

Waiting for a Lady — Lois and Clark/Forever Crossover

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Summary: This is a brief follow-up to "[Garden of Memories](#)." In that story Clark had mysteriously 'died' shortly before the couple was to celebrate their sixtieth wedding anniversary. What happens now? Lois is well into her eighties and Clark's appearance is that of a man in his prime. How does love – even one as special as theirs — breach such an impossible chasm?

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For those of you who were fans of the American ABC Drama *Forever*; it will be intriguing to see how similar these two men – and the women they love – are, despite their vastly different backgrounds

Dedication: This story is dedicated to Beverly and Bob Bartholomew; it is my gift to their loving and happy marriage. Thanks to MikeM and KatherineKent for the great beta work!

Legal Disclaimer: Only a few of the characters in this story belong to me, the rest are owned by DC, December 3rd Productions and ABC television. I receive no monetary reward for this work. This is just my way of saying thank you for providing many years of so much enjoyment to the loyal viewers and readers.

And so, let us begin ...

Chapter One

S.T.A.R. Labs.

The sharp, bitter gusts of winter air chilled Ian Morgan, as he strode easily along Adams Boulevard with a lightness of step more associated with the first blush of spring rather than the depths of midwinter.

Jack Frost pirouetted around his face and nipped at uncovered ear tips. He chided himself for leaving the woolen cap Jo had given him years before in the hovercraft. Still he was snug, wrapped in a heavy camel hair coat and blue silk muffler – a feeble imitation of the skillfully embroidered one presented to him by his first wife, Nora.

Every step made a fresh impression in the newly fallen snow, as if he were the sole individual approaching the magnificent steel and glass edifice that is S.T.A.R. Labs. Snowflakes nonchalantly floated down, tickling the end of his nose and dusting long dark eyelashes. The snowfall reminded him of days long ago when as a mere lad in England he spent many a winter's holiday with his parents. On winter days like this whenever the snow came down he would stick his tongue out, allowing the icy crystals to land and quickly melt. Sadly, despite many improvements on the planet's environment he was loath to engage in such juvenile behavior these days.

Reaching into his pocket, he removed an ancient gold watch, opened it and then smiled softly. "I'm right on time; Jo should be ready in a few moments." Snapping the watch closed, the smile grew wider and touched his eyes. It was time to put ancient memories aside of a life vanished long ago and whole-heartedly embrace the new one beckoning to be created.

For the sixth time in as many months, Dr. Ian Morgan pulled

the steel handles of the main doors which easily opened; puffs of artificially heated air flowed over his body, causing the snowflakes to melt and slide in rivulets down the coat's front. The warmth drew him into the brightly lit lobby which was decorated with lush green plants and tropical flowers, their very presence belying the chilly climate outdoors.

Dr. Beverly Bartholomew, assistant to the Director of Genetics Research approached him, her hand extended in a warm greeting. "Good Morning Doctor, your great-aunt is done with her final procedure. If there are no unforeseen occurrences she should meet you in the family lounge shortly."

The gentleman bowed his head slightly to the petite, older woman with shoulder length, wavy brown hair. Her simple, but classic clothing never failed to make a favorable impression upon him, perhaps because her color of choice was either purple or lavender. A vibrant color his mother wore whenever she presided over elegant assembly balls at the family's country estate. "Hello, Dr. Bartholomew, how is your husband, Robert faring?"

She responded with a merry twinkle in her eyes. "Oh he is quite well, thank you! Between his woodworking projects, writing assignments for the university and that granddaughter of ours, one wouldn't think he was retired!"

He nodded sagely while removing coat and scarf. "Ah well, he is someone who appreciates each day. Indeed, one should not refer to it as 'retirement' but savoring life with those you love."

"Doctor Morgan, we'll miss your visits! Our guests' family members go out of their way to make the staff feel valued, but your kindly — and sometimes pointed — observations about the Renewal program have been appreciated. Your great-aunt Joanna has been a pleasure to work with. It has been a privilege to 'renew' the wife of such a famous Geneticist as Dr. Henry Morgan. Dr. Amundsen says that thanks to his pioneering research in cellular regeneration, this entire process has become possible. Imagine people living one or even two hundred years longer than our current lifespan! Despite my working with the project from the beginning, the results still astound me."

The younger man merely gave her a wry smile, a touch of bemusement in his dark eyes. "It's a kind thought, but great Uncle Henry was only one of many contributors to Dr. Amundsen's work."

"Ah, you are far too modest, especially considering your own contributions to genetic research. That paper on 'genetic modification in the reduction of cancerous cells'* presented to the Reykjavik Counsel is required reading for S.T.A.R. Lab's entire BioGen department. Even Dr. Klein was impressed and we all know how difficult it is to do that! In any case, it was an outstanding paper. Ah! Here we are, the perfect place to wait for your great-aunt and the lounge is set up with coffee and refreshments."

He kept his expression carefully neutral upon hearing Beverly's remark about Ignatius Klein. Nonetheless he was rather pleased, especially since the stoic Dr. Klein was the leading expert on Kryptonian biology. Still if the rumors were true, even he made blunders on occasion.

Mrs. Bartholomew showed him to the Family waiting area. She mused, their conversations were always too brief, but informative. Not only because they shared the same profession, but because his manner of dress and personality were for lack of a better word 'courtly'. As if this visitor came from another place and time.

"Thank you Dr. Bartholomew ... Beverly. If I do not see you before we depart, it has been a pleasure. Oh, by the by, please give Dr. Klein my regards."

Her face fell slightly. "Dr. Klein? Why? He very seldom sees renewal patients or their families."

A rare smirk appeared. "He will know. Again, thank you."

Puzzled at the request, but perfectly willing to carry it out, she gifted him with a gracious smile. "You are most welcome. I hope

all the best for Joanna's new life."

Ian bowed slightly at the waist and then stepped into the room. Beverly quietly closed the door behind him. Slowly he drew breath into his lungs, allowing them to fill, then gradually, permitted the air to escape. It was the work of a moment to hang up his damp outer garments. He hated deceiving Beverly. Unfortunately, the elaborate ruse was necessary in order to keep his centuries-old secret and Jo's privacy intact.

How could he explain he *was* the famed geneticist Dr. Henry Morgan? That three years after marrying Manhattan Police Detective Jo Martinez he had departed from his position at the New York City Police Department's Forensics unit to enter the world of genetic research? Hoping that by doing so he might discover the answers to his own mysterious long life and youthful appearance?

The death of his adopted son Abraham following swiftly on the heels of their daughter Sarah's birth had prompted the move. There were so many memories for them in Manhattan – the bad outweighing the good — they decided to discover what life could be like in a smaller city where the pace was not as chaotic.

Henry sent his resume to a number of research facilities and universities the first one to respond was the University of New Troy. Within six weeks they were living in a Cape Cod style home on the outskirts of Metropolis and Henry had begun a new career as a genetic researcher. Here their family grew to four when Jo gave birth to son Caleb. But Jo Martinez-Morgan was not content to be a stay-at-home mother.

When Caleb was enrolled into kindergarten, she applied for and obtained a position within Metropolis Police Department. To Henry's profound relief, the position was a normal 9 to 5 desk job working as a Detective on a special white collar crime unit headed by Commissioner William Henderson. Despite not fighting crime on the streets, the job did have certain perks. It was not long before encounters with either the famed Superman or his friends, reporter Clark Kent and his wife Lois Lane-Kent, editor of *The Daily Planet* became a common occurrence.

