one time.”

“Yeah, right,” he muttered. “Just try and take it easy. I’m going to take another look at what we’ve got on ACL Industries and their connection to Intergang. Maybe we can find a common denominator between them and your father, find the middle man.”

A light bulb went off as she recalled ACL Industries. So much had happened yesterday she’d forgotten about discovering Lex Luthor’s ex-wife. “Oh, yeah, I’d almost forgotten about them.”

“How could you forget Arianna Carlin, Luthor’s ex? I don’t think Lucy seemed too happy to find out about her,” Clark commented dryly as he took a seat next to Lois on the edge of the bed.

Lois nodded, resting her head against his shoulder. “It’s just another reminder of how much she was lied to. I need to give her a call,” she said, rubbing her palms against the invisible creases in his jacket. “So, are you coming home for lunch?” she asked, linking her arms around his neck.

“Depends.”

She held in her laughter as she let the sheet fall around her, watching as his gaze drifted down her body to the now fully exposed skin.

He sighed, cupping her cheek, “I really hate leaving you.” His eyes wandered down her body, lingering on the curves that had become more noticeable over the last few weeks. “Especially like this.” He gave her a peck on the cheek. “Try and get some rest.”

“I will,” she reassured him, leaning up to kiss him. He smiled against her lips then moved down to place a kiss against the swollen skin of her abdomen. She laughed when she felt the baby kick against the side of his face.

“Love you,” he whispered before he leaned back up to capture her lips once more. She smiled against his lips, wrapping her arms around his neck again.

“I…” She felt his body stiffen in her arms and him pull away. She looked up at him in concern.

“What is it?” Lois asked concerned.

“Fire,” He said, shaking his head, “Metropolis General Hospital,”

“Go,” She nodded at him.

“But…”

“Clark, Superman’s taken a long enough vacation as it is,”

Lois argued. He still was uncertain. He hadn’t gone to the rescue as Superman for a while. She knew he had doubts creeping into the back of his mind, but she also knew he had a voice inside him telling him he had to help. She just needed to make him listen to it.

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“Everything you asked for, Mr. Dunning,” Mrs. Cox placed the large file on his desk.

“Thank you. I assume everything I need is in order.”

“I don’t know,” Mrs. Cox mused, “Was my payment in order, Mr. Dunning?” She glared at him. “You get exactly what you pay for and nothing more, Mr. Dunning.”

“Thank you for your time, Mrs. Cox.”

Mrs. Cox counted the bills in the envelope he handed her.

“Nice doing business with you. Be careful what you do with that information. It could cost you your life.”

Barry laughed, “No, this is going to cost someone else their life,” He said, flipping through the file with interest. “This is

exactly what I need.”

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Clark listened as Henderson went over the scene with him once more, pointing out the source of the fire and the floors that had been affected. It seemed the urgent care wing had been the target. It was obvious arson. He just couldn’t understand why someone would want to burn down a hospital.

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“Poisoned?” Lois asked in surprise.

“She was admitted this morning,” Lucy said, fingering the knick-knacks on the mantel as she looked everywhere but at her sister.

“Any idea who would want her dead?” Lois asked.

“She’s the widow of Bill Church, head of Intergang. It could be anyone,” Lucy explained. “I really don’t know right now. She’s lucky to be alive though.”

“Sounds like it,” Lois said, watching Lucy pace around the room. “You okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine,” Lucy brushed her off. Lois arched an eyebrow at her, “I mean considering I basically got called a … No, never mind; I’m fine. Perfectly fine.”

“Fine,” Lois said, shaking her head. “Just let me know if you need to talk about how fine you are.” She turned back to the file in her hand. She wasn’t sure what had prompted Lucy to invite herself over, but something was obviously bothering her.

Lucy took a seat in the loveseat across from her, “So, where’s Jordan?” She asked.

“Daycare. I’m transitioning him with half days.” Lois said, meeting her sister’s nervous eyes. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” Lucy said, shaking her head. “Absolutely nothing.”

“Doesn’t seem like nothing to me,” Lois closed the file in front of her, crossing her arms over her chest. “What’s wrong?” she repeated.

Lucy looked away. Lois could see the corners of Lucy’s eyes glistening with moisture as she walked away. Lois sighed as she followed her sister into the kitchen. She couldn’t help but feel a sense of déjà vu fall over her. Every time Lucy had a fight with a love interest Lois had to drag it out of her. Lucy wanted the world, but when it came crashing down around her she was the last to admit it.

She stopped in front of the refrigerator, staring at the random pictures and notes across it. Lucy reached for the sonogram that was pinned to the middle of it. “Is this the most recent one?”

“Yeah,” Lois couldn’t help but smile.

“I never got to give you a baby shower before with Jordan. I was hoping you’d let me with this one,” Lucy said, staring at the sonogram. Lois could hear the crack in her voice as she struggled to fight back the tears.

“Of course,” Lois said shakily.

“I still can’t believe they couldn’t tell what the baby was after three scans…” Lucy rambled on, placing a hand on her growing abdomen. “I guess it’s just one more thing going wrong. How am I supposed to prepare? How did they do it without the technology they have now? I mean…” Lucy’s voice began to crack as she held back tears.

“Luce,” Lois placed a hand on her sister’s shoulder only to have it brushed off.

“Don’t,” Lucy snapped back, turning to face her. “You have no idea. I am so tired of the constant ups and downs with everything. I just want a normal life. Is that too much to ask for?”

“No, but having your father stand trial for kidnapping while in cahoots with a known criminal organization isn’t normal, Luce,”

“Neither is having a baby from a one-night stand you can hardly remember, but look at me… I don’t even remember… It’s not fair.” Lucy sighed, rubbing her temples.

“What happened?”

“Apparently, Jimmy’s been around when I was dating Dan. He

watched me let Dan in the night I broke up with him and assumed the worst. Now, I'm back to square one. Oh, and he was pretty descriptive while coming up with his idea of what had to have been going on in my apartment. I don't understand what's going on or why he..."

Lois wasn't really sure how to respond. She hated how everything between Jimmy and Lucy had gotten out of control. She listened quietly, letting her sister recite what all had happened that evening. "...I mean, he should know me better than that. I would never...God, I didn't even with Lex... Well, I slapped him and told him not to come anywhere near me again," Lucy sighed. "I don't know what to do,"

Lois placed an arm around her sister's shoulder, unable to come up with an answer at the moment. She had watched from the sidelines as Lucy and Jimmy continued to battle with one another about their relationship. Ever since Miranda had exposed Metropolis to that poisonous pheromone their lives had been turned upside down. It was strange. What had brought her and Clark together seemed to have ripped two good friends apart. She hoped soon they would be able to work things out. If not for each other, for the sake of the child Lucy was carrying.

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Dr. Klein stared at the young man in front of him skeptically, uncertain of how to respond. He was claiming to be Superman, but there was something about him that wasn't quite right. He wasn't sure what it was exactly.

"So, uh, Superman?" He prodded, "What exactly can I do for you?"

"I want to find out how to destroy my double." Superman said as a cold expression crossed his face. That was what was off.

"Oh?" Dr. Klein did his best not to alert the young man of his suspicions.

"Power is key. I will be the last one standing in that battle. I have to find out what I can do to destroy him."

Dr. Klein thought a moment. This was the best opportunity he had to study the clone without any resistance. Maybe he could use his research to help protect Clark against this double? "Of course, Superman, but in order to do so, I'll have to run a few tests on you. Do you have time?"

"Let's do it," Superman said, crossing his arms over his chest.

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"You called me, Barry," Diana asked, entering the conference room with folders in-hand for the next broadcast.

"Yes, Diana, have a seat," Barry motioned to the chair in front of him.

"Excuse me?" she asked.

"I didn't stutter," he said coolly. "You might want to close the door."

She glared at him as she closed the door slowly waiting for a definitive click to sound. "Barry, are you feeling all right?"

"Perfectly fine," he said, crossing his hands behind his head as he leaned back in the plush leather chair he was seated in. "So, tell me, how long were you going to play me for a fool until you exposed yourself?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Really? Cost Mart has been paying your bills for years, as long as Bill Church was alive. Now you get paid how? Or did Intergang drop you when you went on the run?" He let his arms fall to his sides, folding them on the table in front of him. "I'm done playing your games. I refuse to be an accessory to whatever it is you're doing. I want you out of my office and as far away as possible by the end of the day. Are we clear?"

"Perfectly," Diana watched as his body fell to the floor. "I hate being pushed into a corner," she whispered as she stood over him.

"You..."

"I win, you lose."

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"Hey, Jimmy," Clark walked up behind his young friend, looking at him cautiously. "You all right?" he asked when he noticed the unkempt appearance Jimmy had and the dark circles under his eyes.

Jimmy turned towards him, rubbing his eyes with his sleeve. "I'm fine, CK, just had a long night."

"Yeah," Clark nodded.

"Uh, the Chief was looking for you earlier," Jimmy said, motioning to Perry's office where he was pacing around the office as he yelled into the phone at whatever poor soul had had the bad luck to be on the receiving end of one of his rants.

Clark placed a supportive hand on his shoulder before heading towards Perry's office, oblivious to the small smile that had crossed Jimmy's face when he left. He knocked on the door and Perry waved him in.

"You wanted to see me, Chief?" Clark asked.

"Yeah, how did it go down at Metropolis General?" Perry asked

"Everyone seems to have made it out all right. Superman and the police were working on getting everyone out of there all morning. I've got plenty for at least two or three follow-ups." Clark said.

"Superman, huh? Did you find out where he's been these past few weeks?" Perry had a twinkle in his eye. Clark wasn't sure what the meaning behind it was.

"Uh, yeah, he said he was needed elsewhere, but he's back and shouldn't be leaving anytime soon."

"I hope not. Metropolis needs him," Perry said, taking a seat at his desk. He motioned for Clark to take a seat. "I wanted to make sure everything was all right. I know Lois was put on more restrictions. Her sister made a point to call me last night and tell me."

Clark smiled, "She's fine, Chief. She just needs to take it easy."

"Yeah, good luck with that," Perry muttered. Clark chuckled. "How's the baby doing?"

"She's good," Clark nodded. "Lois is doing everything she can to make sure the baby's all right."

"She?" Perry asked with a smirk.

Clark laughed, realizing his slip. Lois had wanted to wait to tell everyone about the baby's sex but it seemed like he'd ruined the surprise for at least one person, "I, uh, wasn't supposed to tell you that, Chief, sorry....."

Perry smiled, "Tell me what?"

\*\*\*

James Turner looked over the reports he'd gotten back from his team on Miranda's pheromone. It would be interesting to see how Metropolis reacted to this version of 'Revenge' when he had it used against those trying to stop Intergang. If all went well he was looking at having complete control over the city. He craved that feeling more than anything. James Turner was known and respected but he was nothing compared to what Lex Luthor had been. People still shuddered at the name. Soon he would have that respect once more.

"Daydreaming?" Nigel's voice interrupted him.

Turner looked up and smiled, slightly surprised, "Well, well, I was wondering how long you would stay in hiding."

"I had matters to straighten out. You forget I'm not at your beck and call anymore."

"Ah, yes, and what a shame. You really did play the perfect butler."

Nigel's eyes darkened, "I was more than a butler."

"Yes, you were," Lex admitted, putting the files in the top drawer of his desk and walking towards Nigel. "For a time, I thought we were friends. You were my confidant, the one person I thought I could trust. You betrayed that, though."

"You were dead, Lex, what did you want me to do? Watch the

entire empire I helped build crumble?" Nigel asked.

"You betrayed me much before my demise and you know that, Nigel. You worked hard to discredit Lucy during our courtship and ultimately on the day of our wedding. Where were you? Were you already trying to rob the company from under me or did you wait until I jumped to my death?"

"That wasn't in the plan, Lex," Nigel warned. "Being tied down was never in the plan. I wasn't going to watch you throw away everything we'd worked so hard to achieve. Besides, what difference does it matter anyway? She was leaving you. Did you forget that memory when you came back? You had to blackmail her into walking down the aisle to you."

"She loved me once; she'll do it again, and you will have to learn to deal with it. In order to have a partnership, we have to have trust. Can I trust you not to interfere in my personal matters?"

Turner could tell Nigel was seething with anger, but he didn't care. Nigel narrowed his eyes, "I don't want anything to do with your petty love affair, but don't let it cloud your judgment."

"My judgment is crystal clear," Turner reassured.

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"What are you doing?" Lucy asked, watching her sister as she laid out note cards on the carpet.

"Thinking," Lois said, placing another note card on the carpet.

"I'd hate to see you when you're supposed to be relaxing," Lucy said sarcastically.

"I'm fine," Lois glared at her. "Too much has been happening. There has to be a connection. I'm trying to figure out how these are all connected."

"Like what?"

"Dr. Benzen was a part of the cover up with Jordan. He was also supposedly involved with Amanda Marshall, right?" Lois looked over at Lucy for confirmation.

"Yeah, she's still on the lam. No sign of her," Lucy sighed. "You are keeping the doors locked at night, right?"

"Yes, Lucy, I do know how to protect myself," Lois said,

"Now, the story is that Amanda killed Lana in custody, right?"

"Yeah, some fight was going on between them on the inside." Lucy nodded.

"Then there was Miranda with her pheromone that was making half the city crazy," Lois said, placing another card down. Lucy was quiet, placing a hand over her swollen abdomen. "The question is 'why?' There isn't really any motive for doing it."

"Maybe there was an ulterior motive. Think about all the crime that was committed during that time," Lucy suggested.

"True," Lois jotted a note down on another card and placed it down next to the one she had just placed down. "We know Miranda had been using the pheromone before at the Metro Club before the fire because of what had happened to you."

Lucy nodded, "Yeah, but that was different from what had happened before. This was more potent."

"Then we have Intergang," Lois placed a card with a big question mark in the middle. "Where do they come into play?"

"Don't forget ACL Industries," Lucy prompted, "Lex's ex-wife runs the company."

"True," Lois placed another card down. "I still don't know what she's up to."

"So, how are all these guys connected?" Lucy asked.

"I don't know," Lois said, shaking her head. "Mindy Church was in the hospital when that fire was set... Wait, that's another thing. The fires..." She jotted down her notes on another card and placed it down as well. "Who's starting the fires?"

"Your guess is as good as mine," Lucy said, "So, we need to figure out how Dr. Benzen, Intergang, Miranda and ACL Industries are connected."

"And what they want," Lois added.

"And where Daddy and the Superman clone fit into all of

this."

\*\*\*

"Dr. Mamba, it is a pleasure to meet you," Dr. Klein extended his hand to shake the fellow doctor's hand.

"Dr. Klein," Dr. Mamba nodded, "Your message said you had information on a cloning project on Superman?"

"Yes," Dr. Klein motioned for him to follow him. "I got him to trust me enough to run some tests. Normally, I would refer to our cloning specialist on staff, but..."

"Yes, I read the papers. It's tragic. I never thought Dr. Lane would get himself mixed up in something this dirty."

"Yes, well, we're hoping the innocence he continued to maintain is true." Dr. Klein pulled out the reports. "I have yet to see anything like this."

"Seems Dr. Lane has gotten somewhere," Dr. Mamba mused looking over the reports.

\*\*\*

Two Weeks Later...

"She's still alive," Dan said uneasily. "I really can't risk trying something like that again. There's going to be a price on my head, Mr. Turner."

"Yes, well, I'm sure allowing the dust to settle momentarily won't hurt," Turner smiled at Dan, "Just don't do anything stupid like growing a conscience. I still have that tape and I will not think twice about using it if you so much as breathe the wrong way. Are we clear?"

"Absolutely, sir," Dan nodded. "So, until then?"

"Make yourself scarce." Turner lifted up a glass of wine, "I have some things that require my undivided attention for now."

Dan followed his gaze to the television showing Lucy Lane and Mayson Drake in front of a string of reporters outside the courthouse. "Undivided attention, huh?"

"Yes, Ms. Lane isn't someone to go weak in the knees at 'hello."

"Lane?" Dan asked weakly.

"Yes, is there a problem?"

"No," Dan shook his head. "No problem."

"I'll be in touch," Turner said, waving him out of the office.

Dan left the office, closing the door behind him. Turner shook his head. Dan had been seeing Lucy. He knew that, but it felt good to have the shoe on the other foot. To have Dan be the one squirming as he watched Lucy and him together. Tonight he would make his move. Tonight he would wine and dine Lucy Lane. He knew her heart couldn't completely open up to him until he revealed himself to her, but for now, it was a start. She always loved surprises...

A soft clap on the other side of the room brought him back to the present, "So, your enemy is at her weakest and you're just going to bide your time?" Nigel asked.

"Eavesdropping? That is so unbecoming, don't you think?"

Nigel shrugged, "I have to make sure you're not making a tragic mistake."

"I know what I'm doing, Nigel," Turner argued.

"Do you?" Nigel asked, "Or are you just too busy skirt-chasing to realize what you're doing?"

"You want to partner with me, Nigel, we do things my way," Turner snapped angrily.

\*\*\*

Jimmy paced through Whispering Pines Cemetery. Everything between him and Lucy had been fine until Lex Luthor had happened. He hated him. He walked towards the plot area designated for criminals. That attendant had told him this was where the state buried everyone. He still hadn't found Luthor's plot yet.

If he could just make sense out of what it was she had seen in someone that had been so evil. Luthor had been a criminal, the very thing that Lucy swore to put away. Why was she still so hung

up on him?

He glanced around the plots once more. Luthor's grave wasn't here. Where was he?

\*\*\*

"What happened here?" Clark asked, looking around the conference room covered in blood.

Inspector Henderson shook his head, "The cleaning lady," He pointed to the young woman in the corner of the room speaking with Detective Wolf. "She called it in. There's no body; so we're not sure what happened exactly."

"Whatever it was, someone definitely got hurt," Clark said, noticing the blood on the carpet.

"There's no way you can survive losing that much blood, not without medical care anyway," Detective Wolf said.

"We're interviewing everyone on staff to see if anyone knows anything, maybe heard or saw something, but so far nothing's shown up. We have a crime scene but no known victim."

"So essentially you're chasing a ghost?" Clark asked.

"Something like that," Henderson acknowledged.

\*\*\*

"We need to talk," Lucy said, approaching her father's cell as she paced in the small hallway.

"Well, this is a surprise, Lucy," Sam smiled up at her.

"You made a clone of Superman. Why?" Lucy asked, folding her arms over her chest as she stared coolly at her father, waiting for a response.

"I don't have anything to say without my attorney present."

"I'm not the one prosecuting you, Daddy. I'm not here as an ADA; I'm here as your daughter. Please, I need to understand why you would do something like this."

"Science," Sam shrugged. "I was greedy and now I'm paying for it."

"Is there any way to stop him, the clone?" Lucy asked.

"I don't know," Sam shook his head, "I always dreamed of creating a clone to show the world, but I never imagined things would get so out of hand."

"Did you kidnap that baby?" Lucy asked abruptly.

"What?" Sam asked.

"Jesse. You remember? The baby you're being accused of kidnapping? Did you do it?"

"I..." Sam looked away. "You shouldn't be here, Lucy,"

"Who are you trying to protect?" Lucy asked. "Please, I can help."

"I'm beyond help. Just go," Sam snapped.

"Fine," Lucy nodded, "but I'll be back. I'm going to get to the bottom of this."

\*\*\*

Clark walked into the living room expecting to find Lois at her laptop as always, but he was surprised to find her sitting in the middle of the floor surrounded by note cards with different names on them. "Lois?"

She turned around and smiled at him, "Hey, I thought you were coming home for lunch."

"I'm sorry. I got a bit tied up." He apologized, leaning down to give her a kiss as he took a seat next to her.

"I heard about the fire," Lois said, reaching out for his hand.

"It's good to see Superman back in action,"

"Yeah, he's glad to be back," Clark smiled back at her.

"Nah," Jordan called out as he wobbled towards them.

"Nah?" Clark asked, looking at Lois.

"He's been saying it on repeat since I picked him up," Lois explained. "He's been trying to walk and every time he stands up he says 'nah.' Every time he falls down, he says 'nah.'"

"That is something to be upset about," Clark reasoned.

"Nah," Jordan crawled towards them, tugging on his father's pants leg.

"Nah?" Clark asked, leaning down to pick Jordan up. "What's

up with all this 'nah' buddy? You sound like your mommy."

"Hey," Lois thwacked him against the chest. "I'm right here,"

"Some of the time," Clark whispered to Jordan.

"Ma..." Jordan pointed at Lois with a smile.

"Well, ma, how was your day?" Clark asked, turning to Lois,

"And what's up with all the note cards?"

"They help me think."

"Tin," Jordan tried to repeat.

"Careful, he's a little mockingbird," Lois laughed.

"I see," Clark said, readjusting himself so he leaned back against the couch. "He's talking more and more."

"And arguing," Lois added.

"Hey, like mother, like son," Clark shrugged.

"That's not funny."

"Really? I think it's hilarious."

Lois thwacked him against the chest once more. "You are such a brat sometimes."

"Hey, if the shoe fits," Clark shrugged. "So, what are you trying to think about?" he asked, motioning to the circle of cards around them.

"Everything." Lois said, leaning her head against his shoulder, "Dr. Benzen, Amanda, Intergang, ACL Industries... my father. I think it's all connected somehow but I haven't figured out how yet."

"Hmm, well, you can add the fires to the list and a possible death," Clark said.

"What do you mean?" Lois asked.

"Metropolis General."

"No, I know about that," Lois shook her head, "What death?"

"We don't know yet. Top Copy's conference room is covered in blood. No body was found; so no one knows who was attacked or killed." Clark explained.

"Wow," Lois said softly, "That's..."

"I know," Clark sighed. "It's hard to investigate a murder when you can't find anything besides the crime scene."

"Yeah," Lois sighed, "You know, today was kind of fun. I should work from home more often," she teased. "Lucy came over and helped me sort out all this mess." She motioned to the note cards on the floor. "It was the first time we'd been able to really be ourselves with one another without all the tension."

"Sounds nice, but I think if you worked from home I'd probably go insane," Clark whispered, wrapping his arm around her shoulder. "How's Lucy doing?"

"Good," Lois nodded. "She's claiming to be done with Jimmy. She said she's taking a break from dating. Oh, and get this! That Ryan Knox keeps pushing her towards that James Turner."

Clark made a face and Lois nodded, "Yeah, me too. She's still got a weird feeling about him. Not sure what to think about the whole thing. She keeps talking about Lex and how she feels like he's watching her..." Lois shook her head. "We joked around a bit and cut loose. Today was nice." She leaned up to kiss him.

He smiled against her lips, "Nice is good," he said, pulling away, "So, what do you want for dinner?"

"I think some pasta would be good," She laughed when he groaned at her suggestion. "What? I can't help that I love what pasta does to you...or that your daughter is craving it," she patted her abdomen for emphasis.

He laughed, leaning over to pick her up in his arms as he laid her on the couch with Jordan, "I'll be right back. The usual requests?"

"Yes, please," She pulled him towards her by his tie, capturing his lips before pushing him away. "Go. The sooner you go the sooner you get back."

"Guh bye," Jordan squealed.

"I get the picture," Clark groaned, rising to his feet.

"Thank you," Lois said with a smile.

"Yeah, yeah," Clark said after he spun into his Superman suit.

"I can feel the love."

\*\*\*

"We need to talk," Jimmy walked up to Lucy as she left the courthouse.

"No, we don't," Lucy hissed angrily, "I told you not to come near me again."

"Don't blame me because you can't handle the truth," Jimmy snapped, "Your boyfriend's missing."

"What are you talking about?" Lucy asked irritably as she made her way down the steps.

"Luthor," Jimmy said, following her in hot pursuit. "Did you know he isn't buried anywhere in Whispering Pines?"

"I..." Lucy shook her head, "Jimmy, why are you trying to find his grave anyway?" She held up her hand to wave down a taxicab.

"Why is he not there?" Jimmy asked.

"I don't know. I've never gone to the grave. After everything that had happened, I..." She reached for the door handle of the taxicab that had pulled up. "Look, I can't do this right now. Just leave me alone."

"But, Lucy..." Jimmy stopped when she slammed the door to the taxi in his face.

\*\*\*

"So, what have we got here?" Clark asked, picking up one of the cards, "ACL = Intergang?"

"It's just a theory," Lois shrugged. "I haven't really put any clout into any of it yet. I was trying to sort through everything." She took a bite of the cannoli he had brought back, "Mmm, these are so good."

"I'm glad you're enjoying them," Clark said, reading through some of the other cards he'd picked up off the floor. "You don't have anything under 'fires'," he observed.

"I'm not sure what to put there," she explained, leaning her body against his side as she scooted her back against him. She reached behind her and lifted up his arm so she could lean against his chest more comfortably.

"No theories on the fires? Usually, you have all the answers," he teased.

"Not this time," she shook her head.

He leaned over to finish picking up everything on the floor. "What's this?" he asked, pulling out a magazine, "Metro Woman".

Her eyes got big as she reached over to grab it from him, "It's nothing. Lucy left it over here," she stammered as he blocked her from grabbing it.

"Really? Why are you acting so nervous then?" Clark asked, standing up to dodge her.

"Would you give it?" She lunged towards him only to miss again as he floated out of her reach.

"Now, I'm really curious," he laughed, opening up the magazine to skim through it.

"That is not fair," she argued.

He shook his head as he flipped through the colorful pages, "I will never understand fashion magazines," he muttered. "Well, what do we have here? Quizzes."

"You're really not cute when you get cocky," Lois harrumphed, crossing her arms over her chest.

"Let's see here, 'Are you ready for the next step?' That can't be what you're worried about seeing as how there's not really another step to take." He winked, sitting down cross-legged as he continued to float in the air out of reach.

"Ha ha, so funny, but the chances of you crossing any lines are growing slimmer and slimmer the more you read," she warned.

"That's okay. I'm having plenty of fun right now," he shot back. "Oh, how about this one, 'How compatible are you?'" He laughed, "I can't believe you actually took this."

"It was a dare from Lucy. She took it too," Lois shot back. "You're not seriously going to go through every one of those

questions, are you? It's dumb,"

He laughed, "You're really bothered about this, aren't you?"

Lois threw a pillow at him, "You are a brat." She took advantage of his distraction to reach up and grab the magazine out of his hands. "And this is going out into the trash,"

"Hey, wait, I wanted to see how compatible we were," Clark laughed, following her into the kitchen as she attempted to throw the magazine away.

"No, put me down!" She shrieked when he picked her up halfway into the kitchen. She shrieked in laughter as they continued to fight over the magazine.

\*\*\*

Lucy looked around the restaurant nervously. It was beautiful. She hadn't been in a setting like this since her courtship with Lex. "Beautiful," Turner commented, taking a sip of his wine.

"Yeah," She smiled back at him. "Mr. Turner, what is this about? You said you had information on..."

"Rich food is something to savor but not to be overdone," he said. "I'm happy you agreed to dinner."

Lucy took a sip of her water, "I didn't have much of a choice..."

"Ms. Lane," Turner said, holding up his glass to toast.

Lucy placed her glass of water down, "Mr. Turner, I think you have the wrong idea here..."

"Well, isn't this nice?" Jimmy walked up to them.

"Excuse me, but we're in the middle of something," Turner said.

"Yes, I can see that," Jimmy said with a bite in his tone.

"Don't you think it's a bit insensitive to be taking a pregnant woman out like this, drinking in front of her? Kind of selfish; don't you think?"

Lucy glared at Jimmy, "Jimmy, can I have a moment..."

"I'm just getting started," Jimmy said angrily. "You want to keep moving on with everyone but me. You don't have a problem having relationships with everyone else, but me. Why is that?"

"I told you to leave me alone, Jimmy. If you can't respect that simple request on your own I will get a restraining order," Lucy warned.

"A restraining order?" Jimmy scoffed. "How exactly is that going to work? I'm supposed to follow it whenever it's convenient to you, but if I need anything then it's out of the question."

"Mister...?"

"Olsen," Jimmy introduced himself, "Jimmy Olsen. I'm the father of her baby."

"Yes, well, Mr. Olsen, you need to probably walk off whatever it is that's..."

"You think I'm drunk?" Jimmy laughed. "Surprise, I'm sober. I just can't stand having my child exposed to the likes of you."

Turner stood up to face Jimmy, "Is that so? Well, we can settle this like men."

"Bring it on," Jimmy challenged.

"Both of you stop it," Lucy argued.

Jimmy swung at Turner, knocking him in the jaw and onto the floor. "Jimmy!" Lucy snapped, "Stop it!"

Two large men in tuxedos came towards them, "Mr. Turner, are you all right?"

"Get him out of here!" Turner pointed at Jimmy.

"Come on, let's go," One of the men said, grabbing Jimmy by the arm.

"I am terribly sorry," Turner apologized to Lucy.

"I'm sorry, but I think I should go," Lucy said, shaking her head. "This is a mistake and you obviously have the wrong idea here... It's too soon after..."

"After what?"

"Nothing," she said, turning to leave.

"Lucy," Turner followed her out of the restaurant. He stopped when he saw Jimmy approach her outside.

“Lucy, wait,” Jimmy said, trying to catch up with her.  
“Leave me alone,” Lucy screamed. “I hate you! Why do you keep doing this to me???”  
“Lucy, I’m sorry,” Jimmy apologized.  
“No, just leave me alone!!” She pushed him away, running down the steps angrily.  
“Lucy,” Jimmy called out. She stopped, turning to face him in tears. He placed a hesitant hand on her shoulder. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have gone off like that...Just seeing you with...him...on a date...after...”

“It wasn’t a date,” Lucy said bitterly, pacing in front of him outside the front of the restaurant.  
“It wasn’t?” Jimmy asked baffled, “...but he...”  
“Had the wrong idea...I had a message that he had information about Intergang and my dad. Obviously, he had other intentions...”

“So, I got mad for nothing...?” Jimmy asked, placing a hand on her shoulder. “I’m sorry, Luce. I don’t know how to do this. I miss you. I miss our friendship and being able to tell you everything and laugh. I miss you.”

Lucy smiled wryly, “I miss you too. I’m not good at this. I... This whole year has been so hard...I can’t do a relationship with you...I can’t do a relationship with anyone right now. I’m barely able to do a relationship with my own sister. I miss my friend. Can I please just have him back and maybe we can work the rest of it out as we go?”

Jimmy smiled back at her and nodded, pulling her to him. “I can do that.”

For the first time in months, Lucy felt like a huge weight had been lifted off her shoulders. She beamed up at him happily. She watched as his face changed to fear. “Jimmy what’s...?” Before she knew what had happened she felt a searing pain course through her side, her abdomen.

“Noooooo!!!!”

\*\*\*

The living room was covered in their shed clothing. Clark held Lois against him with the cotton throw wrapped around them as he continued to tease her about the compatibility quiz. Her embarrassment over taking the quiz was now long gone. Her legs intertwined with his as she rested her head against his chest, listening to his heartbeat. “A 73%?” Clark laughed, wrapping his arms around Lois as he read over the results.

“What can I say? We’re still newlyweds.” Lois shrugged, tugging the living room throw over her more tightly.

“You cold?” He asked, rubbing his hands up and down her arms.

She looked around the room at the disarray of their shed clothing and smiled. “A little,” she admitted, reaching above her head for his dress shirt.

“There you go, stealing my clothes again,” He teased, rolling them over so she was straddling him as she slipped the dress shirt on.

“What’s yours is mine,” she shot back, leaning down to kiss him.

“I do have to admit it looks much sexier on you,” he whispered against her lips.

“Hmmm, you’ve been trained well, husband,” she teased.

He laughed, wrapping his arms around her as he rolled them over again so she was beneath him. “Trained?”

“Mmm hmm,” She wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling him down to her level as she leaned up to capture his lips.

“I love you,” he whispered, cupping her cheek with his thumb.

She stroked her hand against his cheek, “I love you, too,” She kissed his palm, “Personally I think we’ve done pretty good for a 73% compatible.”

He groaned, tightening his arms around her. “Makes you wonder what Lucy’s compatibility test score was.”

“Mmm, depends on who she was taking it on,” Lois said softly.

“What do you mean?” Clark asked.

“Well, she started dating that Dan Scardino a few months ago.” She noticed the grimace on his face. “I know. My thoughts exactly,” she shuddered against him.

“So, what happened with Jimmy?” Clark asked.

She rolled her eyes, “Do guys just not talk?”

“I haven’t had a chance to talk to him. He didn’t look good this morning, that’s for sure.”

“Lucy said they got into a fight because he was following her and got the wrong idea when she was breaking up with Dan,” Lois explained, turning on her side to face him, propping her head up with her hand as she leaned on her elbow for support.

“The DEA agent?” Clark asked, surprised.

“Yeah, they dated a bit for about a month,” Lois explained. “She keeps trying to open herself up to everyone but Jimmy,”

“I really hope they can work things out before that baby comes. I’d hate to see him or her stuck in the middle of this mess.”

“You’re telling me,” Lois sighed, “Oh, by the way, I have to go with her Friday for her doctor’s appointment. She’s going to tour the hospital and she wanted me to come with her.”

“Friday?” Clark asked.

“Yes, a few days shy of Jordan’s party,” Lois explained, seeing the question in his eyes.

“It’s hard to believe it’s been a year since he was born,” Clark shook his head.

“I know,” Lois sighed, “We’ve missed too much.”

“That’s for sure.” He tightened his arms around her. “But we’re not going to miss anything else,” he promised, placing a hand over her swollen abdomen, smiling up at her as their child kicked against his palm. “I think she’s got your roundhouse.”

“She better be careful in there. If she stretches me out too much I may never go back in shape,” Lois sighed, looking down at her round middle that used to be a tiny waist before her two pregnancies.

“I like your shape,” Clark whispered, leaning over to kiss her. She smiled at him, “Even if I’m getting fat?”

“You’re not fat; you’re pregnant, and for the record, you are the most beautiful,” he placed a kiss on her cheek, “and sexy,” another kiss against her collarbone, “pregnant woman I’ve ever seen,”

“You’re very biased,” she argued, enjoying the feel of his hands against her skin.

“Very, but it’s still true,” he argued.

She laughed as he tugged on her earlobe with his lips. “Keep this up and we’re going to have a repeat of this...Oh, Clark,” she whispered, feeling him nuzzle her ear.

“Encore,” he whispered, tightening his arms around her.

She smiled against his lips until she felt him stiffen in her arms, “You’ve got to be kidding me...”

He held up a finger, “Shhh...” He pulled out of her arms, immediately spinning into his Superman suit, “Call your mom. See if she can watch Jordan...”

“Clark...?” Lois stared at him perplexed.

“It’s Lucy...” He said grimly before ricocheting out the window, leaving her to figure out what in the world just happened.

\*\*\*

Jimmy stared at the cement beneath him that was covered in Lucy’s blood. He could vaguely hear the sirens around him. His eyes were swollen, staring into space as everyone surrounded him. All he could do was stare at Lucy; holding her in his arms. His body was soaked in her blood. He had no idea what had happened after the gunfire. All he’d known was that he needed to comfort her. She had cried at first before losing consciousness.

A flashlight sprayed into his eyes and he squinted at the ambulatory attendant who looked at him in concern. “Are you all

right?”

Jimmy heard a familiar voice and turned to see Superman, kneeling next to him, “She ... she was shot. She’s pregnant,” Jimmy said softly.

“Jimmy, are you...?” Clark asked concerned. His young friend was covered in blood. He wanted to assess the situation to make sure Jimmy didn’t have any injuries as well.

“Superman...it happened so fast...All I saw was a red light and then so much...blood...”

“Okay, Jimmy, these guys are here to help, but first I need you to let go of her. Can you do that for me?”

Jimmy thought for a minute. “I...”

“Please, let them help her.”

“The baby,” Jimmy whispered, letting go of her to allow the ambulatory workers to start working on helping Lucy.

“We’ll do everything we can,” one of the workers said. Clark watched in dismay as his young friend followed Lucy into the back of the ambulance. The way Jimmy had described the gunshot... There was no way anyone could have stopped it...even if he had been there. Someone had tried to kill Lucy. He silently prayed she and her baby would make it but only time would tell.

\*\*\*

“Jimmy, what in the Sam Hill?” Perry asked, looking at the young man that sat on the floor of the hospital covered in blood. “Are you all right?”

“She’s in surgery,” Jimmy said flatly, staring at the double doors in the waiting area.

“What? Son, you’re not making any sense. What happened?” Perry pleaded with him. He sighed, placing a hand on his shoulder. “You want me to call someone?” He asked uncertainly.

“Lucy,” Jimmy said quietly.

“You want me to call Lucy?” Perry asked, not understanding.

“No, Chief, Lucy’s in surgery,” Jimmy explained tearfully.

“Oh, God,” Perry sighed, understanding Jimmy’s grief. “Have you called Lois and Clark yet?”

“No,” Jimmy shook his head. “I... I can’t...” He stammered, “I-I couldn’t stop it. I was there. I can’t ... I can’t tell her...”

Before he could finish Lois burst through the doors looking around the room. She spotted Jimmy and Perry and headed over, “Lois, how did you...?”

“Uh, Superman...” she said quickly before turning to Jimmy, “What happened? Where is Lucy?”

“In surgery,” he said apologetically. “Lois, it’s bad...”

Lois felt a lump in her throat, “The baby...?”

“We don’t know yet, darlin’,” Perry said, looking around, “Where’s Clark?”

“Um...” Before she could finish Jimmy spotted his friend coming through the double doors.

“CK!”

“He was parking...” Lois supplied hurriedly.

Clark hugged his young friend and placed a supportive arm around Lois, “It’s going to be okay.”

“You don’t know that,” Lois said, looking up at him accusingly.

\*\*\*

Amanda walked past the police tape that had been left, closing off Top Copy’s main conference room. She’d been hearing the buzz most of the day about how the police wouldn’t let anyone upstairs. Now it was after hours. The police were gone and no one was left to keep her from snooping.

She turned the knob to the door, hoping to have it just glide open, but it was locked. Frustrated, she pulled out a pick from her purse. During her time on the outside, she’d had to learn to pick many a lock to get where she needed. Now was no different. After struggling for a moment she heard a click and turned the knob until the large wooden door opened.

She scrunched her nose up when the foul smell reached her

nose. She covered her nose and mouth with a handkerchief and squatted down to crawl under the police tape to enter the room. She stood up and gasped, taken aback at the scene. She’d seen pretty graphic scenes before of trauma victims, but this was new to her. The carpet all around the corner of the office was covered in blood. There was blood all over the walls behind it. It looked like the corner of the room had been painted in it.

“Oh, my...” She gasped.

A chair in the corner turned sharply, “Who’s there?”

She backed away, trying to make a run for it, but he was too fast. He caught her by her wrists, stopping her from moving. He was strong. “Let me go,” she fought against him. Her hand burned with pain when she struck his hard chiseled chest. She stopped, looking up, “Who are you?”

He was dressed all in black. His face was covered by a mask. He could easily be a fly-by-night criminal looking to rob the place but there was something in his eyes that told her differently. “A stranger that wants the truth,” he said quietly, still not releasing her. “Who are you?”

“Someone else who wants the truth,” she said, looking around. “What happened here?”

“Someone was murdered,” he said quietly.

“I kind of figured that,” Amanda snapped, “Who?”

“I don’t know,” The stranger said. There was something so familiar about him, but she couldn’t place it. “That’s what I’m trying to figure out.”

\*\*\*

Jimmy had disappeared hours ago. Perry had already left for the night, thinking the doctors would be taking all night to let everyone know what was going on. Ellen had been calling repeatedly to check on a status update for Lucy. Lois stood to her feet when she saw the dark-haired surgeon, Dr. Reginald Burke, and two residents standing behind him. Dr. Burke had reassured them he was the best for this surgery and he would do everything for Lucy. He had promised. She felt Clark’s hand gently squeeze her shoulder from behind. She looked back at him, taking a deep breath as she prepared herself for the worst. She knew something was wrong. It didn’t take three doctors to tell the family about a surgery. Something had gone wrong.

Lois stared at Dr. Burke’s solemn face, shaking her head. “No,” She said softly.

“I’m so sorry,” He apologized. “We did everything we could, but his little body wasn’t strong enough for the surgery,” His head fell as he spoke, “I’m sorry.”

“He?” Lois squeaked in between tears.

“Yes,” He nodded, “It was a boy... If he had been just a few more weeks along we might have...” He sighed, “I’m very sorry.”

“He??” Lois felt the tears escape as Clark hugged her tightly from behind. “And Lucy?”

“She’ll be waking up whenever the anesthesia wears off. The surgery was successful. We were able to repair the damage from the bullet’s path, but it will be a long recovery before she’s back to a hundred percent. Moving, walking, even laughing will be difficult.”

“Yeah, well, I don’t think there’s going to be any danger of that happening anytime soon,” Lois said dryly.

“When can we see her?” Clark asked.

“You’re more than welcome to sit with her,” Dr. Burke motioned to the hallway behind the double doors he’d come out of. “The nurse will give you the details,”

“Thank you,” Lois said softly, watching Dr. Burke disappear behind the double doors once more. She turned to Clark. “This is going to kill her.”

“She’s lucky to be alive,” Clark reminded her. “Someone wanted her dead.”

“Instead, they killed her baby,” Lois shook her head. “Where’s Jimmy?”

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“Mayson,” Detective Wolf waved at her when she stepped out of her car.

“What have we got?” Mayson asked, stepping towards him.

“Here,” He handed her a white doctor’s mask, “You’re going to need this,” She nodded, and placed it over her nose and mouth. “Try and stay upwind,” Wolf said over his shoulder as he waved her on to follow him.

She nodded mutely, following him down the docks. “Oh, God,” she gasped when the smell hit her nostrils through the paper mask.

“I know,” Detective Wolf groaned. “It’s worse without the mask. A couple of the guys have already gotten sick. We’ve closed the perimeter off to the public.”

Mayson stared at the water hitting the edge of the docks. It had a reddish hue. “Is that blood?”

Detective Wolf motioned to the white sheet laid out on the dock. There were seven small bumps beneath it. “You know those crazy stories you hear about when you’re in training and you think I’ll never have to deal with that kind of case?” Mayson nodded skeptically. “Guess again,” he said, pulling the sheet off and revealing the small limbs that had been cut off of a human body and thrown into the bay.

“Oh, my God!” Mayson gasped in horror.

“We still don’t have any head or feet or hands, but we know whoever it is or was...was male,” Wolf explained.

“I...I...” Mayson shook her head, “Who would do something like this?”

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Candles were lit, glowing throughout the room. Lois stared at her feet, uncertain of what to do. Jimmy sat in the first pew with his head bowed and his hands folded together as if he was holding on for dear life. “Jimmy?”

He looked up, turning to look at her, managing a weak smile, “Hey,” He shrugged his shoulders, attempting to recompose himself. “You all right?” he asked. She’d done her best to hide the tearstains on her cheeks but obviously not enough to hide it from her young friend.

She took a seat next to him, looking everywhere but at him, “I could ask you the same thing. Lucy was shot three times tonight. One of those bullets struck your child.”

“The doctors are doing what they can,” he said stiffly.

“Yeah, but they can’t do miracles,” Lois said. “You’re hiding in here while Clark and I are left to deal with the fallout.”

“Lucy isn’t going to want to see me,” Jimmy argued.

“Wouldn’t want... Jimmy, I’ve been doing my best to stay out of whatever’s going on between the two of you. You’re both adults. You make your own choices, but I can’t do it anymore. Three bullets. One in the shoulder. One in the side. One in the chest. You don’t think she would want you there when she wakes up from something like that? You two are best friends.”

“Were,” Jimmy corrected. “I lost my best friend the night that pheromone got released in Metropolis.”

“If that’s how you really feel then why are you still here?”

Lois asked. He opened his mouth to speak but she cut him off, “You still care about her and you care about...” Her voice cracked a bit, “Jimmy, you need to be there when she wakes up. I can’t...I can’t be the one she sees when she wakes up. This isn’t about what you want; or what she wants. It’s...it’s about...” She stopped, shaking her head as the emotion she fought to suppress began to overtake her.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry...” Jimmy said, realizing how much of a toll this was having on Lois as well. “I’ll go sit with her. I promise. Just stay nearby?” He asked, squeezing her hand gently.

“Thank you,” Lois said softly.

She watched Jimmy get up and leave. She let out a sigh of relief when she heard the heavy doors close behind him. Tears

escaped the corners of her eyes; she cupped her mouth, trying to suppress the cry that had escaped her lips. She could hold back the pain that had overtaken her. She felt her knees go weak and her heart felt like it had been ripped from her chest as she knelt over, trying to breathe.

Two strong arms wrapped around her, soothing her, “I know, it’s okay,” Clark whispered, holding her close to him.

“I can’t do this,” she cried. “I can’t be this strong. I can’t...”

“It’s okay,” he soothed, holding her close. “She’ll get through this...”

“How?” Lois cried. “Losing Jordan killed me... Oh, God, Lucy...” She cried, clinging to Clark as he held her tightly.

“I know...” he managed hoarsely.

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“You’re treading on dangerous territory, Agent Scardino,” Arianna warned as she took a sip of her wine. “If the police had caught wind of your involvement in Mindy’s poisoning...”

“I was careful,” Dan cut her off. “Luthor has no idea he’s being played a fool nor does Mindy.”

“And that’s how we’ll keep it. Soon ACL will control all of Metropolis. Intergang will be obsolete along with LexCorp.”

“The ultimate power over Metropolis,” Dan observed, amused. “Too bad it’s illegal to monopolize a whole city like that.”

“Too bad no one knows,” Arianna added.

“How long are you going to have me playing both sides of the coin?” Dan asked. “You asked me to help you take over Metropolis. As far as I can tell you’re doing a good enough job of that on your own.”

“I need someone to keep Lex and Mindy sidetracked while I steal everything they’ve worked so hard for right out from under them, just like he did to me,” Arianna explained.

“That’s one case of a woman scorned,” Dan mused.

“Hell hath no fury.”

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A bright light shone in her eyes as she tried to open them. Everything was blurry. Her eyes stung. “Wha...” She blinked her eyes, trying to focus her vision. Jimmy was watching her hesitantly. Her mouth was dry when she tried to speak, “Ji...m,”

“You want some water?” Jimmy asked concerned.

She nodded, wincing at the pain in her head when she moved her neck. What had happened? She took the cup of water he handed her.

“The doctor said you’d be in a lot of pain for a while; both physically and...”

“What happened?” Lucy squeaked out. Something was wrong. A nagging sensation tugged at the back of her mind. Jimmy looked away, not wanting to meet her eyes. “Jimmy?”

He looked back at her and she was surprised to see tears in his eyes, “You were shot, Luce,”

“Shot?” She asked confused.

“You don’t remember?” He asked.

“I remember visiting Lois and,” she shook her head, “I’m sorry. The rest is a blank.”

His face was covered in sorrow. There was more. Something had happened. Something bad. She instinctually reached down to touch her growing abdomen only to find softened skin. She frowned, looking down at the lack of growth beneath her hand. “My baby... Jimmy, where’s my baby?”

Jimmy’s face visibly winced. “Luce, I’m so sorry,” he cried.

“No,” She argued, “I can’t. That’s not fair. That’s not... No no no no no!” She shook her head repeatedly. He reached out to hold her and she pushed him away. “No! Don’t touch me!”

“Lucy,” he pleaded with her.

“Don’t touch me,” she repeated, curling up into a ball as she cried.

“I don’t know what to do here. What do you want me to do? I...”

“Just leave, please,” Lucy pleaded. “Just go.” She pointed at the door. Jimmy nodded, resigning himself to doing whatever was going to make things easier on her. He got halfway to the door before he stopped himself.

“No!” He shook his head, turning to face her.

“What?” She asked, surprised.

“I said, ‘no’” He repeated. “I’m not leaving. You are not going to shut me out. I lost a child too, Luce,”

A knock on the door made Lucy bite her tongue. Jimmy took a seat next to her as the nurse entered the room to take her vitals, “I’m glad to see you’re awake, Ms. Lane. I know it’s hard, but you have a good support system. Your boyfriend, your sister...and a few friends...everyone’s been here all night waiting for you to wake up. You’ll get through this,” the nurse reassured her.

Lucy looked up at Jimmy who was avoiding her gaze. She reached out to squeeze his hand, “I’m sorry,” she mouthed to him.

“Your vitals seem to be doing well. Are you up to any more visitors? You have a whole waiting room full of people to see you.”

Lucy nodded softly. “Yeah.”

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Lois took a seat next to Lucy’s bed, smoothing the imaginary wrinkles in her blanket, “You’re becoming quite the celebrity, Luce,” she teased, “Every station is talking about you.”

“Yay, me,” Lucy said dryly. “This is not exactly how I wanted to climb the ladder to stardom.”

“The doctor said they got all the bullet out and repaired the damage, but you’ve got a long road to recovery,” Lois said, changing the subject.

“You’re avoiding me,” Lucy observed.

“No, I’m not,” Lois sniffed, “I’m right here.” She gently squeezed her sister’s hand.

“Lois, I’m not going to break. You don’t have to treat me with kid gloves.” Lucy observed.

“I’m not...” Lois argued half-heartedly.

“It’s okay,” Lucy shrugged. “I’ll get through this. It took me getting shot to finally quit fighting over the stupid stuff.” She winced as she tried to sit up.

“Are you okay?” Lois asked in concern.

“Just a pang,” Lucy shook her head, “I’m fine. I have to be.”

“I’m sorry,” Lois said, taking Lucy’s hand again and covering it with her own.

“I know,” Lucy smiled up at Lois. “Me too, but I’m not going to dwell on the past. It’s of no use. I know I would have been a great mom, but that just wasn’t in the cards, I guess.” Lucy’s voice was shaky as she spoke. “You know I keep on hoping this is just some big nightmare. Maybe someone kidnapped him and made me think he was dead? Or maybe I’m dreaming and I’m still at the hotel...”

“Why were you going to dinner with Turner in the first place? I thought you and Jimmy...”

“I don’t know,” Lucy shrugged. “He said he had information about daddy’s case but that turned out to be a big ruse...”

“Luce,” Lois brushed a few stray tears off her cheeks.

“But I’m stupid because I saw my son’s corpse. I know he’s dead, but that hope I hold onto in the back of my mind...”

“I know,” Lois held her hand tightly offering a half smile, “Believe me, I know.”

“You’re the only one that would,” Lucy sighed, “I’m sure Clark’s probably getting antsy waiting out there for you. Why don’t you go home?”

“No, he, uh,” Lois stopped a moment to think. Clark had been called away by a distress call from the search and rescue team by Hobb’s Bay. She hadn’t gotten many details from him before he’d left but she knew he would be a while.

“What is it?” Lucy asked.

“Nothing. I just... Clark went to check with Henderson on

how the investigation’s going on your shooting.” Lois lied.

Lucy glared at her. “In the middle of the night? Bill Henderson is not going to have anything this early in the game. It’s been, what?”

“Eight hours,” Lois answered.

“Eight hours and you need to go home,” Lucy pushed. “You have a child to take care of.”

“Mom is with Jordan right now.”

“All the more reason to go home; there’s no telling what embarrassing stories she’s telling him.” Lucy teased.

“This doesn’t make any sense,” Lois said softly.

“I got shot; it happens. I could have easily been shot coming out of the courthouse after a case or the police station when I went to go see Daddy earlier. It just happens. There’s nothing you can really do about it.”

“You went to go see Daddy?” Lois asked.

“Yeah, I was trying to get some answers about the clone,” Lucy breathed heavily. “That really hurts,” she winced.

“Sorry,” Lois apologized. “I know this can’t be easy.”

“No, not that; it’s just the pang in my side when I breathe too heavily,” Lucy explained.

“Do you want me to get a nurse?”

“No,” Lucy shook her head, “I’m fine,” she argued. “Now, where were we?” she asked, readjusting herself with the pillows.

“You were talking about your visit with Daddy?” Lois prompted.

“Oh, right,” Lucy nodded, “No, I went to see if I could get any information out of him regarding the clone, but he was too busy trying to protect whomever he had been working for.”

“That’s Daddy for you,” Lois sighed, “Brilliant scientist; workaholic till the end,”

“Yeah,” Lucy nodded, “He seemed scared.”

Lois’ interest perked up, “What do you mean?”

A knock on the door interrupted her. Lois and Lucy turned to see Mayson Drake standing in the doorway, “I heard they were letting you have visitors.”

“Hey, Mayson,” Lucy smiled up at her friend.

“I just heard. I came as soon as I could.” Mayson came over to hug Lucy. “Are you all right?”

“I’m good,” Lucy reassured. “It’s good to see you.”

“I’ll be back in the morning,” Lois said quietly, interrupting the reunion.

“Get some sleep, then I want to see my nephew...” Lucy beamed with a forced smile.

“Luce, are you sure you’re up to...?” Lois began.

“I have already missed enough time with him. I don’t want to miss his birthday. Even if I am in the hospital.” Lucy said grimly.

Lois nodded, leaning over to give her sister a peck on the cheek. “Take care of yourself and call me if you need anything.”

“Good night, Lois,” Lucy called out before Lois closed the door behind her.

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Clark had been called away by the search and rescue. He hadn’t wanted to leave Lois, but he knew he’d regret it if he hadn’t gone. The search and rescue boat had tipped, leaving them stranded in the middle of Hobb’s Bay with no way for anyone to reach them. Why they had decided to venture out so far without a backup team was beyond him.

Detective Wolf, team in tow, had hounded Superman from the minute he’d landed. Clark was determined that he would be able to find the missing body parts in the bay. It had taken everything in him not to get sick at the sight in front of him. Every joint had been severed on this body. There was still no head and no identifying limbs to make a clear identification. He searched the bay repeatedly for hours with no luck.

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“Good morning, Mrs. Church,” the nurse said softly when she

saw Mindy waking up.

“Wha?” Mindy looked around, slightly disoriented.

“Calm down. You’re in the hospital.”

“The hospital?” Mindy gasped.

“Just calm down.” The nurse laid a reassuring hand on Mindy’s shoulder. “You were admitted for poisoning.”

“Poisoning?” Mindy sat up, readjusting herself in the hospital bed.

“Please, Mrs. Church, just calm down.”

“What? What happened to me?”

\*\*\*

“Lois?” Ellen shook her daughter insistently until she woke up.

“What? What?” Lois sat up, looking around, trying to assess what was going on around her.

“It’s five in the morning,” Ellen said as if that explained everything.

“So?” Lois asked sleepily.

“So, aren’t you just the slightest bit concerned that your husband is still not home?” Ellen asked.

“No, he was working with Jimmy. Reporters have long unpredictable hours, mother.”

“So, do doctors,” Ellen reminded her with a knowing look.

“Don’t even start,” Lois said sleepily. “We’re not like that,”

“That’s what I told myself too. Don’t you want to at least check and see where he is?” Ellen asked. “No calls; no nothing. It’s not normal.”

Lois rolled her eyes, pulling the covers up. “I’ll go in early and check,” she sighed. “Can you take Jordan to daycare for me?”

“Of course,” Ellen nodded reassuringly. Lois sighed, watching her mother leave the bedroom. It was going to be a long day. It was hard trying to explain Clark’s absence in times like this. She knew he was needed and she was concerned but showing that concern wasn’t allowed when she had to help keep a secret like this.

Now, she was going into the Planet earlier than she would imagine going in even at her worst days of being a workaholic. She used to live and breathe there, but the Planet was not where she intended to go. The conversation between herself and Lucy last night had been playing through her mind repeatedly all night while she fought sleep. Lucy had had her confrontation with Sam Lane; now it was Lois’s turn.

\*\*\*

Mayson stared at the bruised face in front of her. Lucy had been shot tonight. The baby she’d been afraid of raising on her own was gone and she was left with an emptiness that no one could fill. Lucy had fallen back asleep shortly after she’d arrived. Mayson couldn’t bring herself to leave Lucy when she was so vulnerable. Inspector Henderson had called her to begin the investigation into Lucy’s shooting. Knox had of course been too busy smiling for the cameras to do any of the real legwork, so she’d been left to do the dirty work.

“Morning, sunshine,” Mayson said sarcastically when she saw Lucy beginning to stir.

“You’re still here?” Lucy asked groggily, “What time is it?”

“Someone’s strange idea of morning,” Mayson said teasingly, “It’s five thirty.”

Lucy groaned, “Too early.”

“Jimmy said he was going to be back later. He was going to head in to check on the investigation into your shooting; check statements and all that.”

“He’s working on the story for this?” Lucy asked confused.

“No, he’s just pushing it,” Mayson explained. “I guess burying himself in work helps, considering.”

“Yeah,” Lucy nodded, “I know the type.”

Mayson nodded with a smile. She looked around at the empty room, “So, how are you?”

“I’m alive,” Lucy said softly, “That’s enough for now.”

\*\*\*

The door to the visitor’s room opened and Sam Lane stepped into the empty room. The guard stared coldly at him, pointing to the chair in the middle of the room.

Sam nodded, taking a seat. The guard closed the door behind him, leaving Sam to stare at the empty walls around him. Just as he was just getting comfortable the door on the other side of the room flung open.

“Morning,” Lois said sharply, walking towards him, “I understand you and Lucy had a visit yesterday. What about?”

“Nice to see you too, Lois,” Sam said sarcastically.

“Oh, forget the pretend manners, would you? Lucy came to talk to you about the Superman clone. You didn’t tell her anything, but did you warn your boss? Tell him or her that Lucy was onto them?”

“I’m not talking to you without a lawyer,” Sam snapped between even breaths.

“What did you do?” Lois snapped, banging her fists on the table as she leaned down to confront him.

“Me?” Sam stood up in anger, “How is it always my fault? No matter what happens it’s always my fault, isn’t it?”

“You’re damn right!” Lois snapped back. “You left. You left me and Lucy and then you expect us to welcome you back with open arms? You left us. You left mom for every...every intern or nurse or ...or...”

“You’re one to talk!” Sam retorted.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Lois shot back.

“The affair! You think I’m stupid or something?” Sam asked.

“What the hell are you talking about? I have never...”

“You’ve never what? You forget S.T.A.R. Labs had Superman in observation. I heard him. I heard him say your name.”

“That means nothing and you know it.” Lois snapped. “You can’t stand the idea that Lucy and I are nothing like you. That’s probably why you left, isn’t it? You had no one to carry on the legacy. Did you know that they were going to shoot her or was that just luck?”

“What are you talking about?” Sam asked in confusion.

“Lucy was shot last night, hours after meeting with you!” Lois accused, “What did you do?”

“I had nothing to do with that,” Sam argued.

“Did you call someone and tell them about her accusations or not?” Lois asked between even breaths. Sam didn’t answer. “I thought so. We’re done here. You disgust me.”

“That’s always your answer, isn’t it?” he asked, “Running away?”

“Go to hell,” Lois snapped back as she knocked on the heavy metal door. “I mean it. I want nothing to do with you.”

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He felt like all his insides were cringing in disgust as he landed on the docks with the last remaining body part of the severed body. It had been mutilated beyond recognition. He wasn’t sure how anyone could do such a thing. Killing someone was one thing, but to tear apart the corpse this way was unthinkable.

“I know, Superman, it’s...” Inspector Henderson laid a hand on his shoulder.

“I gotta get out of here,” He shook his head, brushing Henderson’s supportive hand off his shoulder.

“Yeah, I understand,” Henderson nodded, “Thank you for everything.”

“Yeah, I’ll see you around,” Clark nodded towards him before ricocheting into the air away from the bay that had quickly become a crime scene.

\*\*\*

“Lois?” Perry called out when he saw her exit the elevator doors, “Darlin’, what are you doing here? Why aren’t you at the hospital?”

Lois raced down the steps into the bullpen, avoiding his question, “I need a story. I need something big and complicated to take my mind off of everything. Please, Perry, I’m begging you.”

Perry looked around at the empty desks around him. “It’s not even seven yet,” he pointed out. “Assignments haven’t even been…”

“Perry,” she impatiently breathed.

“All right,” he nodded, motioning for her to follow him. “I’ll see what I can find.”

\*\*\*

Clark flew as fast as he could to erase the images from his mind. Before he knew it he was on the Kent farm in Smallville. He landed by the treehouse out back and sighed, resting his head against the old oak. The familiar sounds echoed around him as he sat by the old tree that held his childhood treehouse. He sighed in relief, drinking in the familiarity of everything around him. The images of everything he’d seen that night raced through his mind as he fought to regain control. He just needed to feel his own bit of control over what was going on around him.

A man had been murdered brutally. Clark hadn’t heard the cries for help. He hadn’t been able to help. Knowing that and accepting that were two completely different things.