Henry Morgan was occasionally called upon in an official capacity during a particularly difficult case or two. Despite a comfortable work relationship, the couples never interacted socially.

The years went by swiftly and they were happy ones for the Morgan family. Henry's youthful appearance was a frequent joke among their friends and associates. Yet as time passed his non-aging 'condition' became more noticeable and the jokes ceased. He simply did not age along with his wife and contemporaries. They tried hair dyes and padding to soften his athletic build, but as time progressed the disguise became ineffectual.

Jo did her part to maintain to slow down the aging process with proper diet and exercise which, for the most part, was successful, but unfortunately; no one can outrun Father Time. When Jo had turned fifty and Sarah and Caleb were in their late teens they had been brought into their father's secret. They were also told that soon he would have to go away.

His children begged him to reconsider and he almost relented, but dear Jo made them see the logic of the decision. It was necessary to protect all of them. The idea of his loved ones dealing with another cruel person like 'Adam' was too frightening to consider.

On a calm, sunny afternoon in July, Professor Henry Morgan was on his way to work when his tire blew out and hit the guardrail plunging his vehicle in Hobbs Bay.

All during this time, Henry would mention having a much older brother who lived in England and had children. So it was no surprise that three years after Henry's death, his nephew Cedric came to visit the family. Of course the resemblance between Henry and Cedric was striking, yet it seemed perfectly natural for this relative to help Jo and the children navigate life without Henry. In time, Cedric went back to England and his 'son' Ian

came for many a prolonged visit.

By this time Sarah and Caleb had graduated from college, moved out of the house and married. Jo had retired from the MPD and spent as much time as possible with her 'great-nephew'. Their relationship had not changed; he still deeply loved Jo as much if not more than Abigail. He fondly remembered nights when they would sit on their back porch and drink steaming mugs of tea. Those were the best times, which neither age nor infirmities could dim.

When it had been announced that Dr. Mercedes Amundsen had discovered a method of renewing human tissue, Henry wanted Jo to be a recipient. Sadly, Jo was well into her seventies and the procedure would have been fatal. But last year an astounding breakthrough had been made. Now anyone, no matter what their age, could take the procedure and survive.

He had been waiting for this day for what seemed like an eternity. It was not the first time he had come to S.T.A.R. Labs and been placed in this room, but he was grateful today's visit would be the final one. He had seen many others come through this waiting room with their loved ones, flipping through electronic magazine browsers and dropping a few deep sighs here and there; wishing time could move just a touch faster. Others were content to simply wait for their loved one to emerge; young and vibrant, ready to explore a new chapter in their lives.

In the twentieth and early part of the twenty-first century, most of his fellow man had been consumed by impatience, always in a tearing hurry to be somewhere else. It was a manner of living he had never been comfortable with. Now, with this sublime new procedure and drug created by Dr. Amundsen, the human race might just learn to recapture and appreciate the simple joy of relaxing and being content as generations had in the past.

He went over to the refreshment table and made a cup of coffee, took a cranberry scone from the silver platter and placed both on a white china plate. This waiting room felt more like *Lyons' Corner Houses*, in London before the second Great War. Those were wonderful places where a man could enjoy an afternoon cup of tea with fresh bourbon cream biscuits and talk about the latest cricket match with his mates.

Who would have expected such a convivial waiting room to exist in a vast multinational corporation like S.T.A.R. Labs? A place set aside to wait for a very special lady's final renewal procedure and meeting with her doctor.

He sat down on a leather chair, turned back to his slim, well-worn volume of Keats' poetry and took a sip of coffee; it was Sumatran, he had liberally flavored with cream and sugar. The beans were very low in acidity and produced a tantalizing aroma that ranged from chocolate to toasted almonds. Say what you want about Americans and their coffee, but this particular brand was superior and, considering how early in the morning it was, precisely what was called for.

His thoughts were interrupted when the door of the waiting room opened, and someone to enter the room. Henry spied the man as he made his way inside and sat down on a large couch, the leather the color of dark walnut. A tall, athletic gentleman perhaps in his late thirties began reading from a tablet, the face is familiar, annoyingly so. His hair was the color of onyx and wavy, in a style made popular decades before. His cheekbones were chiseled and in a peculiar fashion reminded him of his dear wife. Other than that, he was a perfectly normal fellow in the prime of life, except for one thing; his eyes were obscured by a pair of wire framed glasses.

Now, as a physician, he saw nothing wrong with anyone wearing glasses, it was just that as a technique for improving vision, they were hopelessly outmoded. Certainly this fellow could simply have a laser retinal procedure which would correct the problem immediately and with minimal discomfort. He began to mentally calculate the different procedures that could be used.

But then a thought pierced his mind and the calculations

ceased, quietly he drew in a breath.

The newcomer was at ease wearing glasses because it was a method he was most comfortable with. Special laser surgery was probably an anathema to him. It was obvious he was one of the many people who had come to S.T.A.R. Labs for *renewal*.

Chapter Two

Something about the first snowfall of the season makes the air smell pure and fresh. The environment takes on an ethereal, quieter tone. There is a sense of serenity in the atmosphere. Most city dwellers don't attempt to drive their hovercrafts as the snowy roads did not work very well with the magnetic drive and became too treacherous, thus adding to the emptiness of the city's streets. Unfortunately, over the course of the afternoon, the weather had turned cold and gray; the snowfall having increased noticeably in the past thirty minutes, but the chill of winter had little effect on the tall, handsome man who moved easily down the street, his passage leaving the barest touches in the snow. Only by close scrutiny would anyone realize he was walking just above the snow and not through it.

For the sixth time in as many months, Jerome Clark returned to the imposing steel and glass research facility known as S.T.A.R. Labs. On the one hand, he was content to be coming here – on the other, feelings of betrayal and hurt kept bubbling to the surface. Hopefully this visit would be the final one.

He was understandably apprehensive after all, his late father's warning so many years ago still rang in his ears. *'Son, those lab guys will get their hands on you and dissect you like a frog'*. After what had happened the last time he was brought here, he would just as soon skip entering the research complex all together. A fleeting smile touched his lips as snowflakes dusted eyelashes and icy air whistled past his ear. Despite the cold and mixed feelings, he was like a young man in the springtime of life, reaping the fruits of the first love.

So it didn't matter about any discomfort he had experienced months before, soon Lois would be finished completing all the legal paperwork and with her body renewed and they could live again as a couple without the aches and pains of advanced old age.

He opened the glass door and stepped into the lobby; a wall of warm air greeted him. Even he could not ignore the drastic change in temperature. Waiting by the receptionist desk stood a slender, auburn-haired woman dressed in a blue and black jumpsuit covered by a white lab coat. Dr. Mercedes Amundsen smiled generously, emerald green eyes shining with deep affection, approached him and took his large hand in both of hers.

"Greetings Uncle ...uh ... Mr. Clark!" Mercedes remembered just in time that the receptionist, Ms. Krebs, a nosy young woman could hear everything. "Mrs. Kent will be finished completing her forms in another hour. Let me take you to the Family waiting lounge."

Clark worked hard to keep a neutral expression. He was still getting used to the idea that Cat's daughter had known for years about Superman, but had never uttered a word, not even her late husband knew about 'the secret'.

"Thank you. Pardon my confusion, but isn't Dr. Bartholomew supposed to be meeting me?"

"Not today. She's with the family member of another patient. So, you're stuck with me!"

A chuckle escaped his lips. Mercedes was so much like her mother, not merely in appearance, but also in Cat's vivacious personality.

She kept her voice lowered until they were out of the lobby and then said earnestly, "Uncle Clark, at least this is not as bad as the last time ...when you were a patient here. If I knew what Ignatius was doing, Aunt Lois and the family would have been informed."

Hearing those words, his mind went back to several months before; Dr. Ignatius Klein had examined his chilled body when his

son CJ brought him in – victim of an apparent heart attack — Dr. Klein's initial diagnosis was considerably off. Clark was in a state of deep hibernation sleep and while in that condition, his body had gradually begun to regenerate. By the time Iggy had discovered the truth, Clark's funeral was underway. As far as the world was concerned, he no longer existed. Iggy had two concerns; one, that the shock would be too great for Lois to bear and two, what if Clark never emerged from the coma? So, like a true scientist who set aside emotional and family considerations from the equation, he had kept the bitter truth concealed and effectively turned him into a lab rat.

He may have been Bernie Klein's great-nephew and was almost as intently intelligent, but he wholly lacked his great-uncle's gentleness and empathy for the Kent family's unique situation. Despite his concern for Lois' health, he should have at least informed CJ about the metamorphosis his father's body was undergoing.

A grim smile touched his lips when he remembered Lois' shocked expression as he stealthily entered the garden behind their townhouse. The last time he had been there, he was deep into his ninth decade, gray with the passage of time, yet still held onto a significant measure of his Kryptonian strength. But upon his return from S.T.A.R. Labs, he once again had the appearance of a man in his late twenties or early thirties. Sadly, his beloved Lois was an old woman, who was understandably angry at her spouse for dying and then returning in such a spectacular manner. For a time, their reunion in the garden had been bittersweet. How does love – even one as strong as theirs — cross such an insurmountable barrier?

The matter seemed hopeless until Lois mentioned Mercedes' offer of a chance to return to her youth, to be renewed and enjoy a longer life with her family. Dr. Amundsen had reassured her that the six month procedure was deemed completely safe. Once Clark recovered from the surprise, he was understandably worried there might still be a measure of danger. It figured; despite advanced age, the former investigative reporter would find some way to dive into trouble! Nonetheless, the very thought of seeing her young again made his heart soar and was worth the danger.

He remembered as they walked into their home hand in hand, Lois said with a wickedly mischievous gleam in those fine brown eyes that she wanted to do a few 'things' once her youth was restored. Indeed when it became evident that the Renewal procedures were having the desired effect, he had taken much pleasure in helping her accomplish those 'things' in the privacy of their bedroom.

His mind returned to this morning, they had reluctantly departed from the townhouse's warmth and visited S.T.A.R. Labs Legal department. Earlier that week they had gone through the exhaustive process of officially re-establishing her life as a woman appearing to be in her late twenties, but who, in reality, was chronologically closer to ninety. Happily they did not have to contend with a mountain of forms and risk her being ravaged by paper cuts. No, she simply had to fill out everything on a tablet and take the final photos showing her physical progression to becoming once more the beauty he had fallen in love with over sixty years before.

Going over those electronic forms reminded him of their early days at *The Daily Planet*, huddled in the conference room, knee deep in research materials during any number of investigations. As he recalled, there was more 'romance' in looking through actual paper and getting ink stains on his fingers than staring at a tablet screen.

He remembered one research session in particular where they were trying to find out more about the Prankster. Kyle Griffin had a crush on Lois, one that was far from innocent. Clark was determined to bring him down before he could cause any harm. It was also around this time his lovely partner was beginning to see him as much more than someone she merely tolerated working

alongside.

Once Superman had apprehended Kyle, the duo celebrated by eating delicious chocolate fudge ice cream sundaes at a place called, *The Ice Cream Factory*. Clark hoped that evening would have been the beginning of something special for them, and unofficial first date. — if it had not been interrupted by him hearing the sounds of police sirens responding to the alarms of a late night bank robbery. Quickly he rattled off another one of his corny excuses, leaving a frustrated Lois to pay the check. When he called her later that night, it had led to an argument and he decided, then and there, it was time to reveal who he was.

As matters turned out, the revelation did not happen. The following day, he and Lois were given separate assignments and did not return to the Bullpen until quitting time. Thanks to a tip from Bobby Bigmouth, they ended up at Pier 17 on a rainy night waiting to see if a ship called the *Shackleton* was going to be hijacked. Thus began the chase of the Harmonic crystals story. The following morning Lois met Lex Luthor's mysterious assistant and media liaison Aykira Milan. Who, some months later, married the billionaire.

"Uncle Clark? Earth to Uncle Clark! Hey, did you hear anything I said?"

"What?" He looked up, with a sheepish expression and said, "Oh sorry, I was thinking about the long line of events leading up to this morning. If Iggy had told my family sooner, they could have spun some tale explaining my return to life. Instead, withholding that knowledge sent Lois into an emotional and physical decline that might have led to her death. As it is, I am now Jerome Clark, a distant member of the family. He cannot be trusted; my children on this planet need a doctor, so you are going to become our family 'physician'."

She shook her head in disagreement. "No can do. What with my duties as one of S.T.A.R. Labs administrators and being a close family friend, it does not allow me to be involved with the Kent family medically going forward. Plus there is this little project called 'Renewal' I'm involved in."

"Hmm, point taken. What do we do when medical 'situations' occur?"

Mercedes stopped, laid her hand consolingly on his shoulder and said. "The real reason I wanted to walk with you is Dr. Klein. As I said, his conduct was shameful. He should not have withheld the truth about your condition, because at first, he thought you might never awaken from the coma. Then, when your body started regenerating, Iggy wanted to monitor your bio-signs. Finally when you regained consciousness, Iggy STILL wanted to keep Aunt Lois and the family in the dark. His entire behavior and attitude was cruel and unprofessional."

"Yeah, I'm not a fan of doctors to begin with. Bernie was the only doctor I was comfortable enough to draw close to. Dr. Emil Hamilton was kind in his way, but that cloning process he created did more harm than good. But Ignatius Klein caused a lot of unnecessary grief from his harshness."

"Since I'm not available, I went through the short list of who would be the best person for the position."

Clark ran a hand through his hair. "Agreed, who could take his place?"

"Someone with a master's degree in Genetics and more than a nodding acquaintance with nuclear medicine, for some reason you guys always tangle with nuclear power in one form or another. Which is weird because the world has switched to either solar or machines powered by crystals. The scientist must have other qualities besides their scientific background; compassion and empathy are essential to treating your offspring. Bernard Klein and your parents were well into their seventies when I was a teenager, but their gentle natures and calmness during times of great stress still remain firm in my memory."

Clark looked down at the polished wooden floor; put both hands in his pockets and said, "Well then, the only person in

S.T.A.R. Labs who fits that bill is Dr. Beverly Bartholomew."

Mercedes eyes twinkled. "I thought we would see eye to eye on that. Bev is my choice as well."