“Clark? Is that you, son?” His father’s voice penetrated his subconscious and he looked up into the concerned eyes, uncertain of how to voice everything that was going through his mind.

\*\*\*

Back in Metropolis, Lois sat at the desk, sifting through file after file. Research. That had been Perry’s answer to her wanting a story. Research.

She picked up the archive books in front of her and sifted through them. She was supposed to be researching Metropolis General and everything they could use on their piece on the fire. Instead, she seemed to keep drifting to a certain name that kept coming up when she read about Metropolis General.

Dr. Tony Benzen.

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“Every limb was cut off. They just tossed this guy’s body in the bay like yesterday’s garbage. I spent all night digging through everything. The blood,” Clark shuddered remembering the reddish tint of the water he’d swam in scurrying for the head and fingers of the corpse they’d found.

“Clark,” Jonathan laid a hand on his shoulder. “Any idea who the victim was?”

Clark shook his head, “Not yet. He was too…”

“It’s okay,” Jonathan interjected.

“No, it’s not,” Clark shook his head adamantly. “It’s not okay at all.”

\*\*\*

Jack stared at the police tape in the conference room. A fellow mail clerk tapped him on the shoulder. “I know what you’re thinking, man, but don’t. The boss finds out anyone went in there we’re all toast. Someone got iced in there and they don’t want anyone screwing with the crime scene.”

“Yeah, but who?” Jack asked.

“My money’s either on Mr. Dunning or Ms. Dougherty. Neither one of them have been seen for a while.”

\*\*\*

Everywhere. He had been everywhere looking for Lois. She wasn’t at home. She hadn’t returned to the hospital. His last stop was the Planet; again. Clark had already been here before, but another visit wouldn’t hurt.

He breathed a sigh of relief when he spotted her on the archive floor with his x-ray vision. “Finally,” he muttered under his breath as he landed on the roof. He quickly spun out of his Superman suit and headed down the stairwell to the archives.

“Lois?” He called out when he opened the door to the floor where all the Planet’s archive files were. He scanned the aisles,

looking for her. “Lois?”

He turned another corner, looking for her. He breathed a sigh of relief when he found her in the corner, sitting on the floor with a large file in her hands. “Hey, what are you doing here?” he asked, taking a seat on the floor next to her.

“Did you know Dr. Benzen had been investigated fourteen times in the last two years and every time the charges magically disappeared?” Lois asked quietly.

“Dr. Benzen?” Clark asked, confused. “Lois, I have been looking everywhere for you.”

“I had to get out of that hospital. I couldn’t just sit there and do nothing. I can’t sit at home and do nothing either,” Lois explained. “His name shows up in every lawsuit Metropolis General has had over the past two years. Isn’t that just a bit of an odd coincidence?”

“Lois, he’s dead,” Clark pointed out.

“Why?” Lois asked.

“What?”

“Why? Why is he dead? Everyone just shrugged it off as another unsolved case and I’m tired of it. There is a reason he was murdered. He was connected to Jordan’s kidnapping. Don’t you want to know what he was involved in that made him …made him make the choices he did?”

Clark pulled the book out of her hands, “What’s wrong?”

“I’m fine,” Lois said, jerking the book back.

“No, you’re not,” Clark took the book from her again. “You’re sitting up here in the archives in investigating a three-month-old murder. What’s wrong?”

She didn’t try to take the book from him again. “I really don’t want to talk right now,” she said softly, toying with her hands as she stared at the blank wall across from them.

“Liar,” he said softly.

“You were gone all night,” Lois said quietly, “Are you okay?”

“No,” Clark shook his head, wrapping an arm around her shoulders.

“Me neither,” Lois said, resting her head against his.

\*\*\*

“Are you sure you want to do this?” Mayson asked uncertainly, looking at Lucy for confirmation.

“Yes,” Lucy said shakily. “If it turns out that my father was responsible I want him pro…prosecuted to the fullest extent. If not, I want whoever was behind this in jail.”

“You still don’t believe he was behind that kidnapping, do you?” Mayson asked.

“No, I don’t, but Jimmy said he was working for Intergang, or at least it looks that way. I want him investigated…legally.” Lucy said.

“You know there’s no going back. Knox is out for blood right now. The election is right around the corner and…”

“I don’t care,” Lucy cut her off. “I want it done.”

“You sure you’re okay?” Mayson asked.

“I’m fine,” Lucy said, “Please, just do this for me. I need to get back to work,”

“Lucy, it’s only been three days. We can wait until…”

“No, it won’t wait.” Lucy cut her off. “I need to pick up where I left off.”

“Okay,” Mayson nodded. “Do you need a ride home?”

Lucy shook her head, “No, Jimmy’s picking me up.”

“Oh?” Mayson arched an eyebrow, “That’s good.”

“I’ll see you later,” Lucy said, reminding Mayson to focus elsewhere rather than on her personal life that was in total wreckage at the moment.

“Right,” Mayson turned towards the door to Lucy’s hospital room. “Just call if you need anything.”

\*\*\*

“All right, people, let’s have a little lesson in reporting 101, shall we? When a big news event happens where should you be?”

Perry paced in front of the conference room looking on at the reporters before him.

“Um, on your way to the disaster?” Jimmy suggested, raising his hand.

“Wrong!” Perry shook his head, slamming his fist on the conference table. “You should already be there! A good reporter is where the news is. Now, the Daily Planet has always been the top dog in this city. So, imagine my surprise when for the first time since I’ve worked at the Planet—and let me tell you that is a very very long time—we end up scooped by this rag!” He threw last night’s copy of the Metropolitan Star on the table. Anyone care to explain?”

Ralph raised his hand, “Well, the article is telling how the fire at the hospital earlier this week was a case of sabotage...”

“That’s not what I was referring to!” Perry snapped. “Instinct! That’s what makes or breaks you in the business! Why didn’t anyone know about this when we were investigating? Why were we the last ones to know?”

Allan raised his hand, “In all honesty, Chief, we did know about it; they just printed it first.”

“Thank you, Allan,” Perry sighed, feigning a calm he didn’t feel at the moment, “Just so I’m making myself clear, if this continues to happen the faces around here are going to begin to change.” With that he left the conference room, slamming the door behind him.

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“Miranda!” Turner opened his arms as he stood to greet her, “A pleasure.”

“Good to see you, James,” She smiled, winking at him as she glanced at his bodyguard in the corner.

“I’m glad to see you’re doing well,” Turner said, taking her hand and kissing it.

“Well, I know you didn’t call me for small talk, James. What can I do for you?”

“Revenge,” Turner prodded.

“What about it?” Miranda asked.

“Do you still have it?”

“Of course I never throw out my work.” Miranda shrugged. “What do you need it for?”

“I want to implement it in Intergang’s work,” he explained.

Miranda laughed, “Intergang? I thought you were solo? A one-man criminal organization?”

“There’s already a system in place; why not use it?”

\*\*\*

One Month Later...

“The identity of the unknown body that was dumped into Hobb’s Bay one month ago has finally become known to the public. It is our understanding that this body is not even human but a product of scientific study; a clone. How the subject was destroyed and disposed of this way is still an unknown to S.T.A.R. Labs, but we will keep you posted.” The LNN announcer read off.

Jimmy shook his head, “Unreal.”

“If it was a clone then how do we explain the crime scene that was left at Top Copy and the missing reporter and exec?” Allan asked, pointing to the flyer with a picture of Barry Dunning and Sarah Dougherty reporting them missing.

“This is ridiculous,” Jimmy said, heading towards his desk. “It’s not human, so everything’s all right? Someone still ripped this clone limb from limb and threw him into the bay as if he were garbage.”

“Jimmy, where are those printouts from the S.T.A.R. Labs gala?” Perry hollered across the newsroom.

Jimmy sighed, “Duty calls.”

\*\*\*

“You have got to be kidding me!” Lucy groaned, shielding her eyes from the bright sun as Lois ripped open she curtains.

“Get up!” Lois ordered with her arms crossed over her chest.

“I’m sleeping,” Lucy snapped, yanking the covers over her head angrily.

“You’re hiding,” Lois pulled the covers off her.

“Hey!” Lucy sat up, pulling the covers that had been ripped off her body.

“You have been resting and recovering and sleeping and everything else in the book for the last month. You said you didn’t want to stay at your apartment and I let you stay here. You weren’t ready to go back to work and I was understanding but Luce it’s been a month and you still haven’t left this room to do anything but go to the bathroom.”

“Let it go, Lois, I’m fine. I’m just dealing with some stuff,” Lucy snapped, yanking the covers back from her.

“No, you’re not,” Lois snapped. “Fine would be you actually crying or getting angry. Fine is not sitting in your pajamas all day with a pasted smile on your face convincing everyone but yourself that you’re fine.”

“Let it go,” Lucy argued.

“No,” Lois snapped, “I’m not going to let you do this to yourself.”

\*\*\*

Mindy Church took a puff from her cigar as she looked out at the view from her penthouse. “He tried to kill me,” she muttered under her breath.

LaToya Cox watched her from a distance, “Muttering about your anger isn’t going to get you what you want.”

“What I want?” Mindy asked, “What I want is revenge.”

“Good.” Mrs. Cox handed her a glass of champagne. “Are you ready to do whatever’s necessary to carry it out?”

“What do you mean?” Mindy asked.

“I have a plan to make sure Lex Luthor gets his just desserts,” LaToya Cox smiled through the smoke that had filled the room from Mindy’s cigar. “Are you prepared to make him pay?”

\*\*\*

“I don’t understand,” Dr. Klein argued with Dr. Mamba. “How can you have no idea?”

“I’ve done research on clones with Wayne Enterprises, Dr. Klein, but I haven’t worked on chromosomes with this ... advancement. Superman isn’t human. A clone of him is almost impossible to...”

“But someone did!” Dr. Klein snapped. “Someone cloned him and we have to figure out what to do about it. There is a replica of Superman out there and he wants to go after the real Superman!”

Dr. Mamba shrugged, “Maybe it’ll be entertaining to watch.”

Dr. Klein sighed, “Just forget it,” he muttered.

“I can’t be of much help here, I’m afraid.”

“Then who is?” Dr. Klein asked.

\*\*\*

“Hey, Lois, you’re late,” Jimmy said, walking up to her when she stepped out of the elevator.

“I was babysitting,” she snapped, throwing her arms up in the air, “What do you want, Jimmy?”

“Did you hear they found another body this morning?” Jimmy asked glumly.

“What?” Lois asked aghast.

“CK went to check it out a few minutes ago. This time it’s actually a whole body; head and everything. They’re still waiting for an ID.” Jimmy explained.

“What in the world is going on out there?” Lois muttered under her breath, placing a protective hand over her abdomen.

“I don’t know, but whatever it is, it’s big and the Chief is...”

“OLSEN!!!” Perry bellowed through the newsroom, looking for Jimmy.

“Speak of the devil,” Lois said glancing over her shoulder at Jimmy.

“I gotta run,” Jimmy sighed. Lois shook her head, watching Jimmy run towards Perry with an arm full of files in hand.

\*\*\*

Guilt.

“An emotional experience that occurs when a person realizes or believes—accurately or not—that he or she has violated a moral standard, and bears significant responsibility for that violation.”

He'd read about the emotion, but had never understood until now what it truly meant. He had killed someone. She had been a menace and a murderer herself, but he had been unable to stop her death. He stared up at the news coverage splashing images of police and doctors all over the bay where her body had been found.

He stared at his reflection. He didn't feel like a Superman. He felt like a Super-coward.

\*\*\*

“The woman's body was identified as Sarah Dougherty. Her fingerprints matched with the fugitive, Diana Stride, who had been on the run ever since Bill Church Jr.'s murder a few months back. It is believed Stride knew her attacker but the details surrounding her death are still not being released...”

“Well, well, the plot thickens,” Nigel mused, looking at the confidential police file that he held in his hand.

“Mr. St. John,” The coroner pleaded with him. “If anyone finds out I gave that to you...”

“Not a problem. No one will find out,” Nigel snapped.

“But...”

Nigel pulled out a silver revolver, “Maybe I didn't make myself clear? No one finds out. You come up with some way of hiding her real cause of death. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes, Mr. St. John,” the coroner stammered.

“Good.” Nigel smiled, patting him on the cheek. “Be sure it stays that way.”

\*\*\*

Lois sat in the research lab, staring at the computer screen in front of her. She had to get out of the newsroom. The reports that kept coming in about the bodies had been too much for her. Everything that had been going on the last few weeks had taken a toll on her. Every few hours her daughter would give her a subtle reminder to slow down by giving her a hard kick from inside her womb.

She smiled down at the not so small bump that was her child. The days of her wishing her daughter would come out to join the world sooner rather than later were long gone. Lois dreaded the day she would be born and forced to face the truth about the world her parents had brought her into. It was selfish.

She couldn't help but feel responsible for the situation. She had made this life only to bring it into a world of chaos and mayhem. Her sister had been shot and refused to face the grief that was consuming her after losing her child. Dead bodies were popping up all over Metropolis. Intergang was still in full swing even with its founders gone. And Clark...

He was still struggling with being Superman. He wouldn't come right out and say it, but she could see it on his face. The fear that crossed his face when he would hear those cries for help. Something about being Superman shook him to the core more now than it ever had before and she wasn't sure what it was, or if he would ever share his fears with her. He was so over-protective of her.

“Lois?”

Lois turned around to find Perry standing in the doorway peering at her. “Perry, what are you doing here?”

He cocked his head at her, confused. “I could ask you the same thing. You jetted out of the bullpen like you were on fire. Everything okay?”

Lois shook her head. “I'm fine. I just needed to clear my head.”

He glanced around the room at the handful of research assistants and research techs who were busy at their respective

workstations. He took a seat next to her, “You want to talk about it?”

Lois shook her head, “I'm fine, Perry,” she said.

Realizing he wasn't going to get her to crack he stood up, “If you say so, but just remember my door's always open.”

Lois watched him leave and then turned back to the blank computer screen in front of her. She was fine. She would prove it to him, too.

\*\*\*

Amanda stared at the reddish-brown brick building from a distance, watching the children climb on the monkey bars and down the slides happily. She had thought she would always have her son with her, but fate had had different plans. He had been taken from her twice now. First, it had been by Tony. When he'd found out about her pregnancy he'd made sure she would never 'ruin him' again.

It had nearly destroyed her to watch day in and day out parents that didn't even deserve children coming in and out of the hospital with their babies. Then one day, just for a moment she pretended it was her with the newborn child. It took away the pain she felt; the hole in her heart that couldn't seem to be filled no matter what. Then one day the opportunity for her to make her dream become a reality came, and she took it.

\*\*\*

The green and red glow reflected off of Nigel's face as he polished the round object in his hand. He examined it through the microscope then placed it in a velvet box next to ten others like it. He smiled to himself. When Superman's time came -- and it would come soon -- Nigel would be prepared to take him out. Lex lacked the precision in dealing with his problems. Nigel wouldn't let the same happen to him. He had designed the Kryptonite cage to weaken and torture the Man of Steel, but the Kryptonite bullets would be what would bring him to his long-awaited death.

\*\*\*

Sirens blared around the perimeter as the police closed the area off to the public. Lois looked around the scene, trying to find a familiar face that she might be able to get a statement of what was going on inside S.T.A.R. Labs. She spotted Inspector Henderson standing near the blockade entrance and waved him down. She could see the look of distaste on his face when he spotted her. She had a feeling this interview was going to come with a lecture.

“Henderson!” She pushed her way through. “Excuse me, Lois Lane, Daily Planet,” she called out as she pushed her way past the massive crowd that had formed outside the famous laboratory.

“Lois, what a surprise,” Henderson said dryly.

“Cut the sarcasm,” Lois snapped, “What's going on?”

“You don't already know?” he asked.

“All I know is there was a gunman inside S.T.A.R. Labs. What else can you tell me?” She asked, holding up her mini microphone to record her interview with Bill Henderson.

“I can tell you on the record, Dr. Bernard Klein was abducted at gunpoint along with a military weapon known as the Quantum Disruptor. The suspect is thought to be armed and dangerous.” Henderson pushed the microphone away from his face. “And I'm guessing by the look on your face that you really didn't know that.”

She shook her head mutely as she shut off her microphone, “When did this happen?”

“About an hour ago?” Henderson shrugged. “We're pulling up the tapes right now. He escaped via helicopter so as you can imagine we're going to be having fun with this one.”

\*\*\*

Nothing. He had nothing to go on. No one knew which way the gunman had headed via helicopter and he couldn't find any sign of the machine anywhere. No propeller was being operated anywhere nearby. Which meant that whoever had taken Dr. Klein

had already landed, and there was no telling where they were now.

Clark sighed as he flew through the air. He couldn't help but feel like he was on a wild goose chase.

\*\*\*

Revenge.

That was the name of the game. He would have his revenge. Nigel would pay for gunning down Lucy. Superman would pay for bringing Lex Corp down. Mindy Church would pay for her husband's sins against him, and as for the Daily Planet and its prize reporters...

They would pay dearly for ruining his good name.

He stared coldly at the large chunk of Kryptonite sitting before him. He couldn't help but smile as he imagined the looks on his enemy's faces when they realized their end was here. Lex Luthor would live again; only this time there would be no one left to stop him.

\*\*\*

"So, how've you been?" Jimmy asked, taking a seat across from Lucy at the café across from the Planet.

Lucy shrugged, "You know?" She sighed, "They won't let me back at work until this shrink clears me. I don't understand it at all. I've dealt with more stressful situations than this and I didn't have to talk to a shrink. I think Knox is just trying to look good for re-election."

"Maybe," Jimmy nodded. "But I think it will be good for you to have someone to talk to."

"What do you mean?" Lucy asked defensively.

"I mean, you don't talk about it, Lucy. I don't think you're really dealing with any of it," Jimmy said softly.

"I'm fine," she said. "I had a baby; now I don't. End of story."

"No, you're not." Jimmy shook his head. "You're not fine. I'm not fine. You were shot. You're not fine. We lost a child. We're not fine, Lucy. The sooner you can deal with that, the sooner you can start to put your life back together."

Lucy stared at him a moment in silence then reached for her purse and walked away.

"Lucy," He called after her but thought better of it. This was something she had to deal with on her own. He couldn't help her.

\*\*\*

"Mamba, you won't get away with this!" Dr. Klein shouted as he stumbled through the woods.

"Do you see anyone looking for you?" Mamba asked irritably. "Well..."

"HERE. Do you see anyone looking for you here?" Mamba asked.

"Well, no, but..."

"Then let's just pretend for argument's sake that I have gotten away with it." Mamba snapped. "Just shut up!"

\*\*\*

"Then let's just pretend for argument's sake that I have gotten away with it." Mamba snapped. "Just shut up!"

He sat up and looked around. Where had that come from? He had thought he was alone here on the island; safe from the temptation of losing control and away from people. He turned towards the source of the arguing and was surprised when he zeroed in on it with his enhanced vision to find Dr. Klein here with an unidentified man.

\*\*\*

"What about this one?" Ellen asked, holding up a blouse for Lucy to look at.

Lucy shook her head.

"Lucy, that's the fifteenth rack you've stuck your nose up at me about. You're supposed to be helping." Ellen sighed.

Lucy just stared blankly back at her.

"You can't let yourself get like this," Ellen chided her, "You need to get out and live your life,"

"I am living my life," Lucy argued defensively. She pointed

around her, "I'm in the middle of a store filled with ugly clothes helping you pick out your next atrocious outfit for your next luncheon with people that are too self-absorbed to..." The tears came out of nowhere and now that they had begun she couldn't seem to stop them.

"Lucy," Ellen approached her hesitantly, placing a hand on her shoulder.

"Make it stop!" She sobbed, "I...I can't..." She fell to the floor in tears. Ellen leant down next to her, holding her as she cried.

\*\*\*

"Bank robbery in progress on Main. Requesting backup."

The radio call reached Clark's super hearing, drawing his attention to the suspects that were racing out of the North Metro Bank. He landed outside the bank, grabbing the first suspect by the collar and lifting him up in the air, "Going somewhere?"

A whiff of a strong perfume reached his nostrils, causing him to cough. He held onto the suspect's collar tightly.

"Hey, why isn't it working?" One of the suspects asked.

Clark reached out for the accomplice that had just sprayed him. The sound of police sirens approached them. "For your sake, I hope you don't mind showering in groups," he said, walking them towards the police officers that approached them. "They're all yours, officer."

The officers nodded, taking them into custody. One of the officers, a young brunette who couldn't have been more than 5'5" stared at the first suspect for a minute. "Do we have to lock them up, Superman? He's kind of cute,"

Clark stared at her aghast, "Officer, they were trying to rob the bank,"

"But it could've been a mistake, right?" she suggested.

"What?" Clark asked, shocked.

She looked at him with a smile, "Everybody makes mistakes."

He felt like he was in a nightmare and couldn't seem to wake up as he watched the young officer unlock the handcuffs she had just placed on the suspect and ask the robber for his phone number. What was going on?

\*\*\*

"HELP, Superman!!!" Dr. Klein screamed as he ran through the woods, pushing branches out of his way as he continued on his path away from Dr. Mamba who was very much armed.

"No one can hear you, Klein," Mamba shouted after him. "It's just you and me. You will tell me how to work that Disruptor..." He called after him.

"Never!" Klein shouted over his shoulder, pushing another branch out of his way.

A sonic boom resonated around him. Dr. Klein turned around to look for the source.

\*\*\*

"I don't understand," Lois said, perplexed, looking up at Clark.

"Me neither," Clark said. "It was like all of a sudden the officers weren't there. Nothing they were saying was making any sense."

"Did you get a statement from them?" Lois asked.

"Oh, yeah," He nodded, pulling out his notebook from his suit pocket. "I got an 'I think he's cute. Do you think he'd go out with me?' and let's not forget, 'He's too good-looking to go to jail'. The sad part is that last one came from Officer Jenkins."

"You're kidding," Lois took the notebook from him to read his notes. She shook her head when she read it for herself, "You're not kidding."

"Nope." He shook his head.

"Any idea what it was they tried to spray you with?" Lois asked.

Clark shook his head, "No, but I wasn't taking any chances. I went ahead and sealed the suit up in a plastic bag for Dr. Klein and

went ahead and got whatever it was off of me. Speaking of which, any word?”

Lois pointed at the monitor silently. Images of Dr. Klein with what appeared to be Superman stood at the podium in front of the throng of reporters. “Jimmy and Jenkins are at the press conference. Should be interesting.”

“Does Dr. Klein know he got rescued by an imposter?” Clark asked.

“I don’t think he cares at this point,” Lois said wryly. “Dr. Mamba had him out in the middle of nowhere. Some island in the Pacific.”

“How?” Clark asked.

Lois shrugged, “Who knows?”

“Any word on the weapon that got taken?” he asked.

“Nope,” Lois shook her head.

“We should probably find out from Dr. Klein what that Quantum Disruptor was for,” Clark suggested.

“Ah, great minds think alike,” She teased, patting his arm. She reached for the edge of her desk to stand up. “I was hoping you’d suggest it first.”

“You set me up,” Clark accused.

“And you walked right into it,” Lois smiled back at him.

“Come on; let’s head over there before he leaves.”

\*\*\*

Jimmy sat at the bar, staring at the empty shot glass in front of him. It had been a long day. He had gotten a call earlier from Ellen Lane. She had ended up, checking Lucy back into the hospital after Lucy’s meltdown in the middle of the department store. Lucy had finally done what he had wanted; dealt with the pain from losing their son. Now, he wished she hadn’t. The doctors had said if she didn’t show signs of getting better they would refer her to Shady Brook. He knew that was the last place she needed to be.

“Hey, Jimmy, congratulations on your first headliner!” Allan took a seat next to him and patted Jimmy on the shoulder. “It’s not every day you get one of your photos on the front page.” He motioned to the bartender, “I’ll have a beer,”

“Hey, man, what’s up?” Jimmy smiled weakly at his friend.

“How you doing?” Allan asked.

“Fine,” Jimmy sighed, raking a hand through his hair, “I’m just fine,”

Allan placed a supportive hand on his shoulder, “You don’t look fine. You okay?”

Jimmy shook his head. “I’m fine, really,” he said, reaching for his coat. “I gotta go.”

“All right, g’night,” Allan called after him.

\*\*\*

Lois laid on the couch with her ankles propped up against Clark’s thigh as he read over their notes for their story on Dr. Klein’s abduction. Jordan was fighting sleep as Lois held him close.

“I’m still a bit confused,” Clark said, tossing their notes on the table in front of him. “Dr. Klein said this Dr. Mamba was chasing after him. Why didn’t the clone grab him?”

“I don’t know,” Lois shrugged. “Dr. Klein said he was tired. Maybe there was more going on and he just forgot?”

“You think we should ask Perry for another day on this?” Clark asked.

Lois shrugged. “It wouldn’t be the end of the world. I mean, we already have the main story in tonight’s edition. This is just the follow-up. I’m sure Perry would understand.”

Clark nodded, glancing at Jordan as he lifted his head, rubbing his face against Lois’ sweater, “He’s still fighting it.”

“Stubborn,” Lois commented.

“Like mother like son,” Clark breathed.

“What was that?” she accused.

“Nothing,” he said, standing up. “I’m going to make some coffee. Do you want some?”

“No,” she narrowed her eyes at him, “and I heard what you said, by the way,”

Clark laughed. “It’s true,” he called over his shoulder as he stepped into the kitchen.

Lois opened her mouth to argue but thought better of it when Jordan reached up to yank on a strand of her hair. “You need to go to sleep, sweetie.” He just shook his head, pulling on her hair once more. She took her hair out of his tight fist. “This is going to be a long night,” she mumbled.

Clark resumed his seat next to her, placing the cup of coffee on the table in front of him. “It’s been a long day,” he reasoned, gently massaging her ankles. “How are you feeling?”

“Tired,” She sighed, leaning her head back. “But someone doesn’t want to go to sleep.” She glanced down at Jordan who laughed back at her.

Clark lifted her legs up, sliding closer to her so that the back of her thigh was pressed up against his and her legs rested on his lap. “Here, let me see him,” He picked Jordan up from Lois, resting him against his shoulder, “You need to go to sleep, little man.”

“No!” Jordan laughed.

Clark sighed. He wasn’t making any more progress than Lois was. “It’s going to be a long night,” Lois finished for him.

\*\*\*

“Quantum Disruptor 2000XLT” was engraved on the side of the machine. It looked dangerous. The trigger seemed the same as any other weapon. There was a large cylinder where the barrel of the weapon was. Sixteen holes with plastic over them held sixteen lights. There was a latch for loading ammo on the side.

Turner opened the latch and placed a large glowing green cylinder inside. “It’s perfect,” he crooned.

“It wasn’t easy.” Dr. Mamba said, counting his money. “I was surprised I was able to get away as fast as I was, with Superman there.”

Turner laughed, “That wasn’t Superman,” he corrected.

“Then...”

He patted Mamba on the shoulder. “You have a lot to learn, Isaac. How soon can you get this operational?”

“We’ll see,” the doctor said, taking the weapon from Turner and opening it up for examination.

\*\*\*

Mayson sat on the bed next to Lucy, uncertain of what to do. Lucy had been crying the entire time she’d been there. Ellen Lane refused to leave the room. Lucy couldn’t stop. She kept crying for someone to make it stop but nothing seemed to work.

“Please, please make it stop,” Lucy begged.

“Luce, this is something you have to go through. There’s nothing I can do that can...”

“Just get me something! Some kind of pill or...or...” She fell into a fit of tears again.

Mayson jumped up when she heard a knock at the door. She raced to answer the door. She sighed in relief when she saw Lois on the other side of the door, “Lois, come in.”

“How is she?” Lois asked, entering the room.

“Am I dealing with my grief enough for you now????” Lucy cried angrily.

Lois stared at her a moment, uncertain of what to do. She turned to look for Mayson, but the attorney had already left. “I...”

Ellen Lane looked up from her magazine and shook her head, “Even her friends can’t stand to be around her right now. I’m not sure what makes you think you have a shot.”

Lois sat on the hospital bed, curled up in a ball as she cried. “I can’t...” she cried, “...stop.”

Lois stepped towards her and Ellen looked up from her magazine, warning him, “Lois, she doesn’t want to be touched.”

Lois ignored the warning and sat next to Lucy, wrapping his arms around her. Lucy fought her at first, flinching slightly, but

eventually she allowed Lois to hold her as she cried. It was important that she let this out. She hadn't grieved. She hadn't cried when her wedding to Luthor had blown up in her face. There had been a handful of tears but nothing like this. She hadn't cried when she and Jimmy had dealt with the paperwork concerning their child's remains and burying him. She'd been calm. She needed this. She needed to grieve. "I'm here...I'm here..." Lois whispered to her sister, holding her close.

"I was going to name him ... Jamie...if he was a boy...and Elizabeth...if he was a girl..." Lucy cried uncontrollably.

"It's okay...Luce...just let it out..." Lois crooned, stroking her sister's hair as she cried in her arms. Lois turned to her mom who was watching the scene unfold with tears in her eyes, "Call Jimmy..." Ellen nodded, grabbing her phone as she stepped out of the room.

"No..." Lucy cried. "Please don't leave me..."

"I'm not going anywhere..." Lois promised, "but right now... you and Jimmy both need to grieve...together. He's hurting ... just like you... If you don't let him in..." she shook her head, recalling how she and Clark had drifted apart during the five months after the Planet explosion. She didn't want that for her sister. "You need to tell him ... You won't start healing until you both grieve together...trust me..." she said shakily, recalling how she and Clark had been in tears the night they'd first made love after his exposure to red kryptonite had made them end their five-month sexual drought. He had cried as he had kissed the scar where their son had been cut out. It was hard for her to see him so distraught but it was something they both had needed.

\*\*\*

A large cylinder stood on one side of the room and another across from it. A large computer sat in the middle, connecting the two. Two metal plates stood at the bottom of each cylinder. Arianna pressed a button on the computer and an electrical bolt fired through the cylinder to the other.

She checked the computer to examine the feed she'd just received. "Looks like we're getting somewhere."

"What is it?" Mindy Church asked.

"It's the future," Arianna smiled. "Imagine having your own set of superhuman powers. Once we have mastered how to transfer the powers from one being to another we will have an army of super-powered criminals at our disposal. This is the future and this," she placed a hand on the computer, "is the key,"

\*\*\*

Jimmy had shown up at the hospital and taken over for Lois, holding Lucy as she cried and told him every dream and every wish she'd had for their child. He cried with her, telling her his dreams. Lois left about an hour afterward, making sure her sister was in good hands. Once she'd gotten home she had found Clark struggling with a very crabby one year old.