"Okay. I spoke with Iggy this morning and told him to surrender all of his and Bernard Klein's encrypted notes on me and the family."

Her eyes grew wide, with concern. "What about the Kryptonite in his vault?"

A sly grin creased his face and he said, "During our last visit here, Lois barged into his office and demanded the surrender of all the Kryptonite into her care. He put up some resistance, but at that point, her Tae Kwon Do skills had returned. Considering her mood, he wasn't going to argue with her."

A shiver went through Mercedes' body; she remembered how angry Lois had been at the taciturn scientist when she arrived for her first treatment. It was a wonder; Ignatius had been kept on as their family physician this long.

"Huh, what's been done with the Kryptonite?"

"She gave it to CJ and he put it in the Fortress of Solitude, our version of a family safe."

The doctor nodded in agreement and they continued walking down a wide corridor in companionable silence and passed the glass door to a huge indoor atrium filled with all variety of colorful plants. It was located in the center of S.T.A.R. Labs. The plants inside were part of botany research and many of the staff went inside to eat their lunch.

Mercedes contemplated the conversation. It was unlikely any of the Kent family would approach Ignatius for 'medical' treatment in the future, especially after the family meeting that Clark and Lois had presided over. It was equal parts announcing his return to the family and getting up to speed with everyone after a six-month absence.

"Dr. Klein will be unhappy about this turn of events, he's enjoyed a certain status at S.T.A.R. Labs as the 'Super Family' physician. As quiet as it is kept, the suits and bean counters are aware of Aunt Lois' attitude towards him. They were ready to re-assign him to our **SLI** Lunar base as punishment. It's a good thing you intervened; Ignatius is not the type to handle space travel."

Clark's expression became grim. "That was for all the good he's done in the past and more importantly in memory of his great uncle."

"What about the secret?" Mercedes said, her voice had gone low.

"Iggy may be a lot of things, but he's not a fool. It's *highly* unlikely any mention of Superman's identity will come from him. Besides, he cannot expose us without putting S.T.A.R. Labs in a bad light. Even with all the positive things that are happening with the Renewal Procedure, people will want to know why the Kleins kept mum about the whole thing."

"Will you and Lois tell Beverly everything?"

He shook his head, "There's no need right now. At this point, too many people are getting suspicious. Best to let Dr. Bartholomew get on with her medical duties to us without distractions."

They reached the large oak door leading to the Family waiting room.

"Now that the Iggy Klein situation is out of the way, what are your future plans?"

"When we get back to Hyperion Avenue, Lois and I plan to have more discussions regarding that matter. We ... we might need your assistance." Clark said with a sigh.

Mercedes wanted to continue their conversation, but the pressure of her myriad duties returned. She looked at her chronometer and reluctantly slipped back into the mode of an administrator. "Whatever help I can provide just ask. Right now it time to get back to work. Aunt Lois should be here shortly. 'Bye Uncle Clark.'" She gave him an affectionate peck on the cheek and then walked briskly down the hallway back to her laboratory.

Clark stood at the door for a full minute, deeply in thought. Then he sighed opened the heavy door and entered the room. Before him stood a refreshment table laden with freshly baked cakes, muffins and scones. His mouth began to water and a familiar aroma teased his nose; Sumatran coffee brewed exactly with way he liked it. He and Lois shared a piece of toast early that morning and then hurried to S.T.A.R. Labs. It was long past time for coffee, quietly he began making a cup — heavy on the cream and extra sugar.

As he stirred the coffee he began to reflect on the conversations he and Lois had to have; what would they accomplish with the new lives they had been given. Lois could continue teaching online courses in journalism history and writing which were very popular among the University of New Troy's students.

However, he needed an entirely new identity; Clark Jerome Kent was dead. For a while he had been going by the name of Jerome Clark, distant relative of the Kent family, but he worried that such an identity might not survive intense scrutiny. After all, for over sixty years Lois Lane had been married to Clark Kent. Her beloved husband dies, she undergoes the renewal process and suddenly takes up with Clark's 'relative' who looks remarkably like him? Still, with so many people being renewed would anyone concern themselves with him?

More importantly in this age of instant communications and no secrets could they get away with it? After all, he had fooled people for years simply by wearing a pair of fake reading glasses.

There were other alternatives; it was not necessary for them to remain on Earth since, quite literally, with longer lifespans entire new *worlds* were opened to them. Because of the Renewal process, many had decided to move off-planet and join one of the larger colonies in the Solar System. Moon Base Alpha, the L5 colonies orbiting the earth or perhaps even visit Saturn's amazing rings which are composed of billions of icy particles ranging in size from tiny grains to kilometers across. With Clark's abilities and new technologies, both he and Lois could fly there without assistance from EPRAD.

There were also many employment opportunities opening up in the orbital colonies around the Main Asteroid Belt between Mars and Jupiter. The abundances of precious metals such as nickel, iron, and titanium (to name a few), and water make asteroids an attractive target for mining operations. The water provided for the colonies in space, while the minerals and metals brought in were used to build massive orbital farms and grow food hydroponically. History was being made out there, it needed to be recorded and people needed to read about. Yet he suspected Lois would bypass all these spectacular marvels and opportunities in order to visit Mars colony.

Their son Jason and his family resided there. Last year the capitol city, Europa, was nearly destroyed when an enormous fracture had suddenly appeared in the dome. Jason, as UltraMan had sealed the rupture well enough until it could be properly repaired.

At the time, due to the great distance and her considerable age, Lois could not travel to Mars personally and investigate the phenomenon. But with the assistance of her youngest granddaughter Polara, a journalist for the online *Daily Planet*, the facts had been examined and frightening conclusions had been drawn.

Something about the odd circumstances of the near-tragedy never sat well with her. He suspected that as soon as she was given the all-clear health wise, they would be making a trip to Mars Base Alpha via Superman Express.

Clark muttered under his breath, "I better make sure the oxygen tanks will provide enough air for both of us during the flight."

He heard someone clearing their throat. Apparently, he realized, there was another person in the room with him, an

impeccably dressed man in his early forties reading a well-worn blue leather-bound book of Keats. This must have been the family member who Dr. Bartholomew was attending to.

A book?

When was the last time he had seen a real paper and ink *book*?

There was something about this man that was oddly familiar. Against his better judgement he wanted to know why.

"Excuse me." Clark said.

Breaking away from his thoughts Henry looked over to his companion, for he was the only one who could have spoken, they were alone in the sumptuously appointed lounge. He in his marked British accent replied. "Yes?"

"Have ... have we met somewhere before? For some unknown reason I am positive that we have. Yet for the life of me where we might have met before isn't coming to mind."

Henry answered; the tones of his British accent added a touch of gentility to the words. "I must say I was thinking the same thing about you. My name is ...Morgan. I ...I'm waiting for my great-Aunt. Today is her final treatment." He stood up, walked over and shook the other man's hand.

Clark responded in kind, his handshake, firm and sure. He then said with just a touch of hesitation as if the name were still new and unfamiliar. "Jerome. My ... friend Lois is here."

"Ah, it seems we gentlemen are always waiting for a lady. ... my ... um late wife, Joanna. It seems that I have always found myself sitting on a bench or couch waiting for her at one time or another."

With a nervous chuckle Clark said. "Tell me about it! Lois has more than once kept me 'hanging', usually in the middle of a very desperate situation!" As soon as the words escaped his lips, Clark knew he had made a serious mistake.