It had taken another hour to get Jordan to sleep, but they'd finally succeeded. It had been a long day. Lois had been slightly withdrawn the last few weeks, but tonight she told Clark about how she had held her sister as Lucy cried, unable to say or do anything else. She told Clark how Lucy had finally broken and now the floodgates had been released.

Clark couldn't help but think back to everything they'd gone through after Jordan had been kidnapped. Nothing anyone had said or done had helped when they'd been mourning over their loss. Clark brushed a stray lock of hair out of her face, "Hey, you all right?" he asked.

She nodded, smiling up at him, "Just thinking."

"What about?" He pressed.

"Lucy," Lois said, wrapping her arms around him as she rested her head on his chest.

"I know," he nodded, "Jimmy's been a mess too, but..."

"Mom said they ended up sedating her," Lois said softly. Her hand rested on her growing abdomen. "I keep thinking how this

was me last year."

He placed a kiss on her forehead, "I know. It's hard to watch them go through this."

"There's nothing you can do. There's nothing anyone can do." Lois shook her head.

Clark smiled, watching as Lois fell against the mattress, stretching her arms up, holding her pillow tightly against her neck. He moved down in the bed until he was eye level with her abdomen. He watched the ripple against her stomach, placing a kiss against her abdomen. He made himself comfortable next to her swollen abdomen and started telling his daughter about the crazy things he'd seen today on his rescues.

Lois ran her fingers through his silky hair as he softly whispered to her growing abdomen. "You keep that up and she's going to know your voice better than mine."

He looked up at her and smiled apologetically, "Sorry," He sat up, crawling back up next to her and wrapped his arms around her.

"You're forgiven," she said, cupping his cheek as she looked up at him. "I can't really blame you for wanting to be close to her now. We're already almost a whole month ahead of where we were with Jordan."

Clark's head hung slightly at the reminder. He glanced down at the bump in between them then looked back up at her. "Are you okay?"

Lois shrugged her shoulders, "I don't know." She offered him a half smile.

His arms tightened around her, pulling her against his chest. "She's going to be fine," he reassured her.

Lois sighed, letting out a heavy breath against his chest, "Don't let go," she murmured against him. He held her tightly against him, listening to her breathing. He kissed her head softly, running his hand up and down her back as they lay there in silence.

The last few weeks had been hard. Lucy's mood swings had taken their toll on Lois. She'd had her confrontation with her father after she'd confronted him about the shooting.

Clark had caught her drifting off lately, uncertain where her mind was. He knew she had to watch her stress. Ever since the shooting she'd had visits with the OB every other day. It had felt like she was building up those walls again; keeping everyone out and not allowing anyone to see how much she had been affected by Lucy's shooting. It was moments like this where she let down the walls and let him back in, allowing herself to be completely vulnerable to him.

He hated to watch her going through this, but there was nothing he could do but hold her and let the emotions run their course just like there was nothing they could do for Lucy. It was a series of unfortunate occurrences that no one could have predicted nor stopped. He knew there was nothing he could do. There was no way to stop those bullets, but he couldn't help but feel sick inside wondering if only...

\*\*\*

"You want me to WHAT??" Dan scoffed.

"Don't forget who signs your checks," Nigel warned. "She's becoming a problem. We need to take care of her."

"She's an ADA. That's a federal offense," Dan snapped back. "No, I'm sorry. I can't. Changing information, hiding accounts, that's one thing, but KILLING someone? No, I can't do it."

"I'm sorry you feel like that," Nigel said. He pointed at the door. "You can go."

Dan stared at him in shock for a moment. "What?"

"Obviously we have different views and it's best not to work together." Nigel waved him off. "Go,"

"Okay, well, thank you for understanding," Dan smiled at him. He then turned around to leave and fell to the floor.

Nigel smiled as he twisted the silencer off his 9mm. "Right."

\*\*\*

Green.

Everything was green.

It glowed all around her.

“No.” She called out, shaking her head. “No.”

The cell bars revealed themselves and a mysterious man stood in the shadows.

“No!” She cried out.

Mayson sat up in bed, dripping in a cold sweat as she tried to reassess where she was. The dream. That same dream kept coming to her more and more. The nightmare of her capture; what was that? Why couldn’t she shake herself from these flashbacks?

\*\*\*

“Another body was fished out of Hobb’s Bay this morning; this time the victim was easily identified. A missing DEA Agent was found floating topside early this morning by officials. His cause of death is still unknown,” the LNN newscaster reported.

Lois clicked the television off in disgust then turned to Jordan who was edging his way towards her while holding onto the edge of the couch. She smiled. He’d been trying to walk for the last few weeks. He seemed to be grasping it, then he’d lose his balance and get discouraged again; opting not to try again until he forgot about his last failed attempt.

“Mama,” he pouted, reaching up for her to pick him up. The attitude behind his plea made her laugh. He was getting frustrated, but she knew he had to keep trying.

“Uh-uh,” She took a few steps more away from him.

Jordan sighed, letting go of the couch to cross his arms over his chest; so like his father, muttering rambles of nothingness under his breath as he walked towards her. Before she could move away from him he grabbed her leg. “No,” he pouted.

Lois burst into laughter, unable to contain herself. Jordan looked up at her in disgust, turning away from her with his little arms crossed over his chest as he turned his head away from her as well.

She leaned over to pick him up, holding him against her chest as she leaned back. Jordan might have inherited his father’s looks, but he’d inherited her temperament. He was stubborn and pigheaded just as she had known herself to be. “I’m sorry, sweetie,” she apologized, trying to get him to look at her. His scowl still remained on his face, but he allowed her to hold him.

Clark had left early without even waking her. She’d assumed he must have heard a call for help, but now she realized it was more to do with what the police had found in Hobb’s Bay. It seemed like every time she turned around another body was found. There was no telling who or what they would find next. She couldn’t shake the nagging feeling she had in the back of her mind. A lot had been going on in Metropolis lately and she couldn’t put her finger on it yet, but she knew it was all connected.

\*\*\*

Gary Anderson, police chief of Metropolis’ finest, paced in front of his staff as he began his lecture. His office was filled with agents from the FBI and a federal prosecutor who was out for blood. Someone had murdered a federal agent and they wanted a name.

“This isn’t just Metropolis’ problem anymore. It’s federal. We have to find whoever’s behind this murderous spree and stop them,” Anderson ordered.

“Isn’t that what we’ve been doing?” Henderson asked. “No offense, Chief, but we’ve been working this case, finding witnesses, trying to piece this case together, but no one wants to talk. Just because the Feds are involved doesn’t mean everyone’s just going to magically remember what happened to these guys. We have no leads.”

“Find some!” Anderson snapped. “We have a new victim; start there.”

\*\*\*

Mayson Drake tapped her fingernails against her notebook

nervously as she waited to meet with Dr. Bernard Klein. He had been in and out of the police station yesterday recounting the events that had led up to his kidnapping and his later escape. Now, it was her turn to get his statement recorded so as to build a strong case against Dr. Mamba once the police were able to find him.

So far no one had found any sign of him.

She yawned, stretching her arms slightly. She hadn’t gotten much sleep lately. The nightmares from her kidnapping continued to haunt her. She knew it was dangerous to continue on like this, but she didn’t have anyone to turn to. How could she get help for something no one even knew about?

\*\*\*

Clark stared at the report in front of him. Dr. Klein had warned him about the weapons the military was preparing to use against him. A weapon powered by Kryptonite. Apparently, they had engineered the break-in at S.T.A.R. Labs to access the Kryptonite Dr. Klein was holding. It disgusted him to realize how much the world feared him. No matter how many times he helped to save it, he would always be an outsider. His and Lois’ children would always carry this burden with them.

\*\*\*

“You okay?” Jimmy asked, nudging Lucy’s shoulder softly as she awoke.

She nodded, “You’re still here?”

“Yeah,” Jimmy nodded. “I didn’t want you to wake up wondering where I had gone,”

Lucy smiled at him, “What about work?”

“The Planet will struggle through one day without me,” Jimmy reasoned.

“How are we doing in here?” Ellen knocked on the door as she entered.

“Hi, mom,” Lucy sat up and smiled weakly at Ellen as she took a seat across from the hospital bed.

“You seem to be feeling better,” Ellen observed.

Jimmy smiled over his shoulder at Ellen. “She just woke up. I’m going to go on a breakfast run. Can I get either of you anything?”

“Coffee?” Lucy requested.

“I’ll second that,” Ellen added with a sigh. She didn’t look like she’d slept any better than he had.

“Two coffees it is,” Jimmy said, grabbing his jacket off the back of his chair. “I’ll be back in a few,”

“Bye, Jimmy,” Ellen said, waving at him as he closed the door behind him. She then turned to look at Lucy who was stretching her arms over her head, trying to finish waking up. “Jimmy spent the night?”

“I guess,” Lucy shrugged. Ellen was eying her up and down with that look that always meant trouble. “What?” She looked over her shoulder nervously.

“Nothing,” Ellen shook her head, “It’s nice to see you two spending time together,”

“Jimmy’s just been helping me through everything; being a good friend,” Lucy said.

“Whatever you say, dear,” Ellen shrugged, pulling out the book she’d been reading the previous day.

\*\*\*

“Well, you going solo or what?” Henderson teased when he saw Clark darkening the entrance to his office.

Clark smiled weakly at the inspector’s teasing, “Not a chance,” He shot back.

“What do I owe the pleasure of this visit?” Henderson asked.

“The body fished out this morning,” Clark nodded towards the army of policemen in the lobby, “and the FBI taking over the station...”

“Well, I never said you weren’t observant,” Henderson said.

“What’s the deal?”

“DEA agent got murdered; so it’s now a federal matter. The Chief is issuing a statement to the press with all the gory details,” Henderson explained evasively.

“But not the identity of the victim,” Clark noted from Henderson’s body language.

“No,” Henderson said curtly. “We’re not releasing that information just yet.”

“Was it Scardino?” Clark asked, knowing the answer to the question before he asked it.

Henderson looked up at him in shock, “How did you know?”

“He’s the only DEA agent that’s been poking around here lately. I just put two and two together.” Clark explained hurriedly.

Henderson closed the door to his office before continuing the conversation, “The DEA said he’s been MIA for the last three months. They don’t know what happened to him.”

“So, what does that mean?” Clark asked.

“We got three months to fill the gaps on and red tape to cut through,” Henderson explained. “He was only dead for six hours when we found him this morning, so there has to be another reason for him not showing up for three months.”

\*\*\*

Lois tapped her fingers against the wood grain of her desk as she waited for someone to answer the phones in the Daily Planet newsroom. She hadn’t been able to get hold of Clark all morning. She assumed he was still caught up in the mess at Hobb’s Bay, but she still needed to know something.

“Daily Planet,” Perry White finally answered.

“Perry, finally! I’ve been calling all morning. What’s going on? I saw they found another body.”

“Lois, how are you feeling?” Perry asked, deferring her question for the moment.

“I’m fine,” Lois snapped, “except for being ignored.”

“Well, we’re kind of shorthanded this morning, everyone’s covering this Hobb’s Bay mess. Lois, this is going to be big. They’re now making this a federal matter.”

“Federal?” Lois asked, “Why?”

“The body they pulled out this morning was a DEA agent,” Perry explained.

“You’re kidding!”

“Nope,” Perry said. There was a muffled voice on the other side of the phone, “Listen, Lois, I’ll have Kent call you once he gets in. I’ve got to go; breaking news.”

Before she could say ‘bye’ the dial tone was resonating in her ear. She sighed, hanging up the phone. “Wish I was part of it,” she muttered under her breath. She hated working from home, away from everyone. She felt out of the loop, and out of sync. Clark usually tried to come home early for lunch but it didn’t look like today was going to be one of those days.

She stepped into the hallway to check on Jordan. The door was propped open and she could see his sleeping figure. She smiled to herself. He was sound asleep. She opened the door behind her, stepping inside long enough to grab her laptop before returning to the hallway where she could watch him sleep. She may not enjoy everything about working from home, but there were some perks. She wasn’t about to miss any of them if she could help it.

After making herself comfortable in the hallway outside Jordan’s door she started her laptop up and began her research on the victims from the slayings that had occurred in Metropolis recently. The identity of the latest victim had not been released yet, but she was pretty sure she had enough to go on to start piecing things together. Diana Stride was the only other victim not to have had her limbs removed. Why?

Could she have known the killer?

She started a search on the Planet’s online database, hoping to get some answers. Knowing it would take a while to turn up results she put the laptop down and reached for the knob to Jordan’s door to help her stand up. She wasn’t as agile as she had

once been. The baby seemed to be growing more and more every day.

She walked into Jordan’s room, placing a hand on her sleeping son’s head. He was so peaceful like this, but when he was awake he could be a terror. He definitely inherited that from her. A smile spread across his face as he slept, almost as if he knew she was watching him. That smile. It melted her down to the core. He had that same smile his father did.

Jordan began to stir, turning to look up at her. He stretched his little arms over his head, “Mama,”

“Hey, little guy.” She reached down to pick him up. He reached out for her happily. She sighed contently when his tiny arms wrapped around her. “How about we go out for lunch?” She asked. “We can go visit Da...Oh!” She grimaced, taking a deep breath as she pressed her hand against her abdomen.

“Mama, ow?” Jordan asked, concerned.

She nodded as she continued trying to breathe through the pain, “Mmm hmm, Mama ow-Oh!” She sank to the floor, holding onto Jordan for dear life as she fought back the tears. She had never felt such an excruciating pain in her life. Then again, she hadn’t been conscious for Jordan’s delivery.

‘Oh, no,’ she thought to herself. ‘Not yet. It’s too soon.’

“Mama,” Jordan shook her shoulder in concern. He gave her a kiss. “My Mama?”

She couldn’t help but smile at her son’s attempt to make her feel better. “All better,” she reassured him weakly. She was probably having Braxton-Hicks contractions. There was no way at almost eight months she was in labor. That was impossible.

She sighed in relief when the pain subsided.

See? Nothing to worry about.

“Mama,” Jordan smiled up at her happily.

“Yes, mama happy,” She smiled back at him, standing back up. “You ready to go out for lunch, Mister man?”

“Out!” Jordan clapped his hands happily.

\*\*\*

“I believe I have everything I need,” Mayson said, gathering her files together.

“What about the Quantum Disruptor?” Dr. Klein asked.

“What about it?” Mayson asked.

“It could be deadly; a colossal disaster! If in the wrong hands...”

“You said it wasn’t perfected yet,” Mayson argued.

“Yes, that’s true, but it’s powered by Kryptonite, Ms. Drake.”

“What is that?” Mayson asked.

Dr. Klein fidgeted in his seat uncomfortably. “It’s...”

“Fine, don’t tell me,” Mayson shrugged. “I wouldn’t worry about it, Dr. Klein. If anything happens I’m sure Superman will step up just as he always has.”

“But it’s him I’m worried about.”

“What?” Mayson asked.

“The weapon, the Quantum Disruptor. It’s a weapon to use against Superman,” Dr. Klein explained shamefully.

\*\*\*

Clark landed outside the familiar townhome on Hyperion Avenue. He was hoping to surprise Lois. He hadn’t had a chance to check in with her all day. He knew how sitting at home usually drove her nuts.

After changing into his street clothes he opened the front door to his building, “Lois?” He called out.

No answer.

She scanned the downstairs and upstairs, looking for a sign of where she may have gone, but found nothing. Upstairs he found her laptop open, running the search on Diana Stride and Intergang. He looked around the room nervously. She wouldn’t just leave her laptop lying around like this; would she?

Jordan’s favorite blanket lay on the floor by his bed. He bent down to pick it up. A small red puddle lay beneath it. He brushed

his fingers against it. Blood.

Panic coursed through him as he frantically looked around, trying to find something to tell him what was going on.

\*\*\*

She had been fine.

Lois sat curled up in the driver's seat of her SUV. What was happening? It was way too soon for her to have this baby. Braxton Hicks? She wasn't so sure anymore. She glared at the sign in front of her, 'Rosie's' She was hungry, but she was in pain too.

"Clark!" She cried out half-heartedly. She didn't even have enough energy to muster up a decent call for help.

\*\*\*

The small cry of his name reached his ears as he soared over Metropolis. She wasn't even trying to call for him. What was going on? He zeroed in on the diner outside the Planet and the familiar Jeep. He landed outside the diner, changing quickly into street clothes as he approached the Jeep.

Inside, he found Lois curled into a ball, unable to move. Jordan sat in the backseat, calling out to his mother. "Lois?"

"Cla.." She couldn't even finish his name. He wrapped his arms around her, trying to ease the pain.

"What's wrong?" He asked.

"I don't know," She shook her head. "It..hur.." She winced in pain once more, burying her face against his chest. He looked down at her skirt which had droplets of blood on it. He sighed in relief, realizing his worst fears were just that; fears.

"Come on, let's get you to the hospital," he whispered, climbing into the Jeep next to her.

\*\*\*

Dr. Miranda Prysstin never thought of herself as a victim. She had worked hard to achieve the successes in her life. She had graduated at the top of her class; majoring in Cosmetology and a minor in Applied Chemistry. She was a trained chemist, capable of mixing her own fragrances to create the desired effect for her customers. She had created her own small empire with the help of one man: Lex Luthor.

He had worked hard to keep her afloat through all the changes in Metropolis. When the Metros had taken over the Southside Lex had made sure she had been there to keep him informed of the comings and goings of the criminal organization. The Metros had been working with drugs, selling to the highest bidder.

Lex had found the petty crimes to be amusing and had decided to play along by having her mix a unique mix of her own. She'd called it Revenge. It was a powerful Pheromone fragrance that took away the normal self-preserving guard people held up against the public. If someone was sprayed they went to the first person they found attractive and immediately went for it. It was quite amusing.

Soon, Lex had her mixing solutions for different variations of Revenge. One of them erased memories to allow crimes to be committed. Another made the victims hallucinate. All was going well until the night of the fire at the Metro Club. She had been spotted by that redneck with Lex during a meeting with Johnny Taylor, the leader of the Metro Gang. He had overheard their plans to erase the entire crowd's memory and allow the gang to rob everyone. Shortly afterward the fire had broken out and her witness had disappeared. She had thought she was safe until he had shown up again at Lex Labs threatening to expose her. She knew she had to take care of him.

Miranda had been fortunate in having Mrs. Cox's help in handling the problem. Miranda had thought she was safe until she realized Toni Taylor, Johnny's sister and the only survivor from the Metros, had her own kind of revenge planned. Miranda had beaten Toni to the punch and now she was a fugitive. She was forced to lower herself to the standards of her victims. She had had to be ordinary.

Metropolis had put her there and made her the fugitive she

was now. Metropolis would pay, and to make sure, she would help neutralize Superman and his efforts as well. No one would stop her.

\*\*\*

Lucy glanced at the doorway for what felt like the fifty billionth time. Where was Jimmy? He'd said he would be right back.

"That's not going to bring him back any quicker," Ellen remarked, turning the page in the magazine she was reading. "You really need to learn some patience."

"I wasn't..."

Ellen looked up at her with a half-smile. "Are you seriously going to deny that you have looked over at that door for Jimmy seventy-eight times in the last hour?"

"Seventy-eight?" Lucy asked sheepishly.

"I counted," Ellen explained.

\*\*\*

The coffee in the hospital was disgusting. There was no way he was going to bring that disgusting brew back to Lucy and her mother. Jimmy stepped out of the elevator into the lobby and headed towards the coffee shop on the corner. 'Mazy's' was much better. He would bring back some real coffee and hopefully if Ellen Lane would ever leave him and Lucy long enough to talk, he could finally find out what was going on in Lucy's head right now. He loved her more than anything and...

Jimmy stopped cold. In front of him was a very familiar Jeep with his friend, Clark Kent standing outside of it. Blood was all over Clark's shirt. Clark held Jordan as he watched the paramedics load up...

"CK!!" Jimmy ran towards them.

\*\*\*

A brown hue filled the air as Turner aimed the Quantum Disruptor at the wall. The blast filled the air and the wall disintegrated in front of him. "Impressive," he commented.

"That wall you just destroyed... imagine it with a big 'S' on it," Isaac Mamba grinned. "This will destroy Superman."

"But will it kill him?" Turner asked.

"I don't know," Dr. Mamaba explained. "I can re-create molecules and clone them all I want but there's no way to tell how this machine will work on Superman. His molecular structure is so complex."

"So we need a test?" Turner asked.

"In so many words; yes," Isaac nodded.

\*\*\*

"I'm really not liking this part," Lois winced in pain as she leaned back against Clark.

"I know, Lois, but you have to push," her doctor urged.

"But..." Lois couldn't finish her argument. Another contraction hit. "It's too soon," she cried.

\*\*\*

Jimmy smiled down at Jordan who was reaching for anything and everything in his arms. "He's really grown."

"I'll say," Lucy said, reaching for him. Jordan happily went to his aunt, holding her tightly. "So, how exactly did you manage to go for coffee and come back with Jordan?"

"Well, it's a funny story," Jimmy began.

\*\*\*

"All right, Lois, I need you to push," Dr. Lee urged.

"No, I can't," she cried, shaking her head vehemently.

Clark's arms tightened around her. "Come on, Lois, you can do this."

"It's too soon. She's not ready," Lois cried.

"She is ready," Dr. Lee soothed. "She has to come out. She's almost there. I just need one good push. You said you didn't want to do a repeat c-section. If you don't push that's what you're going to get..."

\*\*\*

“So, what I was exposed to was a radioactive meteorite?”  
Mayson inquired skeptically.

“Pretty much,” Dr. Klein nodded, tapping his hand nervously on his desk. After his interview with her, she had followed him to his laboratory and begun asking him questions about different substances that glowed. Finally, she had come out and admitted what had happened to her. Kryptonite was definitely still out there.

“I can run some tests, make sure there were no lasting effects,” Dr. Klein suggested.

Mayson nodded, rolling up her sleeve, “Let’s do it.”

\*\*\*

Lucy watched Jordan playing with Jimmy. He had a natural talent to calm the toddler. It was hard to remain calm knowing her sister was in labor somewhere in the same hospital and she couldn’t be there for her.

“Okay, I give up!” Jimmy held his hands up in surrender. Jordan was climbing on his back and pulling on his hair.

“I ba!” Jordan cheered.

Lucy laughed. “You two are a mess!”

“Meh!” Jordan laughed, clapping his hands.

Jimmy laughed. “Looks like we’ve got ourselves a little mockingbird.”

“He seems so natural with you,” Lucy observed.

“Well, I just hope I’m keeping him distracted enough,” Jimmy commented, glancing at the empty seat where Ellen Lane had been sitting. She had gone to check on Lois and Clark and they hadn’t heard anything since.

\*\*\*

Arianna Carlin took a sip of her chardonnay as she watched her team of scientists work. She had been through so much in order to get to this point. Lex had been the love of her life. He had given her everything she’d ever hoped for and more, but she hadn’t been enough for him. Even after their divorce she still loved him.

When she had heard of his marriage to Lucy Lane and his death, she had promised revenge. She couldn’t understand how, after all the magnificent rescues and super feats this Superman had achieved in the past few months—and there had been many—how could he let Lex die?

Stealing Lex’s body from the morgue had been simple. Arianna implemented the help of Lex’s physician, Gretchen Kelly, and had her help to resurrect him. Once she was sure Lex was stable she had taken care of Dr. Kelly with a bullet to the chest. Next, she had called Dr. Benzen, the world’s most acclaimed plastic surgeons and had him operate so Lex might have a chance at a normal life. Then he had been taken care of as well.

Once Lex had realized there was no way anyone could come after him he began filling the shoes of ‘James Turner’ nicely. He enjoyed the money and the power that came with it, but he was anything but grateful to her for what she’d done. He still continued to pursue his earlier ambitions of building his empire and courting Lucy Lane. It was then that Arianna decided her revenge was misdirected. She still continued to plan her revenge against Superman, for he had helped destroy the empire that had once been her own—LexCorp.

She slowly began buying LexCorp out from under Intergang; merging a partnership with Mindy Church and hiring Mrs. Cox, Lex’s most trusted assistant, to play both sides. Though Nigel claimed not to be working with Lex, she still didn’t trust him. He would easily expose her and her plans to Lex if it would benefit him.

Now, Arianna worked with Mrs. Cox and Miranda in creating the perfect clone of Superman to destroy Metropolis and then Superman himself. Once she had taken all of Superman’s powers she would then kill Lex and there would be no one to stop her.

\*\*\*

“Come on, Lois, you’re almost there.” Clark cheered.

“One more push,” Dr. Lee encouraged.

“I *am* pushing!” Lois cried.

Clark could hear the pain in her voice. “You’re almost there, baby.”

“Clark, I can’t…” She cried.

“Yes, you can,” he cheered. “You can do this.”

A loud resonating cry filled the room. “You hear that?” Dr. Lee asked. “Just one more push to get her out.”

“I don’t think I can…” Lois panted.

“Yes, you can, honey,” Clark whispered, tightening his arms around her. “Just one more push.”

Lois listened to their daughter continue to cry. She let out a scream of pain as she put all her energy forth to push. Another cry from her daughter. Lois wasn’t sure if she should be worried or relieved. She hadn’t had a chance to experience any of this with Jordan. She had vaguely recalled the sound of him crying in the operating room but never anything like this.

“Congratulations,” Dr. Lee cheered, “A beautiful baby girl. Time of birth is 7:32pm.”

Lois shivered involuntarily; Clark held her close, running his hands up and down her arms to help keep her warm. She smiled when the nurse laid their daughter on top of her. “Do you want to cut the umbilical cord?”

Clark looked blankly up at the nurse, “Um…”

“Sometimes the fathers like to cut the cord,” the nurse explained.

He nodded, taking the clamp from the nurse. Lois watched in amazement as he cut the cord. Their daughter’s eyes were still closed. She moved her head from side to side, whimpering as Lois held her.

“She’s so perfect,” Lois whispered in amazement.

Clark wrapped his arms around her, kissing her forehead, “You are amazing,” He whispered, “I love you so much.”

The nurse reached out for the baby. “We need to check her vitals and then we’ll bring her up to your room.”

Lois hesitated, “But…”

Clark seemed to understand her hesitancy. “Do you mind if we wait here and watch? We don’t really want to let her go.”

The nurse smiled, “Of course,”

Lois and Clark breathed a sigh of relief. The trauma they had experienced over the past year had made them both hesitant to trust the hospital staff anywhere. It was just one of the many things they had to work through.

“While you’re watching you can work on filling out her birth certificate information,” The nurse suggested. “Do you know what you want to name her?”

Lois looked at Clark who was looking at her expectantly. “Um, well…”

\*\*\*

The officer handed Sam Lane his belongings one at a time. “Car keys,” Sam pocketed the keys. “Wallet,” he checked the wallet contents to assure himself that everything was still in there. “Glasses,” Sam slipped the glasses into his jacket pocket.

“Thank you,” Sam nodded.

“Don’t come back,” the officer warned.

“I don’t plan on it,” Sam said, shaking his head as he headed for the exit.

\*\*\*

Lucy watched Jimmy from across the room. Ellen had taken Jordan to Lois and Clark, leaving her and Jimmy alone for the first time all evening. Jimmy had a wistful expression across his face as he looked towards her. She smiled at him, “Long day, huh?”

“Huh?” He looked up, confused.

“I said it’s been a long day,” Lucy repeated.

“Yeah,” He agreed. “I’ll say. Jordan can be quite a handful. I don’t know how Lois and CK do it,”

Lucy smiled, “You were pretty great with him.”

“You think so?” he asked, “I have absolutely no idea what I’m doing.”

“I don’t think anyone knows what they’re doing when it comes to kids,” Lucy said. “I know my family sure didn’t.”

“You turned out all right,” Jimmy pointed out, “You’re alive, no missing body parts. and you don’t wake up screaming from what I’ve noticed.”

Lucy laughed, “No, I guess not.”

“So, why don’t you cut your parents a break?” Jimmy suggested. “I’m sure they did the best they could. I mean, look at Jordan. The poor guy got kidnapped at birth, then he went from one person to another; then back to his real parents again. I’m surprised at how resilient he’s been. Most people would be screwed up from something like that.”

“I never thought about it like that,” Lucy acknowledged.

“Life happens,” Jimmy shrugged. “Just try not to let it take over your life.”

“You think that’s what I did?” Lucy challenged.

“Do you? You’re the one that ended up here in the psych ward. What put you here?” Jimmy shot back.

Her first instinct was to defend herself. He was always making her angry by reminding her of the shortcomings in her past. This time, however, there was something different in his tone and expression. The genuine concern in his eyes tore at her heartstrings. It was hard to be angry at him when he looked at her like that.

“Jimmy,” she began. She really wasn’t ready to talk about what had gotten her to where she was. She had been shot in cold blood and lost her baby. She didn’t want to discuss it. It hurt too much.

“Yeah?” he prompted.

“I don’t want to talk about the baby,” Lucy pleaded with him.

“I’m not trying to make you talk about the baby,” Jimmy reassured her. “I’m trying to bring your attention to something else.” He explained, “You keep pushing away everyone in your life; holding everything in, Luce. You used to be so open; now you only open yourself up to your sister. That’s not good for you. You keep blaming your parents for the way you are but I don’t believe that. I think it has to do with what you went through last year,”

“That’s not...”

“You deny it, but you know it’s true, Luce,” Jimmy added.

Lucy opened her mouth to respond but was cut off when Ellen reentered the room. “How are you two doing? I brought back some goodies.” She held up a bag from the bakery on 57th Street.

Lucy forced a smile, holding back the unshed tears that were threatening to overtake her as she swallowed the bitter bile in her throat. “Sounds great, Mom.”

\*\*\*

Amanda Marshall stood outside the gate of the playground in Metropolis Park. It was so tempting. She could easily take any of the children that were playing on the swing set without anyone noticing. There were so many kids. The parents were distracted. It would be so easy.

The sound of the gate being closed and the vibration of the metal against metal echoed through her hands. She grimaced, recalling the sound of the prison doors closing. She couldn’t do that to herself again.

\*\*\*

“I think he’s mad at me,” Lois commented, glancing at Jordan who was clinging to Clark, staring her down with a scowl on his face. She looked down at their sleeping daughter. “He’ll get over it.”