A twinkle came to Henry's eye, numerous bits of trivial information, ancient memories and a conversation he had overheard in S.T.A.R. Labs lobby between some scientists who worked closely with Dr. Klein had all fallen into place to create a cohesive whole. "Yes, I remember. Is that truly your name? I think not. You are Clark Kent, former investigative reporter for the Daily Planet. What I am trying to understand is why a man whom the world thinks is dead is hiding behind an assumed name, especially when he is here waiting for his wife, the equally famous Lois Lane-Kent."

Chapter Three

The relaxed atmosphere in the guest waiting lounge had evaporated with the stranger's statement. Clark stiffened for a moment and then laughed, again attempting to mask his fears. "If I had a credit for every time someone confused me with my distant relative, I would be a rich man!"

Morgan's dark eyes flashed. He tilted his head somewhat and said not unkindly, "Especially over the last six months? When Mr. Kent died his biography became a minor bestseller. There were several fascinating details about his life, how he came to Metropolis after traveling around the world for a time and started working for the Daily Planet. Wrote a number of rewarding winning stories and was shot and killed during an investigation by Clyde Barrows' clone but was brought back to life by Dr. Emil Hamilton by a technique of cloning. Eventually he married his reporting partner Lois Lane. But if my memory serves me correctly, he was adopted ... how could you be a 'distant relative'?"

Clark remained silent.

Morgan continued on, saying "Are you truly a member of his biological family? If so, why weren't you at the funeral? For if you had been, such a strong resemblance to the 'late' reporter definitely would have been remarked upon. Pardon my bluntness, but I suspect Jerome Clark didn't exist until after his 'relative's' untimely death."

An involuntary shiver spiked through Clark's body. Who was

this stranger? With his clear British accent he could be the 21st century equivalent of Sherlock Holmes. “OK. What’s your game? I thought you were waiting for your great-Aunt?”

“True. I am. I apologize for being so blunt Mr. ... Kent, but the Lois Lane I remember would not have taken up with a complete stranger so soon after her beloved husband’s death.”

Clark’s eyes narrowed, had the stranger — this Morgana — mentioned something he shouldn’t have? “The Lois Lane *you* remember? Are you someone from our past? Have you been renewed as well?”

Realizing his blunder, Henry took a step back and was about to say something when the door opened, and Dr. Bartholomew stepped inside the lounge. She immediately sensed the tension in the room, looked at each man in turn, than cautiously said, “Dr. Morgan, Jo’s paper work has hit a slight snag — something about her late husband’s death certificate. She might be delayed for a half hour.” Turning to his companion she asked, “Excuse me, Mr. Clark?”

“Yes?”

“Dr. Amundsen wanted you to know, Mrs. Lane-Kent has completed her paperwork and then ... um she is going to have a ... ah meeting with Dr. Klein.” Dr. Bartholomew looked decidedly ill at ease. “She doesn’t expect you to wait much longer.”

An odd expression crossed Clark’s face; one that was a mixture of amusement and chagrin. After a surprise visit from an old friend last night he and Lois had talked about taking further measures to insure the secret remained secret — measures he had not discussed with Mercedes. He sighed and said. “Oh boy. Thank you.”

When Dr. Bartholomew departed, it was Clark’s turn to smile and it was not a pretty one. He was now aware of who stood before him. “Dr. Henry Morgan? As in Special Investigator Jo Martinez-Morgan’s husband who worked with Inspector Bill Henderson and his White Collar crime unit? As I recall you were occasionally called in because of your remarkable abilities in the forensic sciences. Lois and I even spent some time in your laboratory at New Troy University while you helped us with forensic information on some of our stories.”

‘Ian’ sat down, took a nervous sip of his now lukewarm coffee and nodded, realizing he had been caught. It was not wise to match wits with someone who was something of a contemporary of his.

“Isn’t it odd for her to have a ‘close friend’ of the family who looks remarkably like *her* late husband, Henry? If I remember correctly, you liked tea of very high quality, but didn’t have any objections to drinking excellent coffee like this.”

Henry sighed. How could it be that after decades — no centuries — of covering his tracks, he had been caught up by his own cleverness? “*Touché*. It appears we both have intriguing stories to relate. Since we are each waiting for a lady who is important in our lives perhaps it would be wise to do so as a way to pass the time.”

Clark nodded and extended his hand. “Then it’s best by starting with proper introductions. My name is Clark Jerome Kent.”

The other man put down his cup, slowly stood and grasped Clark’s hand. “As you have surmised, Ian is not my first name; it is Henry, Dr. Henry Morgan, Joanna Martinez-Morgan’s husband.”

Jo Morgan felt like she was back at her old precinct, dealing with an interrogation. But instead of being the one asking the questions, she was under the gun. The stiff looking paralegal, Ms. Rigaud, whose tightly coiled hair was the color of mud asked a series of questions. The woman had droned on for what seemed like hours about her legal status. Still, if this meant she could spend another hundred years enjoying life with Henry and her extended family, it was worth it.

She allowed herself a tiny smile. No doubt Henry was quietly waiting in the Guest lounge drinking fresh coffee, eating a freshly baked scone and reading a book of poetry — probably Keats. Trust her husband to read a book rather than use a tablet. There were some habits he would never give up.

“Now, Ms. Morgan, we just need to clear up a few things. Your husband was killed in freak car accident?”

The word ‘freak’ caused her policewoman’s instincts to go on full alert and then she forced her body to relax. The black wool turtleneck sweater Jo wore felt tight and itchy around her throat. “Yes, what does Henry’s death years ago have to do with now?”

“If you wish to marry again, legally we need to ascertain that the marriage is over. It saves S.T.A.R. Labs from punitive actions should there be any errors to the paperwork. In your case it seems the copy of the death certificate has been ... mislaid.”

Jo took a shallow breath and asked. “Again, that was years ago. How does one piece of paper affect me *now*?”

Ms. Rigaud blew out a breath and said gently. “Unfortunately, this is one of the many hurdles those who are renewed face. Imagine being renewed and you decide to marry again, but your ‘late’ husband suddenly appears. He’s an old man. You cannot marry unless you wait for him to die or divorce him. As a former police detective, you can imagine the other legal problems that would occur!”

Jo’s lips quirked slightly; as she fought back the urge to keep from laughing. Instead she answered back with a pronounced Manhattan accent. “Rest assured Henry is not going to appear here as a wizened old man. The day his car went through that guardrail my life changed forever. I have no intention of being married to two men at the same time. Not that it’s legal ... and the marriage to the first would be the only real one anyway, but you know what I mean.”

At that moment, Ms. Rigaud’s tablet gave a tiny chime. She looked at it, tapped the screen, studied it for a moment and then smiled. “Aha! The document was located! It was misfiled in the Metropolis city archives. Once we have it couriered over and your signature is authenticated on the document, life can begin anew!”

“Couriered? Why not just download it to your tablet? I can look it over and leave.”

The paralegal wagged her finger, trying to make Jo feel like a young child. “Now, now we can’t have that! Remember what I said before? This whole process is irritating, but rest assured, you’ll be happy we covered all the bases ...legally. Now while we wait for the death certificate ... how many grandchildren to you have?”

Jo looked up at the ceiling and groaned out loud. No matter what age she lived in lawyers and paperwork in triplicate was always going to be here! Having questions asked of her about Henry’s ‘death’ so many years after the fact had put her on edge like being in the middle of a back alley shootout at midnight. But with the location of an ancient piece of paper, once again Henry’s secret was safe. Now if she could just survive getting through this inquisition!

An equally nervous Ignatius Klein sat impassively at a perfectly neat wooden desk; every item from the coffee mug, computer and video frame of his irish setter, Caractus was in its geometrically set location. The desk, bookshelves, rugs, pictures and ceiling lights were all additions made to the office, purchased with his own money after his father, Virgil Klein, had retired and handed the duties as the ‘Super family physician’ over to him.

Organization and neatness was how he kept his world and everything in it under precise control. Right now he felt anything but in control. Only minutes before Mercedes Amundsen had departed, making a dreadful day even worse. He should be in the lab, documenting experiments; instead of sitting in his office like some errant schoolboy waiting for the wife of his former patient to scold him.

Former patient. How odd to think of Clark Kent in such a manner. As a boy he had been raised on stories of the young Superman and how his uncle had saved him on many occasions. He had been told of his wife's deep love and fierce loyalty to her husband and family. That in years passed whenever the Man of Steel faced a crisis, her intelligence and fierce courage was a big part of what carried them through. Uncle Bernie said many a villain was imprisoned because of their brilliant teamwork.

He had never held much credence to that piece of the Superman history. In his entire association with Ms. Lane-Kent she always seemed like such a gracious old lady, waiting quietly whenever her husband came in for a check-up. So he had rigorously ignored the warning given to him by both his great uncle and father.

Over the years he had performed any number of medical examinations on members of the Kent family – those that were super. But during his apprenticeship, a chance to study CJ's DNA had presented itself and ever since, whether a member of the family had come in for the simplest of tests, he took a hair follicle for further study. The renewal of the Kryptonian cell structure was incredible! Over the years he had amassed quite a collection, but he longed to have the golden opportunity for an in-depth examination of the Kryptonian DNA.

When the opportunity presented itself in the form of the patriarch's apparent demise and then subsequent metamorphosis, he was practically giddy with excitement. So much so he never went home, but slept fitfully on the couch, ready to see what happened the next day. All he wanted to do was study Superman's enthralling genetic structure as it literally rewrote into a younger version of itself. He thought that by discovering how it was done he could improve on Dr. Amundsen's Renewal Process. Maybe bask in the glory of having an in-depth article written in the *Interstellar Medical Journal*. Perhaps earn some credits for *himself* rather than being known only as Superman's 'doctor' or the relative of Bernard Klein. Why did the administrators feel the need to insult him bringing in Dr. Bartholomew who was at best only a halfway decent geneticist?

True he should have told Clark Kent Jr. that his father was still alive, but he didn't want anyone barging in on his work and ruining the observations by waking his father up too soon. As it was, the man woke up early anyway; cutting short his experiments. Unfortunately, his stupidity and arrogance had proved to be a huge miscalculation. Now he was on a verge of losing *everything*.

He was so deep in thought that the sound of the door opening and closing never reached his brain. Until he heard a voice that was now vibrant and young say, "Iggy?"

He groaned inwardly, how he hated that ubiquitous nickname! He looked up and instead of seeing a 'gracious old lady', before him stood Lois Lane-Kent and she was stunning. That was one thing his great uncle and father did not forget to mention.

The last time they had met Lois demanded and received every scrap of medical information regarding her husband and family. Even the stockpile of Kryptonite was in her possession. The Lane-Kent history rang true; she was indeed a formidable opponent. Now she stood in front of him, long dark hair pinned into an alluring upswept style, wearing a silver sleeveless dress which showed off her sculpted arms and figure. Draped over one arm was a classic camel-colored trench coat. The woman certainly knew how to enter a room *and* make a statement without uttering a word.

Despite his trepidation he could not help admiring her. Clark Kent was a fortunate man; imagine spending untold years with such a creature? Regrettably he, on the other hand, was worried. What did she want from him this time — his job at S.T.A.R. Labs?

Holding up his hand before she could speak, he said, "Don't worry, Dr. Amundsen and I have spoken. I know Dr. Bartholomew will be taking over my position as your family's physician."

Lois shook her head slowly in wonder and gracious insinuated herself into the chair across from him without the slightest hint of arthritic pain. It was gratifying to see this beautiful woman moving with the grace and allure which only comes with maturity. Slowly, she folded her beautiful hands into her lap, fixed coolly appraising dark eyes upon him and spoke with words filled with compassion.

"I'm not here to argue or shout Iggy. Do you have a few minutes?"

Rattled by her change of tactics, he swallowed and said, "Yes, I'm free. What do you care to discuss?"

"You weren't even born when Bernie Klein introduced himself to Clark. It was during the Bad Brain Johnson case. Johnson had threatened us both with death for leading the investigation that eventually landed him in prison.

Superman took me to a safe place to hide until Johnson could be apprehended.

Ignatius nodded slowly, "That entire story is in the case files. Mr. Johnson, if I remember, caused some 'problems'."

Lois stared up at the ceiling, made a tiny sigh, looked at her folded hands and said, "Yes there were 'problems'. Tim and Amber Lake were a fantastically rich and spoiled couple who collected rare and unique things – especially things they had no right to. Like Superman and his 'girlfriend' Lois Lane."

Confused, the scientist said, "But ...but what has that to do with now? Mr. and Mrs. Lake died over twenty years ago."

"Because I didn't listen to Clark and stay safe in Smallville with his parents. Instead, I caught the first flight back to Metropolis and 'ran into' the Lakes. Tim pretended to be Johnson and filmed me being 'killed' in an explosion. Clark was devastated. He actually watched my 'execution' while in the newsroom in the guise of Superman. According to Jimmy, he screamed and put a fist through the television monitor."

Throughout the narrative, he could hear her voice tighten and finally grow silent. Ignatius sat quietly looking at the palms of his hands as if something very important was there rather than witness the display of raw emotions playing over his visitor's face. Obviously talking about the long ago event still brought pain.

A moment later she continued, once again under control. "We were locked up – prime specimens in the Lake's private museum, along with the arms of Venus Di Milo and the original Magna Carta. We exchanged some very intimate words while in our separate display 'cases'.

"That must have been a frightening experience." He said blandly.

Yes ... yes it was. That experience, more than any other, drove home the fact that Clark and I are not ordinary people. So the normal rules don't apply when it comes to protecting his secret. Sometimes we have gone to extraordinary lengths to keep that information safe. But no matter what obstacles faced us, we always trusted Dr. Bernard Klein and, following his death, your father to help us. But after the emotional upheaval you put all of us through last year, unfortunately; we can't say the same about you."

Ignatius spread his palms out over the desk and said in an exasperated tone, "Mrs. Lane-Kent ... Lois. My reasons were explained to you before; I thought they were just and good. From that short period your husband was under observation substantial material was gathered about Kryptonian cellular regeneration! There was so much more we could have gleaned from the study of his DNA if I had been allowed to have him under controlled observation for a few more months!"