“He’s just jealous,” Clark commented. He looked down at their sleeping daughter, brushing a strand of hair out of her eyes. “She looks so much like you, it’s unreal.”

“Well, I’d think after this one,” she gently tousled Jordan’s hair and he pulled away, “coming out just like you; I’d have one

that looks like me.”

“Let’s just hope she doesn’t get your stubborn streak,” Clark said dryly.

“Hey!” Lois thwacked him across the chest lightly. “I am not that stubborn!”

“Well, Ms. Not – That – Stubborn, any idea what you want to name her. Or are we taking her home as ‘Baby Girl Kent?’” Clark teased.

“It does have a nice ring to it,” Lois shot back.

“Lo-is,” Clark groaned.

“I’m kidding,” she sighed. “Sheesh!”

“You’re kidding? If your mother comes in here one more time demanding to know what her granddaughter’s name is going to be, I may go insane.” Clark prodded, “You do have a name for her, right?”

“Of course I have a name for her.” Lois smiled up at Clark, “Her name is Laura. Laura Lane Kent,” She picked Laura up so she was looking at the baby, being sure to hold her neck steady as she did so, supporting her with her legs.

Clark kissed her on the cheek. “Perfect,” he whispered.

“Jordan, meet your sister.” Lois reached out for him. He pulled away, stubbornly burying his face into his father’s chest. “Or not.”

A knock at the door was followed by a familiar face. “I wasn’t sure if you were taking any visitors.”

“Daddy?” Lois looked up at him in surprise.

\*\*\*

“Long night, Inspector?” Detective Wolf asked, walking into the interrogation room where Inspector Henderson stood with the pictures of all the bodies that had been dug out of Hobb’s Bay in the last year.

“What’s the connection, Wolf?” Henderson asked.

“What do you mean?”

“We’ve got a famous surgeon, a private doctor, a talk show host, and another reporter that could possibly be a part of Intergang. Then let’s not forget our DEA Agent and our meteorologist.” Henderson tapped his hand against the board.

“What’s the connection?”

“I don’t know maybe they all went to the same coffee shop and pissed someone off there?” Wolf guessed. “It’s too late for this stuff, Henderson.”

“It’s too late for a lot of stuff but I still do it. Bodies are popping up left and right in Hobbs Bay and I want to know why.” Henderson muttered.

“Well, you got two doctors. Maybe they worked together?” Wolf suggested.

“And the reporters?”

“Wrong place; wrong time?”

“And the rest?”

“The same?”

“You’re no help,” Henderson sighed.

“Go home,” Wolf sighed, exasperated. “We have bigger cases to deal with right now and...”

“We can’t solve that case on the clones until we solve this. I know they’re connected.” Henderson explained.

“Fine, don’t listen to me,” Wolf sighed. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

<<“Working Together”>>

The words stuck in Henderson’s mind. There was something so familiar about the names. He wasn’t sure what it was.

\*\*\*

“The ultimate test will be how Superman reacts to the Synthetic Kryptonite.” Mrs. Cox explained. “I still don’t understand why you weren’t able to get your hands on the real meteorite.”

“This is just as good,” Miranda assured. “I mixed it myself. I’m confident Superman will feel the effects from this material just as much as the real Kryptonite.”

“The question is how we get the material near Superman to test him,” Arianna explained. “Then we can see how potent this material really is.”

“Well, we can always do it the old-fashioned way,” Mindy suggested.

“Which is?” Mrs. Cox asked.

“Help, Superman?” Mindy suggested.

\*\*\*

Three Weeks Later...

Jack stared at the empty desk in front of him as he gathered the last of his things. It was weird going from job to job. He’d emptied out his desk after turning in his resignation at Top Copy. After the fiasco with Barry Dunning and Diana Stride, he hadn’t been comfortable working there anymore.

“Well, another one bites the dust,” Jack muttered, grabbing the box off his desk and heading towards the elevators.

\*\*\*

Arianna Carlin was a woman who enjoyed being in control. After her divorce from Lex she had used the company, “ACL Industries”, to begin her own fortune after losing her family fortune during their divorce. Lex had taken more than just money during their marriage. He had taken the company her family had built and turned it into his own. Lex Corp had begun with the Carlins.

Now that she was beginning to realize that Lex would never look at her the same way she had looked at him for so many years. She began to plan her comeback. Her family name would resound through the streets once again and Lex Luthor would be nothing but an inconvenient footnote barely remembered by the people of Metropolis.

\*\*\*

James Turner flipped through the police file as Ryan Knox watched in rapt attention. “It’s a shame what happened to one of our own district attorneys, Mr. Knox, under your watch.”

“Yes, Mr. Turner, it’s a tragedy, but I can’t control everything in this city.” Ryan Knox pointed out.

“What are you doing to deal with this?” Turner asked.

“Pardon?” Knox asked, uncertainly.

“I’ve put a lot of money into your campaigns this year, Mr. Knox, I want to know my money is well spent. What are you doing now that one of your own was gunned down in the middle of Metropolis’ streets?”

“I...” Ryan Knox looked around uncertainly, unsure of how to answer.

“I’ll assume nothing, then?” Turner asked.

“No, no, we are investigating, it’s just...”

“Yes?”

“Well, it’s hard to investigate when no one wants to talk.”

“I’d like to see something done, Mr. Knox. It’s disconcerting to see criminals get away with attacking the very officials that work so hard to put them away. It creates panic in the streets; people begin to talk and pretty soon you’re out of a job. Do you catch my drift, Mr. Knox?”

“Completely, Mr. Turner,” Ryan Knox nodded, understanding James Turner’s not-so-subtle hints.

\*\*\*

Lois checked one glanced over at the bassinet across the room, assuring herself that Laura was still asleep. Jordan sat on the bed with her playing with his toy remote control, pressing the light-up buttons. Lois read over the police report on Lucy’s shooting. Clark was out on patrol and she was taking advantage of the rare quiet time to review the details on the case. Just because she was on maternity leave didn’t mean she had to drop the ball on a case that affected her family. Jordan yawned as he played. “Getting sleepy?” she asked him.

He yawned, rubbing his eyes this time. “Let’s get you to bed.” She picked him up, carried him into his room and laid him in his

crib, turning on his glow worm to play his lullabies. He rolled over, holding his glow worm as he drifted off to sleep. “Good night, sweetie.” Lois turned off the light and headed back to her room where Laura slept. Lois checked to make sure Laura was still asleep then resumed her place on the bed.

“You’re not supposed to be working,” she heard her husband whisper in her ear as two strong arms wrapped themselves around her, pulling her against him. He kissed her cheek as she turned towards him, putting the file down.

“This isn’t work; it’s personal,” she shot back. Trying to change the subject, she asked, “How was your patrol?”

“Quiet,” He commented. “I had a couple of situations with a few petty thieves trying to break into a pawn shop on Third but other than that...” He shrugged.

She nodded, “Hopefully it stays that way.”

Clark laughed, nuzzling the side of her neck as he whispered, “You don’t want to have any big headlines on the front page of the Daily Planet?”

“Not while I’m on leave,” she answered, rolling her shoulders as he gently massaged them.

“Figures,” he whispered, placing a peck on her neckline. “Still thinking about that Pulitzer?” he teased.

“You bet,” Lois smiled. “No seriously I want to find out more about...” She let out a low moan as his hands continued to work their magic on her tense muscles, “Mmm, right there...”

“About what?” He asked as he continued to massage her shoulders, “You’re really tense.”

“And sleep-deprived,” Lois added with a smile.

Clark laughed, “Well, at least you know she’s healthy.”

“Yes, that’s true,” Lois sighed, leaning back against him.

“She’s very healthy.”

Clark tightened his arms around her waist. “You are going to drive me insane,” he whispered.

“That’s the idea,” Lois teased, moving her hand upward. He caught her hand before she reached her target, removing it from his leg as he leaned down to kiss her. She hated this. Both Jordan and Laura were fast asleep. They were both definitely in the mood but they couldn’t do anything.

“Lo-is,” Clark chastised, wrapping his hand over hers.

“A little friendly flirting won’t hurt anyone,” she purred, turning around in his arms. She linked her arms around his neck, pulling him towards her.

“Three more weeks,” he murmured.

“Doctor’s orders suck,” Lois harrumphed.

\*\*\*

Lucy nervously tapped her fingers against the wood grain of her dresser as she examined her reflection in the mirror. She still felt like something wasn’t right. Why was she doing this? It was just going to end in disaster. Everything with Jimmy in the past had ended the same, with them fighting.

She cared about Jimmy. She did love him, but she wasn’t sure if she loved him as more than a friend. She knew there were deep feelings there, but to what extent those feelings were was still unclear. When Jimmy had suggested they go out on a date she’d been hesitant. After gentle prodding over the last few weeks she’d agreed. Now she wasn’t so sure anymore.

A knock at the door interrupted her reverie.

*‘Too late to back out now.’*

She got up and headed for the front door.

“Here goes nothing,” Lucy muttered to herself.

\*\*\*

Arianna stared at the map of Metropolis on display in front of her. She circled various buildings, marking each with different numbers. “What’s with the coloring?” Mindy asked, stepping into the office.

Arianna turned around, surprised at the intrusion. “I’m planning,” she corrected.

“Right,” Mindy nodded. “So, when do we conduct the first test with this Synthetic Kryptonite? I’d love to unleash Intergang on this city, but we can’t afford to send everyone with Little Boy Blue still flying out there.”

“Oh, we’ll handle him soon enough, Mindy,” Arianna promised. “First, I need to extract my revenge on someone who has been deserving of repayment for quite some time.”

“Who might that be?” Mindy asked.

“Your partner.” Arianna smiled back at her, “Oh, I’m sorry, former partner. I forgot he tried to kill you.”

“Yeah, well, I have my plans for him,” Mindy shrugged.

“I’m sure you do, but this plan is necessary,” Arianna added. “In order to bring ACL Industries forward in the United States I need to reclaim what is rightfully mine.”

“Which is?” Mindy asked.

“LexCorp,” Arianna stated coldly.

\*\*\*

“Wow, you look awesome, Luce,” Jimmy complimented when she opened the door. she was dressed in a deep violet dress, short sleeved with a v-neck. The hem of the dress came up to her knees.

Lucy smiled back at him nervously, giving him a once-over, “You clean up pretty good yourself, Jimmy Olsen.” She grabbed her purse and headed out the door with him.

\*\*\*

Clark held Laura against his chest, watching her sleep as Lois finished rinsing her bottle out. “She’s out like a light,” he commented.

Lois smiled. “She seems to have adapted to her sleeping schedule pretty easily. Do you want to go ahead and put her back to bed?”

Clark nodded, walking her upstairs. He loved watching Laura when she slept. It was one of the many things that reminded him of Lois, and Laura was the spitting image of her mother. Jordan seemed to have adapted to having Laura around. During the day, he tried to ‘help’ feed and change her, feeling like he was a big boy. Clark and Lois allowed him to help as much as he could, wanting to keep him involved so as to prevent him from feeling left out.

The doctors had reassured them Laura would be fine, but Dr. Lee had cautioned Lois not to push herself. After pregnancy it wasn’t uncommon for complications to occur with mothers, especially those whom had had a caesarean. Dr. Lee still wanted to watch Lois’ blood pressure to make sure there were no more complications. Even though Lois complained about all the restrictions and joked about her doctor being paranoid, Clark knew she was just as concerned.

Once upstairs, he laid Laura down in her bassinet across from the master bed. She stretched her little arms over her head, rubbing her little fist against her cheek as she wiggled around, trying to find a comfortable spot. He smiled down at her, tugging the soft cotton blanket over her little body. “Get some rest, little bit,” he told her.

Lois came up behind him, wrapping her arms around his waist and resting her chin on his shoulder. “She’s probably out for the rest of the night.”

Clark glanced at the clock on the night stand. It read, ‘11:15’. “You’re probably right,” he nodded, turning to hug her. He noticed the file on the bed that Lois had been reading earlier. “What’s this?” he asked, picking it up and scanning it.

“Lucy’s police report,” Lois said, taking a seat next to him on the edge of the bed.

Lois cut him off before he could respond, “I know I’m not supposed to be working but it won’t hurt for us to look into this. Lucy’s just now starting to recover and I’d like to know who’s responsible for doing this to her.”

Clark cast a sideways glance at her. Every instinct within him was screaming ‘no’ but there was something else nagging at him

to pursue this as well. Lucy had been through a lot in the past year. The shooting and miscarriage were just icing on the cake. He couldn’t really argue with Lois.

“This says the police have already classified this as a ‘cold case,’” Clark observed.

“Exactly,” Lois pointed out, “Which means they aren’t going to be investigating this. We have to find out who shot Luce. If they did it once they could do it again.”

“Why would they call it a cold case so early? There’s hardly any investigation notes here,” Clark sighed, running a hand through his hair, “Whoever did this knew what they were doing. No signs of the bullet casing or shells anywhere on the scene.”

“Maybe they know someone in the department,” Lois pointed out.

“Maybe.” Clark sighed. “I really think you should be resting, though,” he half-heartedly argued.

Lois crossed her arms over her chest defiantly. “Clark, she’s my sister.”

“I know,” he sighed, “I just don’t want...”

Lois cut him off, shaking her head. “I need to do this,” she argued, “Besides it’s not like I’m doing this on my own. You’re going to be helping.” She winked at him.

“I know,” Clark sighed, “but the doctor did say to watch your stress levels the first few months.”

“I’m fine,” Lois pressed. “I delivered Laura just fine without any complications. I will be fine. Please help me do this for Luce,” she pleaded.

“Fine, where do you want to start?” Clark asked.

Lois opened the nightstand drawer next to the bed and pulled out a large stack of files, laying them on the bed in front of them. “Lucy’s cases in the last year.”

“How did you...?” Clark asked, bewildered, when he saw the large stack of files in front of them.

“Less talking, more reading,” Lois said, handing him half of the stack as she leaned up to kiss him on the cheek.

\*\*\*

Miranda poured the neon green liquid into the valve carefully as she continued to mix everything carefully. She readjusted the clothes pin that squeezed her nose, preventing the fumes from getting to her.

Mixing the Kryptonite with her Revenge Formula always took great precautions; even more so now that they were using a man-made Kryptonite. She wasn’t sure what kind of effects to expect from the formula. Arianna wanted to test it on their next venture, ‘Turner Banking and Loan.’

Arianna said James Turner had taken everything she’d held dear and valued in this life. Miranda wasn’t stupid. She knew James Turner was Lex. She’d done her homework before signing on with ACL Industries.

She knew about Arianna’s plan to win Lex back and how she had murdered Dr. Benzen and Dr. Kelly after they had brought him back to life. What Miranda didn’t know was why Arianna had taken such a drastic turn. Arianna refused to discuss James Turner or Lex Luthor unless she was planning her revenge against him.

One thing was for sure: if this Synthetic Kryptonite worked the same way it had before then Superman would be out of commission for a long time. Miranda glanced at her reflection in her mirror. She hated having to change her image. She missed the curly blonde locks she’d once sported. Being a fugitive, she didn’t have such luxuries to keep fashionable hairstyles. She couldn’t afford to be recognized and returned to prison.

\*\*\*

Lucy nervously tapped her foot against the marble floor beneath the table. This was uncomfortable. A museum. They were having dinner at a French restaurant in the Metropolis Museum of Fine Arts. It was beautiful and elegant, but it just wasn’t right. None of this felt like her or Jimmy. He was trying to impress her.

She knew that and she was doing her best to humor him, but there was only so much she could put up with. She didn't care about the different artists that had come to the Metropolis Art Museum and she didn't care about the music Mozart listened to when he was a child. She had listened to boring facts like this when she was dating Lex and she'd hated every minute of it.

"Luce?" Jimmy waved his hand in front of her, "Earth to Lucy!"

"Sorry," she apologized.

"Am I boring you?" he asked, confused.

Lucy smiled apologetically, "A little."

Jimmy threw his napkin down in frustration.

"I'm sorry, Jimmy, I know you're really trying but I would have been fine just going for pizza."

"But that's not what you do on a first date," Jimmy argued. "You're supposed to impress the girl and let her get to know you and..."

"Jimmy, no offense, but I think we're way past the first date stereotypes," Lucy pointed out.

Jimmy sighed, "I guess you're right." He thought about it a moment, "I guess we're like on our ... what? Fifteenth date?"

Lucy laughed. "I suppose."

"So, you want to ditch this place?" Jimmy asked, looking around at the snooty waiter that was eyeing their table and looking at his watch.

"I thought you'd never ask." Lucy sighed in relief, grabbing her purse as she stood up to leave.

\*\*\*

Nigel was losing his cool. Lex was growing more and more out of control. The clone Nigel had had Sam Lane create was nowhere to be found and his plans for taking over Metropolis were falling apart with each passing day.

Mindy Church had failed to die, leaving another person he had to deal with on his own. Nigel had readied himself with Kryptonite, preparing to confront Superman on his own and finish the job, but first his enemies had to be taken care of.

Bill Church had served his purpose and Nigel had had him taken care of. Even though it had cost him a good employee, the job had been done. Mrs. Cox continued to report news of Arianna Carlin's plans for Lex. Nigel found it amusing that such an intelligent woman couldn't tell when she was being played for a fool. It was no matter to him. He would use her to her full potential and eventually have her taken care of.

Diana Stride's murder had shocked Nigel and surprised him at the same time. He knew the bodies that had appeared in the Hobb's Bay were the result of Arianna's failed attempts of recreating Dr. Lane's cloning procedures, but he didn't know where Diana Stride's body had come into the mix.

Lex had come unhinged since Lucy Lane's shooting. He had let his company go lax; unable to keep up with the daily pressures of maintaining it. This would be the very thing that destroyed him. Lex's obsession with Lucy Lane had driven him to his death in the end. He had had the opportunity to run and escape before the police had come for him, but Lex had insisted on taking Lucy with him. That had been his downfall.

Nigel couldn't understand this obsession Lex had with Lucy Lane. She brought him nothing but pain. He had no chance with her, yet he kept pursuing her. It was as if he enjoyed the pain she brought on him.

Nigel would never put a woman above everything else the way Lex had. He worked too hard to sacrifice his organization for someone who barely acknowledged him. Never would he make that mistake. Soon he would find a way to get Lex out of the way. Lex's distraction was proof that he wasn't fit to run his company. It was merely the act of an old friend helping him out. He'd understand eventually.

\*\*\*

The next morning, Clark left early to do a quick patrol around the city before heading over to the Planet. His anxiety level seemed to have heightened after Laura's birth. Knowing that there were so many things out in the world that could potentially hurt her scared him.

Her skin and Jordan's was penetrable. They had both been vaccinated by Dr. Klein. They had both bled. Clark knew for now anyway, they weren't invulnerable and that knowledge scared him. He had grown up being completely invulnerable, never seeing blood until his first bout with Kryptonite. Now, the responsibility he'd taken on by becoming Superman seemed minuscule compared to his responsibility to protect his family.

"Morning, CK, beautiful day, isn't it?" Jimmy beamed, patting him on the shoulder as he passed by him on his way to the elevator.

"Yeah, I'd say so," Clark commented, observing Jimmy's out-of-character upbeat attitude, "You seem a bit..."

"I know, isn't it great?" Jimmy interrupted happily. "I'm happy; happier than I've ever been in my life!"

Clark smiled, patting Jimmy on the back. "Good, I'm glad. I guess your date with Lucy went well?"

Jimmy's smile broadened, "She's doing better and starting to go back to the real Lucy. I finally got a glimpse of her last night."

"Olsen! I thought I told you to pull that report of missing persons!" Perry bellowed across the newsroom. "I'm not paying you to have a social hour with Kent there!"

Jimmy grimaced, "Sorry, gotta go!"

Clark finished making his way down the ramp and approached Perry who looked like he'd been up all night. "Chief, is everything all right?"

Perry shook his head, "No, I ... I don't know. I'm not all right."

"What's wrong?" Clark asked.

"Uh, Jack hasn't been home all week," Perry whispered in a low voice as he entered the Editor-in-Chief's office, closing the door after Clark entered. "We filed a missing persons report this morning."

"I'm sorry, Chief," Clark empathized. Jack had come to be like a son to Perry. Clark had helped to get Jack placed in foster care with Perry and Alice. Now, it looked like their efforts had gone to waste. It appeared Jack had run away again.

\*\*\*

"Dadda," Jordan pouted, crossing his arms over his chest.

Lois sighed, exasperated, "Dadda is at work. Come on, Mr. Man, you need to eat so we can get you to school."

"No, dadda," Jordan argued.

Lois shook her head in frustration, "Jordan, we don't have time for this. Your sister is dressed and ready to go. You need to eat your waffle."

"No, mamma," Jordan argued.

The doorbell rang and Lois sighed, looking towards the door, uncertain who could be at the door this early in the morning. "Eat." She pointed at the plate in front of Jordan before turning to answer the door.

She opened the door and smiled when she saw her in-laws on the other side. "Jonathan, Martha, what are you doing here? I thought you weren't coming until next week!" She hugged them as they entered the townhome.

"We got an earlier flight," Martha explained, "and we couldn't stay away for another week." She hugged Lois tightly before pulling away. "How are you doing?"

"I'm fine," Lois said, walking towards the dining room table to check on Jordan. "We're just trying to get breakfast eaten."

Jonathan followed them into the dining room, smiling at Jordan who was still refusing to eat his waffle. "What's wrong with you, buddy?"

"Dadda!" Jordan pouted.

“And a little attitude on the side,” Lois said dryly. Martha smiled warmly at Lois, “It comes with the territory.” She peered down at the car seat where Laura was sleeping. “She is just the most precious thing. She’s gotten so big,” Martha cooed.

Lois smiled down at the tiny baby. “She’s getting bigger every day.” She sighed, turning her attention back to Jordan. To her surprise, he was eating his waffle with the help of his Grandpa Jonathan. She looked up at her father-in-law and smiled, “You are my hero.”

Jonathan laughed. “Let’s get this little guy ready for school now.”

\*\*\*

Amanda watched from across the street as Lois loaded Jordan up into the Jeep. She could feel a rush of envy wash over her as she watched the scene unfold. She had been the one to take care of Jordan at one time. She’d fed him and sung him nursery rhymes when he slept. She couldn’t help but feel a pang in her chest as she watched the Jeep pull away. She missed the feeling of having a child in her arms to care for.

She turned the corner and continued to watch the townhome with envy. “You shouldn’t stare that hard; someone might think you’re up to something,” a voice behind her spoke.

She turned around in surprise. “You.” She breathed a sigh of relief. “So, what if I am? Back off!” Amanda hissed, turning away from him. She got up and left, walking down the street away from the townhome.

\*\*\*

Diana Stride’s files had been sent to a warehouse in the police’s criminal organization division. Nigel had a few officers on his payroll and was able to get his hands on all her files, hoping to find some insight on Intergang that he didn’t already know.

Most of everything was VHS tapes of her shows. He skimmed through the boxes looking for something more useful. He found one envelope with large black ink on it. In large letters, ‘Top Secret’ was written across the envelope.

Curious, he ripped open the envelope and a blank VHS tape fell out. He glanced at it suspiciously. Would it be worth his while? He shrugged. It wasn’t like he had anything else to do at the moment.

Nigel turned on the television and put the tape into the tape player. “Let’s see what’s so top secret,” He murmured to himself.

\*\*\*

“Help, he’s getting away!” A large man with a balding scalp and a sauce-covered apron chased Jack out of his restaurant. “You thief! Get back here!”

Jack raced down the street with his arms filled with the food he’d grabbed on his dine n’ dash. He turned around the corner and looked behind him, assuring himself that he had escaped. He was just about to round the next corner when he came into collision with a solid chest with a familiar blue, yellow, and red emblem on it.

“What the...?”

Superman stared coolly down at Jack. “Going somewhere?”

Jack dropped the box, shaking his head, “You here to take me to jail?” He held out his hands for Superman to take him in.

Superman picked up the box at his feet and opened it up. “Food? You were stealing food?”

“I’m kind of short on cash, but my stomach didn’t get the memo,” Jack explained. “So? You taking me in or what?”

Superman handed him the box, “No.”

\*\*\*

Turner Banking and Loan was a large building. The bank dealt with thousands of businesses every day and many elite members of the upper crust of Metropolis’ society. They had the best of the best for their customers.

Mary Tollins was the head clerk at the bank. She greeted all the customers as they entered the bank. “Welcome to Turner

Banking and Loan. How may we help you today?”

The woman smiled warmly at her, “You can start by emptying out your safe.” She pointed a gun at Mary’s temple. “This is what you would call a holdup.”

\*\*\*

“And based on the evidence before us, we can conclude that Clark Kent, mild-mannered reporter for the Daily Planet is, in fact, Superman. This concludes tonight’s Top Copy segment. Thank you and good night.”

Nigel rewound the tape once more. He still couldn’t believe his eyes.

Clark Kent was Superman?

\*\*\*

Lex Luthor was not a very understanding man. He was ruthless and demanded the best from everyone and everything around him. He had prided himself on a job well done when Lex Corp had created a monopoly over Metropolis. He was the face of Metropolis; the one everyone had to look up to see. Until he had lost control of everyone and everything around him.

He wouldn’t make that mistake again.

“Sir?” Turner looked up from his desk to see his secretary, Janet, hovering outside his door.

“Yes?”

“The alarm to the Turner Banking and Loan has been tripped. I’m not sure what you wanted to ...”

He didn’t give her a chance to finish; instead, he was up out of his chair, heading for the elevator. No one stole from Lex Luthor and lived to tell about it.

\*\*\*

“You know, you’re really not so bad,” Jack commented as he took a bite from his sandwich. “I don’t understand what the big fuss is all about.”

Superman shrugged, “I don’t know.”

“So, you’re like an exact copy of Superman?”

Superman nodded. “My father...” He stopped a moment. He didn’t want to discuss his father. “I was created in the womb,” he explained solemnly.

Jack looked at him, perplexed for a moment, “Whatever.” He shrugged, “Maybe you and Superman should work together; take shifts in saving the world?”

Superman’s eyes darkened. “No! I am the rightful Superman. He is not!”

“Whoa!” Jack held up his hands, attempting to calm him down. “I didn’t mean to start anything. I just thought because you were both working towards the same goal, you could work together. My bad.”

Superman nodded, opening his mouth to speak, but an alarm caught his attention off in the distance.

\*\*\*

Arianna smiled as she aimed the beam to her latest weapon on all that approached her. The doors to the bank opened and she smiled when she saw the figure approach her, “Lex, so good of you to join us!”

With that she aimed the weapon at him, knocking him to the ground in pain.

She smiled, kneeling down next to him as she ran a hand through his hair. He lay unconscious on the floor and she smirked. “Just think, if you could only stay like this forever we never would have had any problems.”

\*\*\*

‘Andrew Simpleton was a simple man.’

Those words could not ring any truer. Andrew Simpleton had worked at LexCorp Finance for fifteen years. He had started out as just an intern, working his way up into management. He had always worked hard and given a thousand percent. Many thought of him as a nerd or a workaholic, but he thought of it as time well invested.

Now, as he sat underneath his desk, clutching his inhaler as his co-workers fell to the ground in hysteria, he wondered if he had been right to invest so much time into his work. He hadn't taken a single risk in his life, nor had he accomplished anything as far as a personal achievement. He had remained a bachelor with no prospects in the near future, and he hardly had any friends. What did he have to show for himself?

He took another breath from his inhaler. He just didn't understand why his co-workers were acting so strangely.

\*\*\*

"Interesting proposal," Mindy mused. "But why don't you do the dirty work yourself?"

"You don't want revenge for what he did to you?" Nigel probed, knowing full well Mindy had no idea Lex had been the one to poison her.

"What are you talking about?" Mindy inquired.

"You were in the hospital for over a week. I'd think you'd want to extract your revenge on the person who put you there." Nigel shrugged, pretending to turn away, "Never mind, I suppose it's not your style."

"Hold it!" Mindy ordered.

Nigel stopped in his tracks, smiling to himself. She had no idea she had just been played.

"Yes?"

"How exactly do you plan on having Lex arrested without exposing me too?"

"I have information from before he merged Turner Inc with the Church Industry," Nigel promised. "Nothing will happen to your company."

"How can you be so sure?" Mindy asked.

"My dear, I've been doing this a long time," Nigel explained.

\*\*\*

Clark landed outside Turner Banking and Loan after overhearing the silent alarm. He scanned the building, assuring himself that it was safe to enter before opening the doors. The last thing he wanted was to put someone's life in jeopardy because of his carelessness.

"What are YOU doing here?" A familiar voice from behind him asked irritably.

He held his index finger up, signaling the uninvited guest to be quiet. Everyone in the bank seemed to be unconscious.

"You're going to screw everything up!" his doppelganger shouted.

"Would you stop?" Clark hissed back at him angrily.

He locked eyes with the very irritated Superman. He didn't understand why he was here. Surely it didn't take two of them to survey the scene.

<<"What do you want?">>

The voice echoed in his mind.

Clark shook his head, taking a step back.

Did he seriously just...?

<<"Well? Are you going to stand there all day?">>

No, he wasn't imagining it.

The sound of sirens approaching them caught his attention. He looked towards the entrance to see where James Turner lay on the floor unconscious. His bank had been robbed and he'd tried to stop it.

'Poor guy,' Clark thought.

"She took it," Turner mumbled incoherently.

He knelt down next to him to hear what Turner had said, hoping he'd repeat it, but Turner pushed him away.

He looked back at his doppelganger, hoping he'd heard what Turner had said, but he was gone.

A stampede of Metropolis' finest, guarded in protective gear entered the bank. "CLEAR!" one of them shouted, waving his gun around.

Clark turned towards the officers and began giving them the

details on what he thought had happened as they began helping clean up the havoc the robbers had left.

\*\*\*

Amanda stood outside the 'Sunshine Metropolis' daycare center, watching as the young children played outside, chasing one another around the playground. She smiled bittersweetly. The ache she had inside her heart was still there; whether she admitted it or not.

She loved the time she had spent with Jordan. She didn't care what anyone had said. In her heart, she knew she had been right. She was destined to be Jordan's mother and nobody was going to rob her of that.

"What are you doing here?" Superman scolded from behind her.

"Nothing!" She said haughtily, turning away from the daycare center as she walked away.