Lois rubbed her shoulders as if trying to ward off a chill, than spoke. "I'm not getting through to you am I? How could such a man like you be Bernie's nephew? Back when we faced Bad Brain, the Lakes and other villains, it was just the two of us. But now, there are *three* generations of superheroes helping not just on Earth, but in the Solar System. When they face a medical crisis my family needs to be cared for by someone they trust, someone with

empathy. Not someone who used a tragic situation to their advantage. I am very sorry, but it cannot be you.”

Underneath the folds of her trench coat Lois produced a petite silver boxlike device.

Curious, Ignatius eyed the apparatus. “What is that? An old-fashioned recorder?”

“No. It’s a memory device given to me recently by an old friend. Lex Luthor’s widow, Aykira Milan, someone who knows quite a bit about compassion. It is very selective; the only information erased from your memory will be Clark’s secret and who the other superheroes are. Believe me, I don’t want to do this, but it’s for your protection and ours.”

Before the startled Dr. Ignatius Klein could respond, she pressed a button and a cool green light enveloped him. Afterwards his perfectly organized office dissolved into blackness.

Chapter Four

The warmth of S.T.A.R. Labs Guest lounge was much appreciated as the sky, darkened by steel gray clouds heaped up disorder outside. The snowfall increased in density and speed, hugging the city in nature’s frigid eiderdown of white. If Lois and Joanna did not complete their various tasks very soon, getting home would become extremely difficult if not dangerous.

After making formal introductions – with their real names Henry and Clark sat on leather couches, facing each other over the large glass and wood coffee table, Henry’s volume of Keats sat on its surface. Their beverages had long grown cold and the scones forgotten. They studied each other, curious as to what twists of life had brought them to this point.

Clark cleared his throat and said, “The last time we met was decades ago, in 2020 during the Carbide case. I had been covering the story ever since Leonard Carstairs body had been found in his office. The prime suspect was Michael Farnsworth, the company’s CEO. It was a well-known fact that the two men despised each other and had an argument the morning of Carstairs’ death. But there was nothing to place him at the scene of the crime. Lois and I were waiting for the results at your laboratory at New Troy University. It was cold and snowy, just like today. Bill Henderson was under tremendous pressure to get sufficient evidence to present to the Grand Jury.”

“Right. Jo had requested I lend my skills to the MPD or rather their white collar crimes unit. Judge Petrillo was determined the case be airtight. The judge wanted Farnsworth behind bars more than we did. They had squared off before and he managed to evade justice because the evidence had been tampered with. I was working around the clock, wishing my former assistant, Lucas Wan, was there to help. Lord, I must have written over thirty pages of notes that day.” Henry said in a faraway voice.

Nodding quietly as he remembered that day, Clark said. “There was a large leather bound journal next to the examining table; it was like something from another age. Most people, even at that point, were writing on computer tablets and not on paper. I remember commenting on how unique your penmanship was, like calligraphy.” It had been many years, but the memory of seeing the spare, yet fluid penmanship of Henry’s notes written in a distinctive blue ink stayed with him.

Rubbing his chin, the geneticist joined into the spirit of the conversation – like a contest of memories. “Exactly right! Mentioning my handwriting made me think about the discarded gloves we had in the evidence container that had been found at the crime scene. Everyone thought those gloves belonged to the victim ...”

“You tested the DNA sample from the discarded glove, it was assumed to belong to the victim; Leonardo Carstairs yet actually matched Farnsworth, the killer!”

Henry shrugged as if solving a murder was all in a day’s work. “People like Michael Farnsworth always think they are the smartest person in the room. Such arrogance usually leads to

unpleasant consequences. I merely used scientific deduction, careful observation and reasoning. Since the late Leonardo Carstairs was the Treasurer of Carbide, it was obvious he discovered Farnsworth — the Chief Executive Officer — was embezzling from the company. He killed Crawford to keep him quiet. With evidence in hand Jo made short work of getting a confession out of him. “

Clark shook his head in wonder. “You used such deductive reasoning to cut through our cover story and discovered who I really am. Lois and I are going to have to work harder to keep my death a secret.”

After taking a final sip of his coffee, Henry looked up and asked in a quizzical tone, “I don’t understand, why it should matter if it is discovered you are alive?”

Clark sensed Dr. Henry Morgan was trying to turn the tables on him, perhaps talk about his own secret rather than explain why he had gone missing for so many years. With the discussion of the Carbide case his journalist’s instincts were kicked into overtime, there was an extraordinary story here waiting to be told. He decided to press the man into talking. “I might ask the same thing of you. Obviously, there is a secret or secrets which must be kept hidden, otherwise why fake your own death – abandoning your family. As far as I know you were not in trouble with the law.”

Rather than answer, Henry slowly put down the coffee cup, stood and walked across the room, to the window, studying the change of scenery outside. The weather had deteriorated in the past thirty minutes. A heavy downpour of snow had turned the peaceful scene into a whiteout. The usual street landmarks were hidden behind the white that swirled with sharp gusts of wind. Scurrying figures dressed in dark clothing seeking shelter were little more than crude outlines of humanity. The soft flakes from an hour ago which had been so enchanting from the other side of a pane glass were going to cause a massive snarl of traffic.

The expressions on his face matched the scene outside; it was dark and tightly closed, as if trying to hold off an avalanche of memories and their accompanying emotions. He said, “I have not done anything illegal.”

Clark responded. “Faking one’s death is illegal. Especially if the survivors collect a death benefit from the insurance company.”

Henry scowled inwardly. It was true, Jo had received a handsome sum from the insurance company once it as established that his death was not a suicide. But that happened only after several months of a rather lengthy and intensive investigation. His family had to tolerate all manner of indignities while trying to maintain the façade of grieving for him. If there had been any other path he would have gladly taken it. Unfortunately, it would have appeared unusual in the extreme if Jo *had* turned down the insurance money. Guiltily, Henry continued looking outside rather than face Clark.

“Correct me If I’m wrong, but you and Jo originally worked for the New York City Police Department; you as a Forensic specialist in the CSI department and Jo was a Homicide detective — two professions that can draw a lot of unwanted attention. So tell me Henry, was someone from the past trying to harm you or your family? There is also the question of your renewal. When I mentioned it, the question weren’t just annoying, you were frightened.”

Refusing to turn around, Henry shook his head and said tersely, “No, it was nothing like that. Mr. Kent, I must ask that this ... this interrogation cease immediately!”

Clark hadn’t been wrong; his mysterious companion was upset with probing. It was time to stop with the questioning, for the moment. Slowly he stood up and stretched his legs. Despite regeneration and long hours in the sun, his limbs and joints occasionally reminded him of their true age. He looked down at the ancient blue volume and bent to pick it up. It felt warm and inviting in his hands, the leather binding had creased in places, its lettering faded and the pages yellowed, still the book had survived

many years of use. Its continued existence stood as mute testimony to the bookbinder's art. Such a tome was either a family heirloom or a find picked up at a top-rate second-hand bookshop. Curious, he opened it to the inside cover, the writing was old and barely legible, yet the handwriting was distinctive to his enhanced Kryptonian senses it read:

August 15, 1945

To my darling Abigail:

Being wed to you has made my life complete. As you read these precious lines by Keats, think of me.

With all my love,

Henry

Studying the faded page very carefully, the intimate note from husband to wife was a written in very distinctive style he had seen only once before, in Henry Morgan's office nearly 40 years ago. It was an exact match.