\*\*\*

Everything had changed. Sam Lane looked around what had once been his laboratory at S.T.A.R. Labs. It was now occupied by two interns. His belongings had probably been thrown out along with all his research notes. Everything he'd worked so hard on...

"Dr. Lane?"

Sam looked up to see Dr. Bernard Klein in front of him.

"Yes?"

Dr. Klein smiled. "I know it's a bit overwhelming. I put all your stuff in storage." He explained. "Uh, the board isn't comfortable with you having your own lab right now...well, given the circumstances."

Dr. Lane nodded. He couldn't blame them. He'd been charged with a capital offense. "Yes, of course."

"Come on, I could use your help."

"What are we working on?"

"Project KMD 629." Dr. Klein stated flatly.

"You seem to have a lot of projects that begin with 'K.'" Sam noted. "Never an 'N' or an 'H' It's always 'K'."

"It's my luck," Dr. Klein said hurriedly.

"Right," Sam nodded. "So what have we got?"

"Well, if you look at this sample..."

\*\*\*

"Authorities still have yet to identify all the assailants that raided Turner Banking and Loan earlier this afternoon. Turner was found unconscious at the entrance of his bank when authorities arrived. Superman was on the scene, helping authorities to piece together what had happened..."

Lois clicked the television off, shaking her head. "Unreal."

"I know," Clark said, wrapping a protective arm around her shoulder. "The guy was determined that these guys wouldn't rob him, so he tried to stop them himself."

"Trying to be the hero," Lois sighed, leaning back against Clark's embrace.

"Being stupid," Clark corrected. "Now, he's in the hospital and no one knows what these guys used on him."

"There's no telling unless he wakes up," Lois said. The cries from the baby monitor caught her attention, veering her attention to the baby sleeping upstairs. "Someone's hungry."

\*\*\*

Six Weeks Later...

The next few weeks kept Lois and Clark busy with the investigation into what appeared to be a botched robbery of James Turner's empire. Turner had been released from the hospital shortly afterward, insistent upon returning to work.

Lois had been allowed to go back to work after her six-week checkup, albeit on a limited workload. The doctor still wanted her to take it easy after the complications she'd had during her pregnancy.

\*\*\*

"I'm sure it's nothing, Lex," Nigel cooed, watching as Lex

paced around him nervously.

“Why did you allow me to get checked into a hospital? Don’t you know they could figure it out?” Lex fumed angrily.

“What was I supposed to do? Break you out with an IV attached to you?” Nigel asked amused.

“You don’t understand the severity of this!” Lex argued. “Everything I’ve worked for...”

“You?” Nigel challenged slightly miffed.

“We. I apologize. I meant to say ‘we.’ Everything will fall apart.”

“I’m not sure I follow,” Nigel cut in.

“The weapon I had Mamba working on is GONE. If I didn’t know any better I’d say those hoodlums used it on me before they left the bank. The point is I have no way of destroying Superman now. No way of extracting my revenge and now every one of us is exposed. If that weapon makes its way back to the authorities...”

“That’s a bit of a stretch even for you, Lex.” Nigel cut him off. “You’re giving the authorities far too much credit.”

“Never underestimate your opponent.”

\*\*\*

“Henderson?” Detective Wolf knocked on the inspector’s door.

“Yeah?” Henderson didn’t even look up from the report he was typing up.

“Someone to see you. A Mindy Church.”

Henderson looked up at that. He raised his eyebrows, “Well, by all means, send her in.”

Wolf looked over his shoulder and motioned for Mindy to come in. “If you need anything just let us know.”

“I will, thank you, Detective,” she cooed, rubbing her palm up and down his shoulder.

Detective Wolf blushed under Mindy’s gaze and then took his cue to exit. “I, uh, I gotta go. I’ll catch up with you later, Henderson.”

Wolf could have sworn he heard Henderson mutter ‘coward’ under his breath as he left the office and headed towards the break room.

\*\*\*

“Lois, it’s not that bad,” Clark argued.

Lois shook her head adamantly. “It is that bad. Every time we bring Laura and Jordan to Dr. Klein for a checkup my father’s there with his five thousand questions. I don’t want to deal with it. Make the call.”

“You are not leaving me alone with him,” Clark argued.

“Invite your dad. Make it a guy thing. I don’t care. Just get him out of S.T.A.R. Labs for the time being.” Lois shot back.

“You’re being ridiculous.” Clark added.

“So sue me,” Lois snapped. “I do not want another day of trying to dodge questions with him.”

“So you want me to do it?” Clark summarized.

“Exactly,” Lois gave him a peck on the cheek as she placed Laura’s carrier in the backseat of the Jeep. “Make the call.”

Clark shook his head as he watched her pull out of the driveway. “The things I do,” he muttered to himself as he reached into his pocket for his cell phone and began to dial.

\*\*\*

Amanda stood outside the daycare center, expectantly waiting for the children to come outside to play on the playground. It had become a routine over the last few weeks. She’d finish her work at Top Copy then she’d take a lunch break at the same time the children were playing and enjoy the afternoon watching her ‘son’ play. She had finally gotten that Superman want to be back off. He kept trying to guilt her into giving up her routine, but she wouldn’t waver.

She looked up when she heard the children cheering as they came out on the playground. She looked around; searching for the familiar face she looked forward to. Where was he? She didn’t see

him.

Panic raced through her mind as she searched for his face. He was nowhere to be found.

\*\*\*

Lois looked up at the clock nervously as Dr. Klein examined both Laura and Jordan. The last visit had been a mess. Clark had kept Sam out in the hall, forcing himself to listen to Sam’s stories about his ‘medical breakthroughs’ for a made-up article in order to cover up their real reason for visiting S.T.A.R. Labs. Lois half suspected Sam was onto them.

Thankfully Clark had held up his end of the bargain and gotten Sam out of the office. How had he done it? She didn’t want to know.

\*\*\*

How exactly had they gotten on this subject? Clark looked from father to father-in-law wondering how they had gotten to such an odd topic of conversation. Sam was trying to convince them that ‘family life’ wasn’t all it was cracked up to be. There was apparently more to life than coming home to your loved one and children. The invention of robotics and discovery of cloning could apparently satisfy any man.

Clark hung his head as he took another gulp of his beer. If alcohol had an effect on him he’d be wishing for it to take effect right now. The waitress seemed to be avoiding their table ever since the topic of conversation had shifted. He didn’t blame her. He’d avoid this table if he could too.

‘The things I do for love,’ Clark thought to himself. ‘Lois owes me, big time.’

\*\*\*

“I’m not sure I understand what it is exactly you want, Mrs. Church.” Henderson peeled Mindy’s arms off him once more, taking a few steps away from her to put more distance between them. She closed the distance once more, tracing the outline of his chest with her index finger, teasing him.

“Oh, but I’ve told you at least a dozen times, Inspector,” She cooed. “I’m doing my part as a Metropolitan! I’m trying to stop ‘valiants’ from hurting our city.”

“Valiants?” He looked at her, perplexed.

“And criminals too!” She cheered. “I came across this and I was shocked!” She pointed at the file on the desk.

“I’ll take a look at it!” Henderson assured hurriedly, pushing her away once more.

“Oh, thank you!” She planted a big wet one on his cheek.

“Uh, you’re welcome,” he said gruffly, straightening his jacket.

\*\*\*

Mayson watched as Lucy Lane stepped into the DA’s office, humming to herself. It had been a while since she’d seen Lucy this happy. She was grateful to see the Lucy Lane she had gotten to know earlier last year rather than the gloom-and-doom version that had been around these past few months.

“Well, you seem to be in a good mood. How was your lunch?” Mayson inquired.

“Wonderful.” Lucy beamed.

Mayson smiled knowingly, “Good food?”

“Good food? Yes. Great company? Always.” Lucy answered happily.

Mayson shook her head at her lovestruck friend. “Whatever you say, Luce.” She handed her a package that had come in. “This came for you while you were gone.”

“Oh, thanks,” Lucy said, taking it from her. “The Church Group,” She read. “That’s weird. I’ve never heard of them.”

“Could be some subcontractor,” Mayson suggested.

“Yeah,” Lucy nodded.

\*\*\*

Lois fought to suppress her laughter. “It couldn’t have been that bad.”

“I don’t want to talk about it,” Clark shook his head, crossing his arms over his chest. “Never again.”

“Oh, come on,” She pleaded, tugging on his arm, trying to ease him out of his mood. He’d been mad about having lunch with her father all day. She wasn’t sure what could have happened that could be this bad. Clark usually didn’t brood this long.

“No way,” He shook his head. She rested her head against his shoulder, trying to suppress her laughter. “It’s not funny. You weren’t there.”

“It kind of is,” she laughed.

“No, it’s not.” Clark shook his head. “He is the most...” He grunted in disapproval when he couldn’t come up with the right words to finish his statement.

“I know,” Lois nodded, resting her head against his shoulder. “I’m sorry.”

“You know he’s a jerk,” Clark added.

“You know this is the same person you kept trying to push me to involve him in our lives last year, right?” Lois shot back.

Clark hung his head as he sighed in recognition. “Now, I understand. I get it. Please don’t make me do something like that again. My sanity can’t take it.”

“Who says you’re sane?” Lois teased. He grabbed a pillow from the couch and thwacked her gently with it. “I’m kidding. I’m kidding!” She squealed in laughter.

“Not funny.” He added, pulling her towards him. “Two hours.”

She turned to link her arms around his neck, leaning up to kiss him, “I’m sorry. If it makes you feel any better, Laura and Jordan’s exam came out fine. Perfectly healthy.”

Clark gave her a half smile. He sighed, “It does make me feel a little better.”

“I’m sorry daddy was such a scrooge and drove you and your dad crazy,” she said, inching herself closer. What’s my punishment? Kitchen duty for a week?”

Clark laughed. “I’m not letting you near that stove after what happened last week.”

“I followed those directions to the letter.” Lois snapped back.

“It still caught on fire. You’re not touching the stove.” He shot back, pulling her towards him.

“You’re mean.”

“How am I mean?” she asked.

“Picking on me because I can’t cook; that’s mean,” Lois explained.

“I never said you couldn’t cook... I just said you couldn’t touch the stove. There’s a difference.”

“Hah!” Lois scoffed, pulling away from him.

He watched her head get up off the couch and head towards the kitchen, “Where are you going?”

“I’m hungry. I’m going to fix something to eat WITHOUT using the stove since apparently I’m not allowed to touch it.” Lois shot back over her shoulder.

Clark got up to follow her into the kitchen. She was bent over, looking through the refrigerator with the door half open. He wrapped his arms around her from behind as she continued to look through the cabinets for something to eat. “You want me to fix something?”

“No,” she said half-heartedly. He smiled against her skin, leaning down to kiss her.

“No?” He murmured against her lips. “I thought you were hungry.”

“I am... was. You’re very distracting,” Lois said, stepping away from him.

“How am I distracting?” Clark teased.

Lois turned to close the door to the refrigerator. “Because you are,” she shot back. She sighed when his arms wrapped around her waist, pulling her towards him.

“I’m just minding my own business,” he said innocently, tightening his arms around her waist. She laughed, pulling him

towards her. “You’re the one that’s up to no good.”

“Really?” Lois inquired, tugging on the lapels of his jacket to pull him towards her. “Exactly how am I up to no good?”

“Where to begin?” Clark asked, resting his hands on her hips as he walked them out of the kitchen. Her grip on the lapels of his jacket had not faltered. She held onto him tightly as he continued to walk them backward. “First, you con me into making your Dad leave S.T.A.R. Labs.”

“I did apologize for that,” she pointed out.

“Two hours of utter nonsense I had to listen to,” Clark added, lifting her up in his arms to keep her in his embrace.

“At least you didn’t have to live with him.” Lois teased.

“No, that was enough,” He sighed, pressing her back against the wall to the entrance of the kitchen.

“Clark,” She let out a soft whimper when he molded his body against hers. His lips brushed against her collarbone. He supported her with one arm as he began popping the buttons to her blouse open. “What if we wake someone up?”

“Then you’ll just have to learn to be quiet.”

\*\*\*

“Such a perfect piece,” Arianna commented, stroking the sides of the Quantum Disruptor she had taken with her from her raid on Turner Banking and Loan. She smiled to herself, “Another addition.” She glanced towards the wall that held several pieces between a glass case. She had collected almost everything Lex had gained on his climb to fame during the construction of LexCorp. She had stood by him through thick and thin; playing the doting wife while he had betrayed her countless times. She wouldn’t be the one left holding all the pieces this time. Lex Luthor would pay for what he had done to her and her family’s empire.

\*\*\*

Lois took a deep breath as she stepped into the Daily Planet lobby. The fluctuation of her emotions was easy to read about, but surviving the ups and downs was completely different. She seemed much more emotional this time around than she had after Jordan. She had just dropped Jordan off at daycare and Laura was with the Kents. They had insisted on staying with them to help adjust to the new baby in the house. Martha and Jonathan had been a godsend, helping balance between the two children vying to be the center of everyone’s attention.

It was overwhelming, to say the least, when Lois had just recently adapted to life with Jordan and now here was another little body to add to the mix. That added with her husband’s extracurricular activities kept her stressed most of the time. She was usually able to hide the stress except for today when she had broken down in tears dropping Jordan off.

It wasn’t very convincing to the teacher when Lois had insisted she was all right as she kept sobbing. Clark had had to attend to a situation up north with an oil spill that had turned into an oil fire on the harbor; so she’d had to do the morning routine of dropping Jordan off alone. Now, she was late to work. She struggled to readjust her make-up to hide her puffy eyes from the curious glances she knew would come if she dared step into the Daily Planet newsroom without her game face on. Mad Dog Lane didn’t have puffy eyes or emotions other than anger.

\*\*\*

Superman landed on the outskirts of Sunshine Metropolis daycare center, watching as Amanda stared at the playing children from the park across the street. She was still watching Jordan. He knew this wasn’t right. He knew he should do something, but he didn’t know what to do.

Maybe Jack was right. Maybe he needed to work WITH the other Superman.

\*\*\*

“Morning, Lois,” Jimmy bounded up to her with a large manila envelope in his hand. “This came for you guys yesterday afternoon. You guys had left early, so...” He shrugged, handing

her the envelope.

“Thanks, Jimmy,” She said inattentively, reaching for the envelope without looking up from her computer as she continued typing away.

Jimmy nodded, catching the hint. He walked away, allowing Lois to continue typing up her notes. Lois turned her attention back to the computer screen, concentrating on finishing before the staff meeting in less than an hour. She glanced at the clock at the bottom of her screen. Hopefully, Clark would be making an appearance before the staff meeting. She didn’t feel up to making up another excuse for his absence right now.

\*\*\*

“Take a look at this,” Henderson said, laying out sheet by sheet on the large conference table in front of him.

“It’s a bunch of company details,” Wolf commented. “So?”

“No,” Henderson groaned, fisting his hair in frustration.

“LOOK!” He pointed at the highlighted points on the sheet.

“Huh?” Wolf commented as he read, “Turner Industries has the same companies that…”

Henderson threw another folder on top of the sheet he was reading. The file read ‘CONFIDENTIAL’. “Open it,” He ordered.

Wolf sighed, taking a sip of his coffee as he opened the folder. “This is James Turner’s medical file. So?”

Henderson threw down another file. The same stamp of ‘CONFIDENTIAL’ was marked on this one as well. “Go on,” He prompted.

Wolf shook his head, opening the next file, “Lex Luthor?” He glanced at Henderson perplexed. “I don’t get it.”

“Blood type and fingerprints are an exact match,” Henderson explained. “How coincidental is it that Mr. Turner appeared after Lex Luthor’s supposed death. The body can’t be found. Turner Industries conveniently owns almost every property that LexCorp owned, excluding the Daily Planet.”

“They also own Cost-Mart,” Wolf pointed out.

“Technically that would be Mindy Church that owns them.”

Henderson corrected.

“So what are you saying? Lex Luthor has been living among us this whole time without anyone knowing it?” Wolf asked.

“He didn’t fool everyone,” Henderson remarked with a smirk, pointing at the confidential files. “How do you think I got all this?”

“Oooh, that’s cold. Betrayed by your own business partner.” Wolf whistled. “Good for us, though.”

“We still need more than this to go to the judge for a warrant,” Henderson explained. “All we got is theories.”

\*\*\*

“I don’t get it.” Lucy shook her head. “Why would someone send me my own file on an open case?”

Mayson shrugged her shoulders. “Maybe they want you to take another look at it?”

Lucy read the file aloud, “Gretchen Kelly, age 35.”

“The gunshot wound at close range?” Mayson inquired.

“Yes,” Lucy answered. “Wasn’t she a doctor or something?”

“Private practice,” Mayson nodded. “Her body had been in the harbor for almost a month before we found her.” A silence fell between them. “There isn’t anything else in there besides the file?”

Lucy shook her head, “No,”

“Wonder what the story is behind this one.”

“Maybe she was the first victim of a serial killer?” Lucy suggested.

“Maybe she knew the killer?” Mayson added.

Lucy shook her head, “Either way, this falls more under the Metropolis P.D’s territory than ours.”

Mayson nodded, “Take it down to Henderson. Maybe he has some ideas.”

\*\*\*

“No,” Lex breathed, reading the finance report on the screen in front of him. “No!” He clicked the mouse repeatedly, hoping the screen would change to something different.

He was broke. Every penny that had been in the Turner Industries bank account the previous night had vanished. He had to figure out where the money had gone. Nothing made sense. “Where is it?” He muttered to himself.

Whoever had dared to take from him would pay.

\*\*\*

The greenish glow resonated from the control room as Sam Lane and Bernard Klein stood behind the lead-lined casing to protect them from the radiation. Test after test on the substance brought different results back.

“This can’t be right,” Dr. Klein muttered to himself, shaking his head as the lid to the lead-lined box closed and he stepped out from behind the protective cover. They had been working tirelessly to find a way to make Superman immune to the Kryptonite’s deadly radiation. No cure had been found thus far.

Dr. Lane still remained in the dark as far as the reasoning behind such tests, but he played along. “What seems to be the problem, Bernard?”

“I’ve never seen anything like it. It’s like the Kryptonite’s infrastructure is changing with every test. There’s no way to protect anyone from it if it keeps changing.”

“Are you sure these reports are correct?” Sam asked.

“Yes!” Dr. Klein exclaimed emphatically. “Every note and report I have made on Kryptonite since I started testing last year are in this file. Every test is the same but the readings are different. I have never seen anything like it.”

“Let me see,” Sam reached for the file in Dr. Klein’s hands.

Not thinking, Dr. Klein handed the file over to Sam. Sam began reading the report, then flipped back a few pages to compare. Realization dawned on Dr. Klein as he realized what he’d just done. “Sam, wait!”

“What in tarnation!?” Sam slammed the file down and stared Dr. Klein down. “What the hell is going on here?”

Dr. Klein looked nervously at Sam who was pointing at the testing reports from the previous week where Dr. Klein had tested on Superman and the medical reports on ‘Two offspring’ had been marked. “Oh, boy,” Dr. Klein muttered nervously. “It-it’s not as bad as it looks.”

\*\*\*

“I have no idea.” Henderson shook his head. “I know Dr. Kelly was one of the first victims, but there were a few others found around the same time. There’s no telling what we’re trying to be told.”

“I knew there was something creepy about him. I felt like … I thought… I just don’t get how I was right. How did Lex become James Turner?” Lucy asked nervously.

“I don’t know, Lucy,” Henderson apologized, “I’m sorry I don’t have more details. I just had this information brought to me yesterday.”

“I had this file couriered to me yesterday,” Lucy added.

“Think it’s connected?”

“Could be. I just wish we had the smoking gun to connect it all together.”

\*\*\*

“ACL?” Luthor read off the report on the last 72 hours of activity with Turner Industries’ account. Apparently, Turner Industries had transferred everything to a company called ‘ACL Industries.’ ACL. Those initials haunted him for a long time. It had taken him years to finally build up LexCorp where it could stand on its own without the help of the Carlin family. After Arianna’s parents had passed he’d officially changed CL Industries to LexCorp, dropping her family’s name. She had kept the small company he had created for her after their divorce. Now she was attacking him.

Why?

He didn't understand. She had gone to such great lengths to bring him back after his fall from Luthor Towers. Why bring him back to destroy him?

\*\*\*

Lois stared at the images in front of her, shaking her head. She hadn't expected any of this when she'd opened the envelope Jimmy had handed her. Time-stamped photographs of Dr. Benzen and Gretchen Kelly sat on her desk. Reports of 'resurrection' procedures and plastic surgery procedures by Dr. Benzen billed to 'ACL Industries' sat next to the photographs. None of this made any sense.

A familiar face reappeared next to her and she shook her head, breaking herself out of her reverie. "I just got off the phone with Henderson. You're not going to believe the stuff he got."

Lois smiled at Clark as he took a seat next to her. Could he tell how it made her skin crawl to see images of the very doctor that had operated on her and helped take her son away sitting in the photograph having drinks with another dead doctor? This man had lied to her face repeatedly about her son. She hated him.

"I think it's probably connected. All of us getting stuff like this at the same time can't be coincidental." Clark added.

"We definitely need to look at what we've got on ACL Industries and figure out why they wanted Lex brought back to life," Lois said quietly. She was trying really hard to focus right now, but something was eating away at her. She couldn't figure it out. Jordan was safe at daycare with his teachers and friends. She knew this.

So why did she feel like her insides had been ripped out once more just by glancing at a photograph?

\*\*\*

She was so close. All she had to do was climb the gate. She'd be back with her son. Her little boy... She watched as the teachers turned around to take the kids back inside. This was her chance...

\*\*\*

"And based on the evidence before us, we can conclude that Clark Kent, mild-mannered reporter for the Daily Planet is in fact Superman. This concludes tonight's Top Copy segment. Thank you and good night."

The haunting image of Diana Stride disappeared and the screen went black.

Lex smiled easily, clicking the remote to replay the tape.

"...we can conclude that Clark Kent, mild-mannered reporter for the Daily Planet is in fact Superman."

The television clicked off and Lex smiled, musing aloud to himself, "Well, well, that's one I didn't see coming."

\*\*\*

"So, pretty much what we've got is this ACL Industries wanted Lex Luthor alive for some reason or another. They brought him back to life and gave him the means to pick up where he'd left off. The question is what they wanted him for." Lois concluded after looking through all their notes.

"Maybe it's revenge. They didn't want him to die on his own terms. Maybe they wanted to punish him. If they were such fans of his they probably would have gone into a partnership of some kind." Clark added.

"Not necessarily. Would you want to draw attention to yourself if you weren't on the up and up with everything?" Lois asked.

"Point taken," Clark nodded.

"We still don't know who's behind this 'ACL' or what it even stands for. It could be a shell company for something entirely different."

\*\*\*

Gone.

Everything he'd worked for so hard was gone. There was nothing left. The remnants of LexCorp had been destroyed and

Turner Enterprises was bankrupt. How would he explain this?

He had to act fast. If he would ever be able to save some shred of dignity he had to take a plan of action quickly.

Lex quickly grabbed what he could from the penthouse and left.

\*\*\*

"You're a liar!"

"An alien!"

"How could you?"

The accusing voices surrounded him as he flew through the sky. How had they figured it out? Clark flew higher and higher but the voices seemed to grow closer and closer.

Jimmy's voice penetrated his thoughts.

"I thought you were my friend. How can I ever trust you again?"

\*\*\*

"No!" Clark screamed as he sat upright in bed. He looked around, searching for the accusatory voices that had haunted him. No one was there. It was just a dream.

He sighed in relief, relaxing as he sank back onto the bed. His breathing slowed and he could feel himself beginning to drift back to sleep when the high pitch from the baby monitor reached his ears. He winced, reaching over to turn the monitor off. He checked to make sure Lois was still asleep before he carefully slipped out of the bed to tend to Laura.

He knew she needed her rest more than he did. She had cried herself to sleep last night, unable to drift off peacefully. He had been up with her most of the night, calming her cries. She hadn't had many moments where she was hungry or wet. She was mostly crying from being upset. He'd pick her up, hold her and rock her back to sleep only to repeat the same thing a few hours later. It was going to be a long night.

\*\*\*

Hannah Dorsey stared at the computer screen in front of her, shaking her head. The disk had been defragmented and repaired in as many ways she could manage. Now all she could do was piece together what little information she could find on the disk and try to recover it.

She had been working for months on this project with Inspector Henderson, now all of a sudden he had gotten a wild hair and decided to put the heat on her for finishing it. Trying to break through the security that had been placed on the disk to begin with was hard enough; now she was expected to do so along with deciphering the programming code that had been left—encrypted—while having Henderson breathing down her neck.

Didn't he know this wasn't her only project? She was a detective, not an IT. Why had she opened her mouth and told him she was computer-savvy in the interview a couple months ago?

\*\*\*

'Project K'

Sam read through the file in Dr. Klein's desk, trying to get a better idea of what his senior was working on. Dr. Klein seemed cautious around him whenever discussing the file with him. Klein seemed guarded for some reason and Sam planned to figure out why.

He seemed to be getting somewhere. The origins of this Project K began in Smallville with Bureau 39's research.

He felt his right pocket vibrate. Cursing under his breath, he reached for his phone, "Sam Lane," he answered.

\*\*\*

"No way," Jimmy shook his head as he watched the television monitor before him.

<<<"This is insane!">>>

"Ludicrous," he muttered to himself.

"And based on the evidence before us, we can conclude that Clark Kent, mild-mannered reporter for the Daily Planet is, in fact, Superman. This concludes tonight's Top Copy segment. Thank

you and good night.”

The haunting image of Diana Stride disappeared and the screen went black.

<<“There’s no way I would have missed something that big. It has to be a lie. CK wouldn’t lie to me like that. Lois wouldn’t...”>>

Jimmy could feel a panic racing through him as he began to recall small unexplainable events that had occurred over the last two years. Trask and his force had been convinced that the substance known as ‘kryptonite’ had been in Smallville, Kansas. Coincidentally, that had been Clark’s hometown. Lois and Clark had insisted Trask was crazy and there was no substance of such. Yet, a year ago, Bill Church Jr. had unveiled his ‘kryptonite paint’ at S.T.A.R. Labs. Granted, the stuff didn’t work, but how did he hear about Kryptonite?

Jimmy stared at his hands, examining the creases of his skin as he sat in silence. He was angry. So many emotions had run through him in the last half hour. He couldn’t seem to concentrate on what emotion he was feeling except the undercurrent one that seemed to remain: anger.

He had been lied to. His friends had lied and deceived him. How was he to trust anything they said or did? He was friends with a bunch of liars.

\*\*\*

Clark had been in rough shape. He had already dressed and fed Laura. He was dressed and showered but the worry on his face let anyone who thought about asking how he was, know he was far from all right. He held Jordan close as he told Lois about his nightmare from the night before.

“What do you mean?” Lois asked, placing a supportive hand on Clark’s shoulder.

“I mean, it was a nightmare. I kept trying to get away and I couldn’t. Then at the end, one of the voices turned into Jimmy and he was accusing me of not being a real friend.” Clark shook his head. “It was horrible.”

“I’m sorry,” Lois rubbed his shoulder, giving it a small squeeze. “We have been under a lot of stress. It’s probably related...” she sighed shaking her head. She gathered Laura up, motioning for him to follow with the diaper bag. Regardless of what was going on, they both agreed they’d rather keep the normal routine with her and Jordan and hopefully things would go back to normal soon.

“I don’t know,” Clark sighed. “I just never thought of things like that.”

“Like what?” Lois asked.

“Our friends, family... They’re kept out of the loop-- Something that’s a big part of our lives. How would they feel if they found out the truth?”

Lois gave a tight-lipped smile, “I don’t know. I’d like to think they’d understand, but...”

Clark opened the front door and a bright flash filled the corridor as a string of reporters and photographers hounded them with questions. “What in the world?” He muttered under his breath.

“Superman!”

“Mr. Kent, is it true, you are in fact the alien known as Superman?”

Lois glanced at Clark nervously, uncertain with what to do next.

\*\*\*

Perry White paced his office slowly, looking back and forth between his two prize winning reporters. He wasn’t sure what to say or do at the moment. He was angry. He had been put into an impossible situation.

“Perry,” Lois began cautiously.

“I know,” Perry cut her off. “I don’t need an explanation. Right now I just need a game plan,” Perry sat at his desk and

looked at them expectantly. “Well?”

“I don’t know,” Lois shrugged her shoulders. “I have no idea how or why Diana Stride would think such a thing let alone who would leak this kind of thing to the press.”

“Clark?” Perry turned to Clark, expectantly.

Clark just shook his head. “We’re wasting time. This is just a distraction to keep us from stopping Intergang...”

Perry nodded his understanding, “I agree, but right now, the reality is we have a mess to clean up. The suits upstairs are fit to be tied and they want an explanation yesterday. So my question to you two is how do we handle this?”

\*\*\*

Superman landed outside the Daily Planet, determined on his mission. He stood by the elevators, waiting patiently for their arrival. Several people stared at him uneasily but he ignored it. He had to find Jordan’s parents before it was too late. Amanda was smart. She wouldn’t stay in one place for long. She would move. He had to stop her, but a situation like this was foreign to him. He had lost control before. He had let his anger dictate his actions. What if that happened again? No, he needed help. He needed the real Superman to help him. He could redeem himself with this. He would help them stop Amanda and he would be redeemed for the wrong he had done.

The elevator dinged. The doors opened. He took a deep breath as he stepped inside the elevator car along with the clerks that had surrounded him. He would do right today.

\*\*\*

“What in the Sam Hill is going on out there?” Perry muttered under his breath. Lois and Clark glanced towards the windows to the Editor-In-chief’s office.

“Oh, my...” Lois gasped, “Is that?”

“Well, I’ll be darned,” Perry smirked, “speak of the devil...”

“Tell me about it,” Clark muttered under his breath as Superman entered the office.

\*\*\*

“What’s going on?” Carol from Marketing asked, craning her neck over the throng of reporters that had crowded in the middle of the bullpen.

“Did you see him?” one reporter asked, pointing towards the Editor-in-Chief’s office.

“Who?” She looked around, trying to see who they were referring to.

“Superman,” he responded.

“What?” She asked, “Where?”

“In the Chief’s office.” He pointed again towards the office to illustrate his point.

“No,” She shook her head. “What’s Superman doing here?”

“Who knows?”

\*\*\*

Perry had left the office to let them have some privacy, but all they’d been able to do was argue with one another. He had known. This Superman double had known where Amanda was. She had been stalking their son... watching their every move and he’d done nothing. How could he do such a thing?

“Why should we believe anything you have to say?” Clark asked angrily. “You worked with this woman, helped her...”

“I never helped her!” Superman argued.

“You didn’t stop her!” Clark snapped back, stepping closer as he continued his confrontation. “You knew she was stalking my son and you did nothing.”

“I...” He stopped. Superman looked from Clark to the steely expression that covered Lois’ face. There was no explaining his actions right now. Neither of them would be open to listening to him. “You’re right. I can’t excuse anything I did but I can help right now. I’m telling you, he’s in danger. She’s been at that daycare every day... watching... but she didn’t show up today.”

Lois glanced between Clark, then Superman and grabbed the

phone, “I’m calling the daycare...” Before she could finish both Clark and Superman had disappeared.

\*\*\*

She’d done it. She was inside. She just had to find Jordan. She would take him back and all of this would be over. She had a home picked out in Gotham. A perfect hiding place. A new home...

“What are you doing here?” the woman asked as Amanda pulled out a gun, entering the classroom where the babies slept.

“Taking what’s mine,” she said softly. “Hand him over...”

“Amanda... You walked right into a trap...” the woman smiled, pulling out a syringe as she placed the baby in the crib. “A very deadly trap.”

\*\*\*

“What do you mean you don’t know what happened???” Clark asked angrily as he held his son close.

“All we know is there was a security breach and we went into lockdown. When the police got here there was no one here. The teacher’s aide that was temping today for Jordan’s classroom was gone as well.” The director said shakily. “Mr. Kent, we have the most state of the art security system. No one can get in and out of here without an access pass and no one can take a child out of here without a code...”

“...but she tried,” Clark said, shaking his head, burying his face in his sleeping son’s shoulder.

“...but she didn’t succeed.” The director reassured him. “Like I told Mrs. Kent. It’s impossible to leave the perimeter without an access pass.”

Superman looked around the room, scanning for any clues. “None of this makes sense. She was obviously here. What stopped her?”

“We don’t know...” the director said shakily.

Henderson interrupted, patting Clark on the shoulder, “Kent, I know you’re shaken up right now, but I need to get a statement from you and Superman for the report when you get a sec.”

“Yeah,” Clark nodded, following Henderson outside. There had been no call for help. There had been no warning. His little boy had almost been kidnapped again... Here he was the strongest man in the world and he couldn’t even protect his son from this deranged woman. When would it end?

\*\*\*

Miranda smiled down at the unconscious woman beneath her as she sharpened the blade in her hand. “It’s a pity you couldn’t have just done your time like you were supposed to. You were supposed to take the fall for Lana Lang’s murder like a good girl. Didn’t Tony teach you anything?”

\*\*\*

Jimmy raked a ragged hand through his hair as he took a seat on the couch. It had been a rough day. Lucy’s voice behind him caught his attention, “Okay, so, I know I’m late. Don’t hate me.”

He’d completely forgotten. They were supposed to go out for dinner tonight.

“The office was a madhouse. I’m not sure what’s going on, but security has been insane.” Lucy continued.

Did she know about CK? Was this all just an act? She had to know. She was Lois’ sister. Lois wouldn’t keep something like this from Lucy... or would she? He glanced over at Lucy as she stared back at him expectantly.

“You okay?” she asked.

Something clicked in the back of his mind. She didn’t know. She had no idea what was going on.

“Uh, Luce, we’re going to have to cancel for tonight.” Jimmy began apologetically.

Her face scrunched up in concern. “Why? What’s wrong?”

“You’d better sit down,” He continued, gesturing to the chair across from him.

“This isn’t good, is it?” Lucy asked as she took a seat.

“No,” Jimmy shook his head as he stood up. “Uh, listen, do you want something to drink? Something to eat? Chocolate maybe?”

“You’re offering me chocolate? Oh, my God! What happened? Is someone dead?” Lucy began to get frantic.

“No, no, nothing like that,” Jimmy reassured.

“Just tell me, please,” Lucy pleaded.

“Fine,” He nodded his head. He ran a ragged hand through his hair, “I really hate this.”

“Just tell me. I’m kind of freaking out here,” she prodded.

“Someone trespassed on a daycare facility this afternoon and tried to take Jordan with them.” Jimmy blurted out.

“What?” Lucy gasped in shock.

“That was too blunt, wasn’t it?” He asked when he saw tears beginning to form in the corners of her eyes. “I’m sorry, Luce, I hate being the one to tell you this.”

“Where’s Lois?” Lucy asked abruptly.

“I... I don’t know. I’d assume at home, but honestly, I really don’t...” Before he could finish she was gone. “Hey, Luce, wait up!” He called after her, grabbing his jacket to follow.

\*\*\*

The newsroom was abuzz with activity as the staff continued to comment on what was going on in the Editor-in-Chief’s office between the reporting duo of Lane and Kent and the Man of Steel.

“I guess that story was a bunch of bologna after all.”

“I mean, you can’t deny the facts. Look, there’s Superman and Clark Kent in the same building standing next to one another,”

“Why would Diana Stride make up a story like that? You have to wonder...”

The newsroom was abuzz with activity as the staff continued to comment on what was going on in the Editor-in-Chief’s office between the reporting duo of Lane and Kent and the Man of Steel.

Superman had walked into the newsroom with a purpose, finding the reporting duo and requesting a moment of their time. Now, holed up inside Perry White’s office spectators continued to watch, wondering what the trio could possibly be discussing.

“What in the Sam Hill is going on out here???” Perry White’s voice boomed across the newsroom as he exited the main conference room. “Get to work!”

The newsroom switched back to the normal mode of reporters running from one end to another, chasing down leads. They left their questions of the Man of Steel’s intentions alone for the moment as they focused on meeting their boss’ needs at the moment.

\*\*\*

Bureau 39? Why did that sound so familiar? Sam continued to ponder as he walked through the corridors of S.T.A.R. Labs until he was back at Dr. Klein’s lab. Ellen had called him away to inform him of Jordan’s attempted kidnapping. It had taken some reassurance on his part but had finally talked her down.

In a situation like this, he knew the last thing Lois needed was for him and her mother hovering over her. She didn’t seem to answer well to their attempts at trying to help. Since he only seemed to make things worse he figured staying away was the best thing he could do at the moment.

“Dr. Lane?”

Same was mildly surprised to see Dr. Klein at his desk. He nodded, “Dr. Klein.”

“I heard what happened. Is everyone all right?”

Sam nodded solemnly, “Yeah, everyone’s fine. We’re just in shock.”

“You know you don’t have to be here. If you’d rather be at home with your family I’d understand.” Dr. Klein pressed.

“I’m fine. I’m of no use to them right now.” Sam reassured. “I figured I could at least help here.”

Dr. Klein nodded. “Pull up a seat.”

\*\*\*

“Lois, are you sure you’re okay?” Lucy asked skeptically as she wrapped her arms around her sister.

“I will be...” Lois said trying to portray a calm she didn’t feel. “Clark’s with Jordan right now. He said he’d bring him back as soon as he was done with Inspector Henderson.”

Jimmy was aloof. Not really saying much as he stared at the ground while Lucy did her best to comfort her sister. “What did he say when he called? Did they catch Amanda?”

Lois shook her head inaudibly, unable to hold back the tears.

\*\*\*

Dr. Klein breathed a sigh of relief as he watched Sam Lane leave for the night. It wasn’t that he didn’t enjoy Sam Lane’s company when he was working. He enjoyed the intellectual stimulation of bouncing ideas off of his new partner. Unfortunately, it wasn’t easy to work when Sam was around. He wasn’t in the loop on Clark’s secret and that made things complicated, to say the least at work. Having Sam here while he was working on Project K made Klein uncomfortable, to say the least.

He understood Sam’s reasoning behind wanting to stay in the lab. It was easier to dive into work than deal with the emotions behind the situation he was being faced with. Having your grandson kidnapped not once but twice was something he himself couldn’t even imagine. He didn’t know what to say in a situation like this.

\*\*\*

Laura stared back at her quietly, tugging on her mother’s hair as she slowly drifted back to sleep. The entire household had been in an uproar since the news of Jordan’s attempted kidnapping had come to light. Martha and Jonathan had been their usual concerned and loving selves and her mother had been her usual overbearing concerned self. Lois wasn’t sure what she was at the moment. She felt numb. After hearing the initial news she’d done nothing but cry; now she felt unable to shed a single tear.

Laura had refused to go to sleep, searching for her father and brother among the faces that continued to look over her. Lois had no way of explaining either one’s absence to her young daughter. Clark was still at the police station with Jordan. How long did it take to give a statement?

The soft murmurs filled the room as Laura finally drifted off to sleep. Lois breathed a sigh of relief and laid her in her bassinet. She quietly tip-toed to the other side of the room and turned off the light, being sure to keep the night light turned on for her. She relaxed to make sure Laura was asleep before allowing herself to relax and give into the emotions the day had brought on.

“Is she asleep?” Two strong arms encircled her waist from behind as she felt her husband’s breath against her right ear. She nodded, turning to face him. She cried when she saw her son’s sleeping figure resting on his chest.

Clark looked as worn down as she felt. The small wrinkles of worry covered his forehead. His hair looked like he’d run his hands through it with anxiety at least a hundred times. Unable to respond to his question at the moment, she grabbed Jordan from him, holding him close, unwilling to let him go. She felt Clark wrap his arms around her, pulling her to him. “He’s okay,” he whispered over and over to her. The tears fell at their own accord, raining down her cheeks and the tension and anxiety from the day began to dissipate as he held her in his arms.

He let out a sigh, resting his chin in her hair, “I’m sorry,” he whispered. It was a small phrase, but it seemed to be the key that unlocked the floodgates of emotion for both of them. She felt the burning sensation behind her eyelids as her cheeks filled with tears. At the same time, she could feel the moisture against her hair as he cried with her.

\*\*\*

Sam tightened his hand around the small flash drive that rested securely in his pocket. He would discover the secrets of Project K.

The more he dug into it the more curious he became. Why was Dr. Klein so secretive about this project? What did he have to hide? Anytime questions arose about it, he froze. Was it a government project or something personal? No, Dr. Klein didn’t seem like one to have much of a personal life. It had to be something bigger.

He would figure out just what that something was... as soon as he was home on his computer able to go through the files he’d downloaded. He hated deceiving Dr. Klein, but he’d been left with no choice.

\*\*\*

Hannah Dorsey sat at her desk with a smug expression across her face. She’d surprised even herself with her skills today. The entire disk had been recovered and she now discovered the secrets Red Dixon had been trying to tell everyone. It was sad he’d been killed before he’d been able to expose the criminal.

Now, it was up to Hannah to see that justice was served.

\*\*\*

Unbelievable.

Sam stared at the screen in disbelief. Everything he’d ever wanted to know about Superman was right here in front of him. He’d done research after research trying to develop a clone. Unbeknownst to him all he would have had to do was approach his son-in-law and so much time and effort would have been saved.

His daughter was married to Superman. This was a hard concept to wrap his mind around.

How had she ever agreed to a life like this? Living with someone of a different species? Had she known all along? It was hard to imagine. His grandchildren were a one of a kind. Would they have abilities like their father? How would they adjust?

Sam stopped a moment, uncertain of where his train of thought would go next. So many emotions raced through his body.

He held back tears, fighting hard to suppress the painful tears he’d been fighting most of the day. There was no fighting them off any longer.

\*\*\*

“I don’t believe it,” Lucy shook her head adamantly.

“It’s right there on T.V.” Jimmy pointed at the screen. “That’s all everyone’s been talking about.”

“Clark wouldn’t lie to us like that. Lois wouldn’t keep something like that from us. It just doesn’t make sense. I think there’s something else going on here.”

“There may be something else going on,” Jimmy acknowledged, “but there is also something going on with Superman. Why does he only give the exclusives to your sister and CK? Why always the Planet?”

“My sister? You’re not claiming Lois as a friend anymore?” Lucy asked, questioning his word choice.

“I don’t know.” Jimmy shrugged. “I don’t know what I’m doing.”

“Well, I say its bologna and you need to stop reading the Tattletale Weekly. There are more important things to focus on than the latest rumor in Metropolis.” Lucy snapped irritably.

“I... I’m sorry, Luce, I guess I wasn’t thinking.” Jimmy apologized.

“Please, just stop. She’s my sister and I would know if she were hiding something this big,” Lucy pleaded. “We need to find Amanda and stop her.”

\*\*\*

Lois reached up and grabbed both sides of Clark’s face, pulling him down to kiss her. She could still feel the moisture on his cheeks. A shudder ran down her spine as she leaned back against the mattress and pulled him on top of her. She loved kissing him. She lightly traced a path through his hair with her fingertips, enjoying the feel of his hair against her hands. He moaned into her mouth as she lightly tugged on his bottom lip with her teeth. She lightly teased him with the tip of her tongue;

inviting him to explore her mouth. “Clark...” She moaned against him.

Oh, God, she needed this. She needed to lose herself in his arms. She needed to feel his skin against hers. She was hurting. She was scared. The only thing she knew was how good it felt in his arms. The passion between them slowly began to build into a raging inferno as she tightened her arms around him. She had held Jordan in her arms, rocking back and forth for what seemed like hours and then finally laid him in his room. Martha had offered to sleep in there with him to make sure he was okay so she and Clark could get some rest.

The euphoria that had taken over her mind during their lovemaking slowly began to dissipate. Their clothes lay strewn all over the floor as she lay in Clark’s arms. She let out a heavy sigh, silently resting her head against Clark’s chest. Question after question began to race through her mind as she listened to the heartbeat drumming against her ear. She could feel the sorrow that had overtaken her once before creeping up on her, but it didn’t seem quite as intense. Somehow, the idea of facing this crisis together rather than how they had faced everything a year ago was comforting in its own way.

She would find her son’s kidnapper and make her pay dearly for attacking her family.

\*\*\*

Hannah Dorsey beamed as her colleagues surrounded her desk with words of enthusiasm and congratulations. She had cracked the case. She had solved the case even Inspector Bill Henderson couldn’t solve after over a year of working on it. She couldn’t help but feel her head swell just a bit.

“Congratulations, Dorsey,” Detective Wolf held up his glass of champagne, congratulating her once more. “Didn’t know you had it in you.”

“Thanks,” She wrinkled her nose, “I think.”

“Now, are you ready to see your work pay off?” Detective Wolf asked.

“What do you mean?”

“Your first arrest,” He prodded. “It’s your case now.”

\*\*\*

Sam stared at the wall, drumming his fingers against his wood grain desk. He had the greatest secret at his fingertips. What would he do with it? He could sell it. He would be the richest man known to man. Maybe even richer than Lex Luthor even thought of being

--but he couldn’t do that to his family. His daughter would never forgive him. His grandchildren would be constantly at risk.

No, he couldn’t do that. He would have to take the road less traveled in this instance—well, for him anyway—and put his family’s needs above his own for once.

First, however, he would have to talk to Lois and Clark.

\*\*\*

“You ready?” Detective Wolf helped Dorsey with her bulletproof vest as they geared up for picking up Miranda. They’d already called for back-up. She was nervous. “Relax.”

“Is it always this nerve-wracking?” She asked.

“First time’s always the hardest.” He reassured her. “It gets easier with time.”

“I hope so.” She let out a long breath, “Okay, let’s get going.”

“After you.” Wolf motioned for her to go first. “This is your show.”

\*\*\*

“And based on the evidence before us, we can conclude that Clark Kent, mild-mannered reporter for the Daily Planet is, in fact, Superman. This concludes tonight’s Top Copy segment. Thank you and good night.”

The haunting image of Diana Stride disappeared and the screen went black.

Sam Lane clicked the television off. He had to stop this. He

couldn’t let the world destroy his family because of one person’s greed. Diana wasn’t even around to contradict or validate the story. He had to do something.

\*\*\*

Arianna tapped her fingers against her desk as she waited impatiently. Miranda was being followed. They had to act fast if they were going to pull this off. Stealing Superman’s powers was no easy feat and with the way things were going they’d have to put the plan in action sooner rather than later.

“There you are!” Arianna sighed in relief when she saw Miranda’s silhouette darken the doorway. “I was beginning to get worried.”

“I had to make sure I didn’t leave anything behind,” Miranda explained, gesturing to her cat in the small cage next to her feet.

“You brought your cat?” Arianna asked skeptically.

“He’s more than just a cat,” Miranda chastised, “He’s helped me develop most of my most successful solutions.”

“Whatever,” Arianna shrugged. “We need to get going. The longer we sit around the more likely we will get caught.”

“Yeah, the authorities are probably already searching my place.” Miranda groaned.

“Pretty smart of Mindy to bug the police station when she stopped by last,” Arianna commented.

“Yeah, she’s full of surprises,” Miranda responded dryly. “So where’s everyone else?”

“Putting the rest of the plan together,” Arianna gestured to the chair next to her, “Sit down, relax, and have a glass of wine. It’ll be a little bit before we move.”

“You sure this is going to work?”

“Positive,” Arianna beamed, “It’ll flow just like clockwork.”

\*\*\*

“It’s clear!” Detective Wolf called out as they entered the last room of Miranda’s apartment.

“No!” Dorsey cried out in frustration. “This was it! I know it!”

“Maybe, but Miranda ain’t here anymore.” Wolf shrugged. “It happens sometimes, but at least we can search the place without any interruptions.”

Dorsey scowled at him. “I wanted to get her.”

“You will,” Wolf smirked at her, “but now you build a more solid case and figure out where she ran to and why.” He picked up a binder that had been sitting on the desk in front of them and handed it to Dorsey. “Fun reading.”

\*\*\*

Miranda smiled to herself as she headed to the airport. The final loose ends that had been left after her murder of Lana Lang had been taken care of. No one would miss Amanda Marshall. She’d been a kidnapper and labeled a psychotic over the last year by the media after her kidnapping of Lois Lane and Clark Kent’s baby. Miranda had staged it perfectly to look like a suicide.

The note of remorse for kidnapping the Kents’ baby last year and the unwillingness to face the world without a child of her own was a perfect touch. No one would be the wiser.

“Gotham Airlines,” The cab driver said, breaking Miranda from her thoughts.

“Thank you,” Miranda said, reaching into her purse to pay the cab driver before she got out and went to catch her flight back to Metropolis.

\*\*\*

“So, Nigel St. John was behind this whole operation?” Inspector Henderson asked skeptically.

“Well, not everything, but a good part of it.” Mindy admitted shyly, “He was trying to get me to partner up with him, and I couldn’t do such a thing. All I have left of Billy is his chain of CostMart stores and he was trying to tarnish my good name by turning it into a criminal organization. Can you believe that? I’m not real smart when it comes to business, but I do know right from wrong.”

"I see," Henderson nodded. "What exactly did Mr. St. John ask you to do?"

"Well," Mindy leaned forward, "which time?"

Henderson pulled out a pad of paper and put it in front of her, "Why don't you just write everything down first so you can organize your thoughts better."

"Oh, thank you, Inspector," Mindy beamed, "I can't tell you how thankful I am that you're taking the time to listen to me."

"My pleasure, Mrs. Church."

"Oh, Mindy, please," She cooed.

"Mindy," he repeated with a forced smile. "Just write down what happened and we'll get to the bottom of it."

\*\*\*

Hannah Dorsey stared at the numerous piles of files in front of her, shaking her head. "Was this really what she wanted to do? Every time she broke a case would she be buried in paperwork like this?"

"How's it going, Dorsey?" Detective Wolf asked, approaching behind her.

She sat up, reaching for the next file. "Fine, just ... working."

"Yeah, I bet," Wolf grinned back at her. "You want some help?"

"Please?" She smiled up at him, "I have no idea what I'm doing here...or looking for."

"Well, you're in luck. I happen to be an expert in mountains of paperwork."

"Good, because this is a mountain of paperwork," Hannah smiled back at him.

\*\*\*

Arianna removed her protective goggles, blinking as her eyes readjusted to the loss of electrical light in the room once she'd turned the machine off.

She approached Mindy, removing the protective restraints she had been bound in, "How are you feeling?"

"I..." Mindy mumbled groggily.

"Come on, on your feet," Arianna said, helping her up.

"Thanks," Mindy said.

"Better?" Arianna asked.

"Much," Mindy said.

"Good. We'll need to run some tests to make sure the transfer was successful."

"Okay, I'm ready whenever you are," Mindy said.

"How about now?" Arianna asked, turning to her with a gun.

"Arianna, no!!" Mindy screamed as she was fired upon. The bullets bounced off of her and she looked down in shock.

"I'd say you passed the first test with flying colors." Arianna smiled. "Of course we need to do some more testing then we need to plan..."

"You can plan," Mindy cut her off. "Look at me," Mindy said as she floated off the ground. "I'm flying. I'm invincible. I'm going to have some fun."

"Wait..." Arianna began, but before she could finish Mindy was gone. "That miserable ungrateful imbecile." She muttered under her breath.

\*\*\*

"Everyone move, move, move," Police Chief, Gary Anderson ordered. "As stated before, James Turner aka Lex Luthor is considered to be armed and extremely dangerous. Do not underestimate him. His last encounter with the law entailed him jumping off his penthouse balcony. He will not escape justice again."

The patrol officers nodded, grabbing their gear as they headed out the door to hit the streets and begin searching for Luthor.

\*\*\*

Mindy stood on the roof of Turner Enterprises screaming at the top of her lungs. "Help! Help, Superman! Help!"

"Keep going," Arianna ordered over the radio.

"HELP!!" she cried.

A whoosh was heard and Mindy turned to face Superman. "Oh, goody! You came to my rescue!"

"Always good to he--lp..." Superman fell to the ground in pain, falling unconscious.

"How exactly are we supposed to get him down now?" Mindy asked.

Arianna shook her head. "You're a strong girl. You can manage."

\*\*\*

His empire had been destroyed. Everything he'd worked for, all his plans were in ruins. How could this have happened? Who was responsible?

Lex threw his fist against the solid brick wall, screaming in agony upon impact. His adrenaline was pumping, his anger was out of control.

He would have his revenge. His life had been destroyed. His empire destroyed. The person responsible would pay one way or another.

\*\*\*

"What took you so long?" Arianna snapped when she saw Miranda out of the corner of her eye.

"I had to take care of some unfinished businesses." Miranda explained.

"Such as?" Arianna asked.

"That nurse that witnessed Lana Lang's deadly accident," Miranda explained.

"Well, so good of you to clean up after yourself without any encouragement," Arianna said as she checked the settings on the computer once more. She turned to Mindy who was standing on the other side of the room. "Are you ready?"

"I was born for this," Mindy said coldly.

"You got Superman?" Miranda asked.

"More or less," Arianna replied. She pointed at the metal wall on the other side of the room. "Might want to take cover."

\*\*\*

"Well, I've gotten quite a bit of information from Amanda's old co-workers," Lucy said proudly, stealing a chip from Jimmy's lunch that was scattered across his desk haphazardly.

"Oh, yeah?" Jimmy asked, intrigued by the new information.

"Apparently Dr. Benzen and Amanda were somewhat of an item," Lucy said, flipping through her notes. "She had gotten pregnant and lost the baby from some kind of disorder. Anyway, long story short she couldn't carry a baby to term. She then became obsessed with trying to have a baby to replace the one she lost. Adoption, foster care, and so on..."

"And was there a reason why she never pursued these LEGAL means of having a child?"

"Yes, there is," Lucy smiled, "She apparently couldn't pass the psychological exam."

"Big surprise." Jimmy snorted.

Lucy thwacked him with her notebook. "Watch it."

"Sorry, but this one's been two grapes short of a fruit basket since we met her," Jimmy explained. "Any indication on where her family is?"

Lucy shook her head. "Nope. No family. Just an old house that was left to her about 10 years ago."

Jimmy reached for the phone, "I'll phone CK."

"I already sent the info to them and Henderson," Lucy added with a smirk.

"Well, then what does that leave me to do?" Jimmy asked.

Lucy smiled, "So glad you asked." She handed him the file on Diana Stride. "Let's get to cracking."

\*\*\*

"Gordon," the commissioner of Gotham City answered his phone gruffly. "Whoa, whoa, whoa, slow down. Inspector... You want me to what?"

“We’ve got a kidnapper at large,” Henderson said as he spoke to Commissioner Gordon on the phone. “Last known address was there in Gotham City. She put a large deposit down on a town home. I need you to see if you can find her. She’s pretty dangerous.”

“What makes you think she’s in Gotham City?” Gordon asked.

“We think this home is where she planned to take the baby she tried to kidnap. Please just check it out for me? If you come up with anything you can reach me at Metropolis City Hall.” Henderson pleaded.

“Fine...” Gordon muttered.

“One more thing...” Henderson said, “How do you feel about the press?”

“Press?”

\*\*\*

Lois took a deep breath as she watched the Gotham police break down the door to Amanda Marshall’s house. She had no idea how Henderson had been able to convince Gordon to let her and Clark tag along on the raid but she was so grateful. Lucy and Jimmy were working on trying to discredit Diana Stride’s accusations. In the meantime, Clark was trying to be extra cautious on the comings and goings of his alter-ego. So far they hadn’t heard anything from the Superman double.

Anxiety filled her mind. She fidgeted beneath the Kevlar vest she’d been ordered to put on before Commissioner Gordon would allow her within ten feet of the Marshall home. Commissioner Gordon’s radio chirped and the lead officer’s voice resonated loudly, “We’ve got a body!”

<<‘Body???’>>

“Oh, God!” Lois whimpered, trying to keep her composure as she and Clark waited to hear more information from the officers. What if she was dead? She’d never see justice served. Never see that horrible woman punished for what she’d done...Clark put a supportive arm around her, holding her close, whispering words of reassurances to her.

The chirp of the radio beeped once more, “Yeah, it looks like a suicide. Amanda Marshall is confirmed dead.”

Lois breathed a sigh of anguish. Commissioner Gordon responded, “Perimeter clear?”

“Clear,” the radio chirped. “No one else is here.”

Gordon turned to Lois and Clark, “I’m sorry.”

Lois sighed, shaking her head, “Me too.”

\*\*\*

Sam Lane knew Clark was Superman. Lois and Clark looked at one another nervously, uncertain of how to react to this news. What would he do with this information? Sam had been a scientist first and foremost. His family had come second to him for years.

“I figured it’s time I came clean about a lot of things,” Sam began. “My part in that little boy’s kidnapping was minimal. He was brought to me to conduct tests on and I turned him into the police. I never was a part of the kidnapping.”

“Why didn’t you say something?” Lois asked.

“My life, my career, and my family were threatened. I couldn’t do or say anything.” Sam explained.

Lois and Clark glanced at one another, uncertain of what to say. It seemed Sam had an explanation for everything.

“I’m sorry for the way I’ve been in the past,” Sam continued.

“I want you to know I will not share this information with anyone.”

Lois and Clark sighed in relief, “We appreciate that, Sam,” Clark said.

“I wouldn’t do anything to purposefully harm my own family,” Sam added.

“What about Lucy?” Lois asked.

“What do you mean?” Sam asked.

“What happened that night she was shot?” Lois asked.

“I don’t know.” Sam sighed. “I wish I did, but I don’t know.”

“Who threatened you?” Lois asked.

“He said he was with Intergang.”

“Who?” Clark pressed.

“Nigel.” Sam said. “I only got a first name.”

Lois and Clark looked at one another. They both knew it couldn’t be a coincidence.

“Attention all units...” Clark’s super hearing picked up a radio call from a nearby police car.

“Uh...” Clark gave Lois that familiar look.

“Go,” Lois nodded.

Clark stood up and spun into his Superman suit, “I’ll be back soon.”

With that he was gone, leaving Sam and Lois alone in the living room. Sam stared at the space Clark had just vacated.

“Wow,”

“Yeah, it does that to you,” Lois said wistfully.

\*\*\*

Alarms were blaring from one end of the city to the other. Clark couldn’t decide where to go first. The police department had been destroyed, the fire department was in ruins and the streets of Metropolis were demolished. It looked like the work of a super-powered being. He’d thought his clone had moved past such childish behavior, but it looked like the clone was acting out again.

He had a long night ahead of him.

\*\*\*

The room was spinning and his breath was ragged. He felt weak. “Superman?”

A voice called out to him but he couldn’t answer. What was wrong? Why couldn’t he talk? He couldn’t move. It was so dark.

\*\*\*

“What happened here, Inspector?” Clark asked as he floated Inspector Henderson outside of the ruins of the Metropolis Police Department.

“I, uh, I wish I knew, Superman,” Henderson replied dryly. “She came in, then Boom!—This...” He motioned to the ruins of the police department building. Several officers surrounded the site, helping fellow officers and detectives to safety.

“She?”

Clark asked.

“Mindy Church,” Henderson replied dryly. “She had this red glare in her eyes then everything caught on fire. It was hard to keep track after that.”

Clark nodded, patting Henderson on the shoulder, “Thank you, Inspector.” He motioned to the sky, “I’ll be back. Do you have everything under control here?”

“Yes,” Henderson nodded, “Good luck, Superman.”

\*\*\*

S.T.A.R. Labs was in ruins. Lex couldn’t help but laugh. He wasn’t sure what had happened but someone had made his job even easier. Scientists were running around, trying to save their experiments in the ruins; Lex was able to slip through the crowd unnoticed. He had had a map of S.T.A.R. Labs and where to find what he needed, but breaking into the Kryptonite vault may have been easier with the walls up. It was hard to find anything in the rubble that was left.

\*\*\*

Mrs. Cox, reached down to check Superman’s pulse and shook her head, “He’s dead, Arianna.”

Arianna slammed her fist against the desk, “Damn! Mindy still hasn’t returned.”

Mrs. Cox pointed to the television, “She has been busy.”

“A bit too busy if you ask me,” Arianna sniped. “Help me carry the body.”

\*\*\*

“Blast!” Lex fumed. “No!” He was furious. The Kryptonite vault was empty. What had happened? Had someone beaten him to his own score? Who?

Could it have been Mindy? Maybe Nigel? Or Arianna?  
He would have to figure it out.

\*\*\*

“Thank you so much for your services, Mrs. Cox,” Arianna gleamed as she looked down on her body. Hobb’s Bay would gain two more bodies to be fished out today. “Always a pleasure,” she added before pushing Mrs. Cox’s corpse into the bay.

She then turned to Superman’s body, “And as for you...”

\*\*\*

Lois watched the television in rapt attention. Images of Metropolis’ destruction were shown as reporters narrated the scene. “That is so awful.”

She glanced at the phone, then to the window. Martha gave her a knowing look. “Lois,” she began, anticipating what Lois was already planning.

“I know,” Lois nodded. “It’s too late. I’m exhausted.”

“You should get some sleep. Hopefully, Clark will be home soon.” Martha added.

“Yeah,” Lois nodded, “If not, I’ll get started on this tomorrow.”

Martha laughed, “Can’t teach an old dog new tricks.”

“I’m a reporter; it’s what I do.” Lois headed upstairs. First, she stopped in Jordan’s room to make sure he was okay, reassuring herself that he was indeed safe. He lay curled up in his crib with his arm around his favorite teddy bear and the other arm tucked behind his head. She leaned down to kiss him goodnight once more, then closed the door behind her. She then peeked in on Laura to check on her. She was sleeping soundly in her bassinet. She smiled in her sleep. Lois couldn’t help but laugh. She leaned down to kiss her daughter goodnight.

Her room seemed so empty when she entered. After everything she’d gone through today she really just wanted to lose herself in her husband’s arms. Unfortunately, her husband was also the man flying throughout the city, helping to rescue thousands of people from the wreckage that a super-powered Mindy Church had created. A small price Lois had to pay for being married to Superman was she couldn’t always have him home every night.

She found his t-shirt from earlier in the day and slipped it on before climbing beneath the covers and curling up in bed. The soft scent of his cologne still lingered on the shirt and she breathed it in with a sigh of relief, grateful for that little piece of him that had stayed with her for the night. She slowly drifted off to sleep, praying for Clark’s safe return.

\*\*\*

“Stop!”

The demanding voice came from behind her. Mindy turned around with a smirk, “Superman, so good of you to join me.”

“Put the bus down,” Clark ordered. “Those people have done nothing to you.”

“But it’s so much fun,” Mindy shot back. “Do you have any idea how liberating it is to finally have some control in my life? I call the shots now. I decide what happens. No one else...”

“That’s fine,” Clark tried to reason with her, “but those people haven’t done anything to you. There’s no reason to tear up Metropolis.”

Mindy threw the bus to the ground and the people’s screams could be heard as they anticipated the fall. Clark caught the bus before it could hit the ground. He gently placed them back on the ground. Mindy laughed, “Catch me if you can?”

She was trying to get away. Clark aimed a blast of heat vision at her ankle, hoping to get her attention long enough to stop her. What happened next surprised him. “Ouch!”

Mindy and he both looked at one another in shock. “Ouch?” Clark asked.

\*\*\*

Nigel stared out at the harbor, looking down at the water. The police had been there earlier, fishing out two more bodies,

Superman’s—or at least what appeared to be him—and Mrs. Cox. She had been a loyal employee for years and now she was gone. He hung his head solemnly. He hated that she’d succumbed to the likes of Arianna. He’d have to take his revenge soon.

A cold hard object pressed against the back of his neck and a hand grasped his throat from behind. Only one person would have the guts to come at him like this. “L-Lex?” He rasped out.

“One false move and you’ll be joining the rest of your funeral party,” Lex snapped. “Where is it?”

“Where is what?” Nigel asked.

“You know what! The Kryptonite. What have you done with it?” Lex asked angrily.

“I-I...”

“Is it really worth dying over, Nigel? You can’t use it if you’re dead; which you will be in 3, 2, ...”

“Okay okay...” Nigel caved, pulling a small box out of his pocket. “I have it.”

\*\*\*

Lois and Clark walked through the Daily Planet lobby carefully as they headed towards the stairs to walk up to the newsroom. Thankfully the only thing that had been destroyed at the Planet was the glass pane doors from a car crashing through earlier. The maintenance crew was already at work fixing it, but the elevators had been shut off as a preventative caution.

“So, the effects were temporary?” Lois asked as they climbed the stairs.

“Yeah, apparently this transfer they did only temporarily gave Mindy powers,” Clark explained.

“Well, we can all be grateful for that.” Lois reasoned, “She’s only had them less than 24 hours and look what all she’s done to this city.”

“I know,” Clark sighed, “I’m sure things will get cleaned up soon, but I just can’t believe how much she destroyed.”

Lois patted his shoulder softly and smiled, “I’m sure things will get back to normal soon.”

\*\*\*

“And another one bites the dust,” Lex mused as he pushed Nigel St. John’s limp body over the harbor. He had the Kryptonite, the gun, and now he had a plan as well. Every person that had been consequential in destroying him and his former life he would destroy in turn. At the top of the list were two meddlesome reporters for the Daily Planet.

\*\*\*

“I’m not sure I understand,” Mayson said, tapping her pen against her notebook. “You’re saying you know who is behind all of this, but you won’t give me a name. You want immunity, but you won’t give me anything to go to the DA with. What am I supposed to do with this?”

Miranda smiled at her, “You’ll have to trust me, Ms. Drake.”

\*\*\*

Jimmy was the first to greet Lois and Clark as they entered the newsroom. “That staircase will give you quite a workout, huh?”

“Yeah, I guess I don’t need a visit to the gym today,” Lois said wryly.

“Guess what I got?” Jimmy asked, walking with them to their desks.

“I don’t know,” Lois said. She wasn’t in the mood for games. They had way too much to deal with. The business with Clark’s identity being leaked all over the media still had to be dealt with. Then there was Lex Luthor who had been masquerading as James Turner for the past year, and now they had to deal with Mindy Church and how she’d gotten superpowers to destroy the city.

“Ta-da!” Jimmy showed them the front page of the morning’s edition to the Daily Planet.

‘DIANA STRIDE STORY: HOAX!!’

An image of Clark Kent and Superman in Perry White’s office was right beneath the headline and the story was written by both

Perry White and James Olsen.

“My by-line! What do you think?” Jimmy asked. “The Chief wanted it front page this morning so we stayed late working on it.”

Lois smiled at him. He’d come a long way from the gofer who had worked with her on the Prometheus story last year. His own byline with Perry white, now that was something; because Perry White didn’t share a byline with just anyone.

“That’s amazing, Jimmy,” Clark said. “Absolutely amazing.”

“You’ve come a long way,” Lois said wistfully, dabbing the corner of her eyes to cover up the tears that were trying to form. She willed them back as she spoke, “You stayed all night to work on this?” This was one thing she and Clark wouldn’t have to worry about.

“Yeah, pretty cool, huh?” Jimmy asked.

“Very,” Lois smiled.

A loud buzzer sounded through the newsroom. A red and white siren glowed from across the room. Perry hollered from his office, “Code red, everyone! We have a shooter in the Planet! This is not a drill!”

Lois and Clark looked at one another in surprise. Clark looked to Lois who nodded. Everyone around them began taking positions beneath their desks when...

“No, it’s not a drill at all!” Lex Luthor warned as he entered the newsroom. He held a gun in the air, firing at the ceiling.

“Let’s play a game, shall we? It’s called who destroyed Lex Luthor more?” He approached Lois and Clark faster and faster. Clark moved in front of Lois to protect her, hoping to shield her from any stray bullets.

“Who destroyed Lex Luthor and his empire more?” He pointed the gun at Lois, “Lane,” he then moved it towards Clark, “or Kent?”

“You disgusting sociopath,” Lois hissed angrily, unable to hold in her anger.

“Tsk tsk tsk... Didn’t they teach you how to act in a hostage situation in journalism school?” Lex asked.

“Go to hell!” Lois snapped.

“Been there; done that,” Lex snapped back, pointing the gun back towards her.

“Get away from her,” Clark warned.

“Always the hero,” Lex mused. He nodded his head. “I understand,” With that, he fired a single shot.

Clark looked down in shock. He was bleeding.

“Clark!”

\*\*\*

Perry White had gone back into his office to call the police and find out what the status was of the threat that had been reported to him. He sat in his office frozen to his chair. He knew that sound. After years of working as a journalist in territories of conflict, Perry had come to know the sound of gunfire. It was coming from his newsroom. He pushed the emergency button beneath his desk and stood up to face the intruder in his newsroom. He wouldn’t leave his staff to face this intruder alone. After all, he wasn’t Editor-in-Chief just because he could yodel.

\*\*\*

Hannah Dorsey stood outside the Daily Planet stairwell nervously readjusting her vest.

“You okay?” Henderson asked, looking back at her.

“This is my first time... on the field.” She stammered. “I’m a bit nervous.”

Henderson shook his head and placed a hand over hers. “We can’t afford to be nervous. We have to be precise. This guy’s got a room full of potential victims and he’s escaped justice before. We have to get him.”

“I know,” Hannah nodded.

“Just take a deep breath. You got put on my team because they said you knew the background. Don’t let your nerves ruin your chances. This is Lex Luthor, career criminal.”

“I thought his name was James Turner?”

“It is. I’ll explain later.” Henderson pulled out the map of the Daily Planet and showed it to Hannah and the rest of the team. We’ve got men on every window to catch him if he tries to make a jump for it.”

“Jump?”

The team replied to Hannah’s question in unison. “He’s tried it before.”

Henderson sighed. He didn’t know if it would be beneficial or not to leave Hannah on his team for such a big job. This was Lex Luthor. Unfortunately, his captain didn’t leave him much choice.

\*\*\*

Jimmy Olsen was no hero. He sat crouched beneath his desk as he watched his best friend fall to the ground in pain. His shirt was covered in blood. Clark Kent had been shot.

“Clark!” Lois screamed, kneeling down next to him.

He knew Lex Luthor was behind the mask of James Turner. He’d listened to Lois, Clark, and Lucy discussing the investigation as well as Perry White. It was different now to see the man that had destroyed Lucy so completely with a different face.

Had he been responsible for Lucy’s shooting? His child’s death? He could feel the adrenaline pumping through him as his rage began to rise.

“What in the Sam Hill?” Perry White came out of his office.

“Ah, Perry...” Lex turned away from Clark and turned toward the elderly editor-in-chief.

Jimmy could see Lois sobbing as she held Clark’s head in her lap, attempting to wipe the blood off him. He wasn’t sure but it looked like Clark’s chest was glowing.

\*\*\*

Blood. There was blood everywhere. Why was there blood? “Clark...” Lois cried, applying pressure to the wound as she scanned the newsroom for an answer to why her husband was lying on the newsroom floor covered in blood. He was Superman. He was invulnerable.

Was there Kryptonite somewhere?

It didn’t make any sense. Why was he bleeding?

\*\*\*

Detective Wolf sat across from Mindy Church in the Metropolis City Hall’s conference room. “You destroyed over half of this city. You’re looking at quite a few years in prison and yet you still won’t tell us how you just happened to temporarily end up with Superman’s powers?”

“I’m waiting for my attorney,” Mindy said coolly.

“Uh-huh,” Wolf said dryly. “Well, I’ve got a witness that’s willing to testify to your involvement in the murders that have been taking place across Metropolis for the last year.”

“What?” Mindy scoffed.

“The headless bodies. I’ve got a witness that puts you in the room during these murders. Whether you committed them or not that still makes you an accessory after the fact.” Detective Wolf explained. “You’re in trouble, Mrs. Church, big trouble.”

He got up to leave when Mindy called after him, “Wait!”

“I thought you wanted to wait on your attorney?” He asked.

“If I give you information on these murders and who really committed them what happens to me?” Mindy asked.

“I’m sure we can work something out with the DA,” Detective Wolf assured. “Don’t you want to wait on your attorney?”

“I’ll sign a waiver.” She said, shaking her head. “Just get me the DA...I’ll even throw in the real kidnapper of Jesse Stiponavic as a freebie.”

\*\*\*

Jimmy watched in horror as Lex cocked the gun and aimed it at the esteemed Editor-in-Chief. He couldn’t just sit here and do nothing. He was going to shoot Perry ... unless he could do something to stop it.

“All those editorials, demanding investigation...” Lex droned

on about how Perry had worked with the police and Metropolis in dismantling his empire.

Perry was standing just a few feet away from him. Luthor was a foot or two away from Perry with the gun aimed at him. Jimmy had to do something. He had to get out from under this desk and do something. He couldn't let anything happen to Perry. He had to...

"I hope they have newspapers where you're going, Mr. White. Say hello to Elvis for us..." Lex said.

"Noooo!" Jimmy shouted, jumping out from under the desk. He knocked Perry to the ground.

\*\*\*

"She's claiming to have information that will put the headless killer behind bars for good," Lucy said, going over the file with Mayson.

"How do we know that?" Mayson asked. "She could be taking us on a wild goose chase. So far we've got two people willing to spill on the supposed ring leader of these killings. What do we have on this Miranda?"

"At the very least she's an accomplice after the fact," Lucy said, "but there've been three other bodies found this morning after Mindy Church's rampage."

"Is that what we're calling it?" Mayson asked. She took a deep breath, shaking her head as she tried to regain her balance.

"Are you okay?" Lucy asked.

"I'm-I'm fine. I just got a bit—" Mayson leaned against the wall for support. "Okay, I lied." Lucy leaned next to her to check on her. As Mayson slid down to the floor, taking a shallow breath Lucy knelt down next to her.

"You're scaring me, Mayson. I'll get a doctor down here." She got up to leave.

"No!" Mayson grabbed Lucy's arm to prevent her from leaving. "No doctors."

"What? Why?" Lucy asked confused.

"Just promise..." Mayson snapped.

"Okay okay, I promise. Let go of my arm!" Lucy pulled her arm out of Mayson's death grip. "What's going on?"

"I have to talk to someone before I know," Mayson explained.

"You'll have to elaborate for me. I'm not understanding."

"I don't know what's going on. I have to find out from S.T.A.R. Labs." Mayson then went on to explain to Lucy her experience in the Kryptonite cage and the effects she had suffered the weeks after.

\*\*\*

"No!!!" Jimmy lunged forward, knocking Perry to the ground in front of him. He knew it was coming. He was going to get shot. He could almost feel it. He couldn't let someone he loved get hurt if he could help it. He hadn't been able to help CK but he had had time to prevent Perry from being shot.

This was it.

How would it end? Would his life flash before him? All he seemed to be able to think about was his family at the Planet and of course Lucy Lane. He'd wasted so much time worrying about the what-ifs. If he'd made his move earlier maybe they would have had a shot. Maybe she never would have gotten involved with Lex Luthor. Maybe he would be a father right now.

Unfortunately, he couldn't go back in time right now. He couldn't change the past. He hoped and prayed everyone in his life knew how much he loved them as he waited for the inevitable bullet to cut through his body like a burning knife.

There it was; a loud resonating sound of a gun being fired. Why did it sound so far away?

\*\*\*

Henderson watched as Turner fell to the ground. He sighed in relief then called out to his team, "Clear!" The door opened on all entrances and the team moved in to survey the scene. It appeared Turner had been neutralized. Henderson had taken his shot after

Perry had been knocked down by Olsen, but he couldn't be sure. After all, this was Lex Luthor they were dealing with.

Henderson approached the body, checking for a pulse. "Is he--?" Lois asked from behind him.

"Yeah," Henderson nodded, turning towards her. "He's gone." She was covered in blood. Her face was tear-stained. "Are you all right?"

She shook her head, looking down at Clark who lay unconscious in her lap. "Clark—he won't wake up." Lois cried.

"Oh, okay, it's going to be okay." Henderson did his best to keep calm, but the strain in his voice still managed to come out. There was a lot of blood. "We have to get you to a hospital."

"No," Lois shook her head. "Clark—he won't wake up," Lois repeated.

Henderson sighed, looking down at Clark's blood stained shirt and face. She wasn't going to let him do anything for her until he looked at her husband.

\*\*\*

Martha and Jonathan watched the television screen in silence, unable to move. The news of the hostage situation at the Daily Planet had taken over every station. Laura was down for her nap and Jordan was playing with his blocks in the living room, oblivious to what was going on.

"Still no sign of him," Martha whispered.

"We don't know that, Martha," Jonathan reassured her, placing a supportive arm around her.

Jordan reached up to tug on his grandparents' legs. Martha looked down and smiled at her grandson, "Hi Sweetie!" She reached down to pick him up, lifting him up in the air, making the sound of an airplane as she moved with him.

"Yah!"

Jonathan smiled, watching Martha move with Jordan. He looked back at the television and shook his head, "Be safe, son," he whispered before turning to follow Martha and Jordan into the kitchen.

\*\*\*

Henderson watched as Clark Kent was wheeled out of the newsroom on a stretcher. Dr. Klein had shown up after seeing the news on T.V. offering his services to help. His reasoning was he couldn't work as a scientist today, but he could work as a doctor. It didn't make much sense to Henderson, but he wasn't going to argue. Lois seemed all too happy to have the man looking over her husband and was finally able to accept some help herself.

\*\*\*

Dr. Klein did his best to stay out of the way as the ambulatory workers placed Clark inside the ambulance. They were headed to Metropolis General Hospital. With Lois' permission, he had been able to ride along since they were carrying her to the hospital in an ambulance as well. She had been grazed by a bullet and they said she was in shock. Not surprising considering the week she'd had.

"Is it all right if I--?" Dr. Klein pointed at Clark's motionless body. Clark was sweating. Not normal for Superman at all. Klein had to find where Clark had come into contact with Kryptonite and get rid of it as fast as possible.

The workers nodded as they closed the doors behind them. Then one of the workers came to Dr. Klein's side and cut Clark's shirt open. Dr. Klein took a deep breath, expecting to see the Superman suit beneath. He sighed in relief when he saw blood-soaked skin. It seemed Clark didn't keep his Superman suit on beneath his clothes after all.

Klein gasped when he saw the green glowing inside the chest wound. He couldn't take it out without risking Clark's health even more. He could see the fragments of Kryptonite embedded throughout the skin around the wound and wherever else the bullet had managed to lodge into. The doctor's expression was somber. He couldn't do this himself. He was going to need some help. Clark would have to have surgery. That much was evident, but

Klein had no experience in the surgical field.

He'd have to call in someone to help; someone with experience and someone who could be trusted. He knew the answer before he even completed the thought, but would Lois be okay with trusting her father with his much responsibility? Dr. Klein sighed. She would have to be.

\*\*\*

"You are the worst friend ever," Mayson muttered under her breath as she glared up at Lucy Lane.

"You're sick." Lucy shot back. "You need a doctor."

"I'm fine. It's not something I can--" She began to cough weakly just as the doctor came back into the room.

"Ms. Drake, how long have you been feeling like this?"

"Last few weeks," Mayson shrugged. "Why?"

"I'm going to have to run a few more tests before I know for sure," the doctor said solemnly. Both Lucy and Mayson knew by her face that the news wasn't good.

\*\*\*

"You want me to WHAT?" Lois hissed angrily.

"You promised you wouldn't overreact!" Dr. Klein reminded her.

"I'm just now starting to speak to my father again. I can't trust him to do something this ...BIG." Lois argued. "No, you -you have to do this, Dr. Klein."

"I can't. I can't operate on him. I can't perform surgery. I've never done it before." Dr. Klein argued, "But your father has. He is world known for his surgical skills."

Lois sighed, "I know, but how are we going to--?" She stopped when she saw her father and mother standing in the hallway, looking around. "You called my father?"

"And your mother." Dr. Klein added. "He's going to need a surgical nurse."

"But--"

"No, buts," Dr. Klein retorted. "Lois, I wouldn't do this unless it was necessary. Can't you see this is Clark's only shot?"

Lois sighed and nodded, turning towards her parents as they approached them. How was she ever going to explain this to her mother?

\*\*\*

One Week Later...

Lucy squinted out to the crowd as she prepared to speak. She looked back at Detective Wolf and Inspector Henderson who had Arianna Carlin in custody with shackles on her ankles and wrists, preventing her from escaping. The cold stare she gave her chilled Lucy to the bone. It was as if Arianna was dead inside.

"Thank you for coming," Lucy cleared her throat nervously. Normally, Mayson Drake would be handling situations like this that the DA didn't want to face the camera for. It didn't look like Mayson Drake would be up to any press conferences anytime soon.

<<Cancer>>

That was what they had guessed, but of course, nothing was certain until they got the lab results back. Thanks to Mindy and her escapades they didn't have the convenience of S.T.A.R. Labs being right down the street.

"Metropolis has come a long way..." Lucy began her speech as she reflected back on everything they'd had to endure the last few days in order to be standing where they were today.

With the help of Miranda and Mindy they had been able to find Arianna Carlin's safe house. Arianna didn't go down easy. She had tried to run, resisting arrest by tossing anything and everything she could get her hands on at the officers she'd been evading. Detective Wolf had been on the scene and finally stopped her, but he'd taken a few blows in the process.

This woman had heartlessly murdered several people over the past year. She'd defiled their bodies, cut off their heads and all for what? Science?

\*\*\*

One Week Earlier...

Jimmy Olsen slowly sat up slowly, squinting as the bright sunlight hit his eyes. He hurt. "Oh, man," he groaned in agony. The entire left side of his body was in pain. He looked around the room. He was in a hospital room for some reason. He looked down at himself and groaned; he was in a hospital gown.

He recalled the hostage situation at the Planet and panicked, looking up and down his body for a sign of a bullet wound. Nothing. He just had a small bandage on his shoulder. Had he just missed the bullet? Had it hit Perry?

He could feel his adrenaline level rising as he began to question what had happened. The door to his room opened and Perry White peeked in, carrying a cup of coffee, "Olsen?" He called out quietly.

"I'm up, Chief," Jimmy sighed in relief when he saw his elderly boss standing in front of him.

"Good to see you made it through all right," Perry said, pulling up a chair and sitting down next to him.

"What do you mean?" Jimmy asked, confused.

"That bullet," Perry pointed to his shoulder. "It got lodged in your shoulder. What in the Sam Hill were you thinking, pulling a stunt like that?"

"I--" Jimmy looked at his shoulder, carefully. It did hurt to move it. He'd been shot.

"You get a bullet in the arm and a goose egg on the noggin for your efforts." Perry scolded. "You could have been killed. Then where would you be?"

Jimmy looked down sorrowfully. He hadn't been thinking about himself. He just saw his friends were in danger and had tried to help. "I'm sorry I scared you, Chief."

"Not just me," Perry continued. "Lucy's been a wreck, coming in and out of this room, checking on you for the past few hours, along with Lois, and your mother."

"My mom?" Jimmy groaned. "You guys called my mom?"

"Of course," Perry said. "She had a right to know her son was in surgery," Perry said matter-of-factly. "Don't you ever pull a stunt like that again."

Jimmy sighed, "I'll do my best, Chief."

"I know that's right," a familiar voice scolded from the hallway.

"Hey, Luce," Jimmy beamed, when she walked into the room.

"You scared me," Lucy said.

Perry smiled, "Yeah, I've been chewing him out about his crazy stunt."

Jimmy looked up at Lucy with regret. He'd never wanted to hurt anyone, or himself, but he couldn't let Lex hurt his friends. At the time, he didn't see a solution. Perry or any of his co-workers and friends could have just as easily been shot—and not survived. "I'm sorry, it was just instinct, I guess."

"Well, your instinct scared everyone to death, son." Perry patted him on the back. "I'm glad you're okay."

"Me too," Lucy smiled at him.

Jimmy caught her gaze. She looked tired and stressed. He could see the worry lines around her eyes. He smiled up at her, hoping to ease whatever tension and anxiety she'd had over him. He changed the subject, "How's CK doing?"

Lucy looked at Perry then back again, "Uh, he had to have surgery to get the bullet removed. He was shot close range which made the wound harder to repair."

"How is he?" Jimmy asked.

"Not himself," Lucy said. "He's still in pain."

"Dr. Lane ended up operating on him, they got the bullet out, but he's probably still got a long road to recovery," Perry explained.

"And Lois?" Jimmy asked, looking at Lucy.

"She's hanging in there," Lucy said, patting his leg. "How

about you? How are you feeling?”

“Fine, I guess,” Jimmy said softly, “I think I feel fine.”

\*\*\*

One Week Later...

“We watched him fall to his death, evading capture...” Lucy pushed the memory to the back of her mind as she continued her speech.

It would have been so gratifying to arrest James Turner and finally bring him to justice for all his crimes, but unfortunately, fate had other plans. She had had mixed feelings when Henderson had told her Turner hadn’t made it. The emotions she’d felt the year before when Lex had jumped to his death had come flooding back. He’d escaped capture once more. He’d cheated her out of justice once again.

The resentment she’d buried inside came to the surface once more. How had she been so blind to allow this man into her life? It was so obvious now.

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Earlier That Day...

Mayson grabbed a tissue and dabbed her eyes, “Cancer? Really? After everything I...”

“The doctor said the tests were inconclusive. It’s just one of the many possibilities.” Lucy tried to reassure her friend.

“Just one?” Mayson asked. “That’s all he said. ‘It may be cancer, but we don’t know until we get the lab results.’ Why would they say that if they didn’t think it was really ...” Mayson dabbed her eyes once more as she cried.

Lucy looked at her at a loss, uncertain of what to do. Apparently, Mayson had been exposed to a radioactive substance that had begun to form abnormalities in her skin cells. The doctor said there was a 70/30 chance they were cancerous.

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A Few Days Ago...

Lucy lay in Jimmy’s arms staring at the ceiling, recalling their recent activities. Could she do this? Could she have a relationship with her best friend and not screw it up? Only time would tell. She stroked Jimmy’s cheek as he slept. She’d been so close to losing him... Her best friend.

She recalled what Lois had told her earlier.

<<“You’re screwed up?” Lois laughed, bitterly, “I’m screwed up, Luce.” Lois sighed, brushing a strand of hair behind her ear, “Between the drama with Mom and Dad and the divorce and every ex-boyfriend I’ve had that has literally stabbed me in the back one way or another... And let’s not forget having my son kidnapped while I was unconscious and having everyone around me try to convince me otherwise, including my own husband. Yeah, I’m screwed up, but you don’t see me sitting here scared to face the world. You forced me to take a chance on Clark and look where it got me. I’m married with a family and I couldn’t be happier. So, I’m going to tell you, Lucy Lane, take a chance. Do you love Jimmy?”

“I don’t know,” Lucy shook her head.

“The fact that we’re having this conversation proves you do know.” Lois cut her off. “Take a chance. This last year hasn’t been easy on either of us, but you can’t give up on life. It’s very lonely.”>>

“Whatcha thinking about?” she heard Jimmy’s voice penetrate her thoughts.

“Life,” Lucy smiled wryly. She patted the scar on her abdomen from her surgery. “So much has happened.”

“I know,” he said sadly. “We’ll get through this, Luce,”

“How can you be so sure?” she asked.

“Because after... watching Lois and CK go through everything they’ve gone through... I gotta think this... You and me is a piece of cake.” He smiled back at her. “I love you, Lucy,”

She smiled up at him. He’d said the scary words again. She wasn’t going to run again, “I love you too, Jimmy,” she leaned up

and kissed him, deepening their embrace as he held her close.

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A Few Days Later...

Lucy could feel the blush creeping into her face as she spoke. She had to think of something else before she turned completely red.

<<“Don’t go there”>>

Thinking about Jimmy was not the best idea right now.

“It is serious. Any radioactive material can be lethal, but especially a substance from a meteorite can prove to be deadly...” Lucy fought back her tears as she spoke.

“Its deadly effects are not solely on Superman, but on us as well. It is a real threat...”

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Lois sat on the couch, glued to the television as she watched the coverage of the Planet’s hostage situation and Lucy’s press conference. It had been a rough week. Clark had made it through surgery without a hitch and everything was back to normal. So why did she still feel so anxious? Clark placed a reassuring arm around her. “You’re going to make yourself sick with worry if you keep watching this stuff.”

Lois shook her head, “I should have known. I should have known something was wrong.”

“We’d assumed the power was out from Mindy’s destruction. No one could have known.” Clark tried to reassure her.

“I hate this.” Lois shook her head.

“I know,” Clark tightened his grip around her. “I’m not exactly enjoying playing sick either.”

“Well, how do you explain immediately returning to work after heart surgery?” Lois asked.

“Four more weeks and then we can slowly get back to normal. Besides, they’ve got most of the city under construction anyway. We can enjoy some quality time.” He wiggled his eyebrows at her. Clark said, gently squeezing her arm. “I’m sure everything will be all right, and with Mayson Drake coming forward about the harmful effects Kryptonite can have on everyone hopefully the military and government will do what they need to destroy it.”

“I still can’t believe someone did that to her,” Lois shook her head. “It’s just awful.” Lucy had told them of what had happened at the hospital with Mayson. The Kryptonite radiation had possibly given Mayson Drake cancer. They wouldn’t know anything conclusive until the lab results came back but the doctors seemed pretty sure.

“I know,” Clark sighed, “I hate that she’s going through something like this.”

“Well, at least we know the people responsible are gone.” Lois reasoned.

“Yes, everyone is safe. You’re fine. I’m fine,” Clark reassured her, taking her hand in his and kissing it. “We’re fine.” He pointed to Jordan and Laura who were across the living room playing with mega blocks. Jordan was trying to stack the blocks as he hit them together while Laura looked up at him curiously. “Arianna Carlin’s been captured, Miranda and Mindy will be in prison for the next 15-20 years. Jimmy is fine, your sister is fine, and that woman Amanda can never bother us again.” He placed a kiss on her cheek.

“Are you sure you’re not mad about me telling my mom?” Lois asked again. “I mean, I’d understand if you were. It’s your secret and I just blabbed it the first time things got tough...”

“It’s okay,” Clark reassured her. “It’s not just my secret anymore, it’s our secret. You did what you had to and I’m grateful to your parents for saving my life.”

Lois leaned up and kissed him. “I love you, Clark Kent,”

“I love you, Lois Lane,” he murmured against her lips.

“So any idea when Superman will be returning to Metropolis?” Lois asked.

Clark winked at her, “How about now?”

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The sound of laughter could be heard from the skies as a red-blue streak crossed in the sky. Lucy looked up in the sky and smiled. It looked like Superman had returned.

Many had wondered if the Superman that had been found in the harbor was the clone or our Superman. Either way, neither seemed to be present. There was no red cape flashing through the sky during Arianna's capture or the Planet's hostage situation with Lex. It was as if Superman had disappeared. Maybe it was a good thing. Metropolis had come to rely on Superman for so much it had forgotten how to survive without its acclaimed hero. Metropolis had to defend itself.

Lucy looked back at Detective Wolf and Inspector Henderson one more time and smiled to herself. As long as Metropolis kept people like that on the force the city would probably survive. Metropolis had a lot of unsung heroes hidden within.

THE END