His contemplation of the volume ended when he heard Henry's voice ask succinctly. "Are you a student of poetry Mr. Kent or does that particular page hold some strange fascination for you?"

"Not a student, but I do enjoy the classics. Over the years I have developed interests in many things, but siblings, even twins do not have handwriting that matches exactly. The A in Abigail matches yours exactly. Why does the man in this room possess the same handwriting that matches of someone who should have been dead for many years? Who are you Henry Morgan? What happened to your wife Abigail?"

Slowly, painfully Henry told his narrative. "It's a long story; I was born September 19, 1779, and while aboard the vessel "The Empress of Africa". I was shot by the crew with the captain's flintlock pistol while trying to help free the cargo ... slaves ..."

With each word uttered, Clark could barely contain himself. Was this really possible? Had the man before him lived well over two hundred years? After he had finished there was a long silence in the room. Clark still found it hard to believe but then if he really wanted to check out Henry's story, he could always ask H.G. Wells to find out if such a man existed during his time. Much as he disliked the idea of involving a time traveler in this intrigue, it was the least thing Herbert could do. After all, hadn't they helped him more than once with repairing timelines? He had to ask one more question.

"That does not explain what happened to Abigail. Where does Jo come into the picture? Is she like you?"

An enigmatic frown curved his lips. "My second wife Abigail ... died in 1985. Jo is as normal as your wife. When we worked for the NYPD Homicide Department, I used my vast experience and two hundred years of medical knowledge to solve New York City's most baffling homicide cases. Originally Jo was rather put off by my presumptuous deductions, but over time she came to appreciate my expertise."

"Oh? What drove you closer together?" Clark asked.

"It was many things; a desire to see justice done, caring for the innocent and a love of solving mysteries. We came to understand one another. Jo had lost her first husband and that pain scarred her for a time. But it was during a rather difficult case, one which had deep personal meaning for me that things between us ... shifted. In the midst of the investigation Jo had become strongly attracted to a wealthy Hotelier, Isaac Monroe. For a time they dated, and the relationship had moved to the point of him suggesting they take a vacation to Paris, of all places once, the investigation had run its course.

"That must not have been easy to endure." Clark said remembering those terrible days when Lex Luthor pursued Lois with a fervor that both frightened and sicken him.

"No, it decidedly was not. I fumed quietly, like some lovesick school boy leaning against a wall, trying desperately not to show my feelings or let it interfere with the investigation. There was actually nothing wrong with Isaac, but he was just so charming ...

it quite rankled me to the bone!"

His companion nodded in understanding. He knew all too well how a wealthy man with smooth words and a glossy veneer could turn a woman's head. "What did you do about it?"

"Do? There was nothing to do. At that time we had a professional relationship. Of course she had been to my home, had dinner with me and Abraham, my son, on numerous occasions. But our personal relationship was ... undefined."

Clark's eyes crinkled in amusement and said softly. "Of course it was."

Staring at his companion suspiciously Henry responded. "Pardon me; I did not quite hear what you said?"

Waving his hand for the story to continue, Clark said. "Oh, it was nothing. Obviously Isaac is no longer in the picture."

"Thank heavens Jo had misgivings, canceled the vacation and broke off the relationship. Isaac was moving too swiftly for her tastes. He married a lovely woman who happened to work for him in the finance department. Office romances are sometimes the best way to meet the right person — especially if they are conducted discreetly."

The two men smiled at each other. They had both met their future wives on the job.

"Funny, for some strange reason I can see you on a British frigate being chased by Buccaneers." Clark his tone a little lighter.

Henry cocked an eyebrow and said. "Trust me Mr. Kent, at the time, it was anything but amusing! So, how long before you and Miss Lane began your courtship? Surely your 'other life' and duties as Superman must have been inconvenient at times."

Clark sputtered incredulously. "How ... how did you know that?"

"Don't be so surprised. Many factors came into play: the odd circumstances of your death. Passing yourself off as a long-lost relative who resembles Clark Kent perfectly as he was in the 1990's. It is a documented fact that he was adopted by a kindly couple in Kansas. Why are you waiting here for Lois Lane rather than one of her children? From what I gather they are a close-knit clan that would not allow their mother to undergo such a dangerous process even at its latter stages alone. How could you have been renewed before Dr. Mercedes discovered a means of rejuvenating those over the age of sixty?"

Now it was Clark's turn to look out the window. The winds pushed the snow about in greater gusts than before. It was whipping into a proper blizzard. Soon, S.T.A.R. Labs might have to close for the day.

Henry continued. "The last piece to the puzzle. Your ability to read my note to Abigail in this book. The war even touched that most prosaic of tools, pen and ink. The allies took amazing precautions to keep information out of the Axis hands even to the point of creating special ink that could not be read when transferred into microfilm. Over time, that particular ink fades to almost nothingness. I am the only one alive who knows what was written on that page. Without the proper specialized lenses my writing cannot be seen. Only Superman, with his microscopic vision, could have read it."

Turning his eyes back to Dr. Morgan, Clark's heart hammered within his chest, he had made a mistake. A mistake which might cost him and his family dearly.

"I surmise over the years, others unknown to you have reached this conclusion as well, but for the greater good remained as silent as you are now. We each hold the key to the other's future happiness in our hands. Might I suggest we leave our past — mistakes and all — where it belongs, in the past?"

Profound relief flooded his heart. He managed to say only. "Thank you Henry."

"Not at all. Sometimes it is for the good and protection of those we love to keep secrets. Now, since our womenfolk still have not arrived. Please tell me something about your early days with Lois."

On one of our first dates after solving the Shackleton freighter hijacking I came by to pick her up ...”

Morgan held up his hand in a warning gesture, “Don’t tell me. Still getting ready?”

“Lois answered the door with her make-up and nails done and the perfume she sprayed on was light and floral. To top it all off she was wearing the most perfect little black dress. But ...”

Henry now completely enthralled in the story said. “But?”

“Here she was looking like she stepped off a Paris runway, but in her hair were the largest pink rollers I ever saw! Honestly, they looked like soda cans! I sat around the apartment for another ten minutes waiting for her to look ‘just right’.”

Morgan nodded with a small knowing smile. “So was it worth the wait?”

Clark’s face glazed over as silver memories of how beautiful the evening turned out to be. Dinner, at a Brazilian restaurant where they had small plates of crispy thin crusted empanadas filled with seasoned beef, spicy chicken, and Brazilian chorizo served with *chimichurri*. Of course Lois wanted vegetables, so they shared a *salada caprese*; fresh mozzarella, roma tomato and basil leaves drizzled with aged balsamic and extra virgin olive oil. The meal was finished by sharing a thick wedge of fresh out-of-the-oven vanilla pound cake smothered in warm chocolate sauce. The expression of sinfully contented decadence on Lois’ beautiful face when he fed her that first perfect bite had lived in his memory for decades.

Afterwards they went dancing at a local club and then a late night walk through Centennial Park with a thousand stars shining down upon them. Through it all, he couldn’t take his eyes off her, thinking how fortunate he was to be spending time with such a fascinating woman.

“Yes,” he said softly as his mind returned to the present. “It was worth the wait.”

The two men continued sharing reminiscences about the many instances their wives made them wait while they prepared for one event or another.

The doctor was chuckling after a particularly amusing reminiscence and asked, “Did the lady ever have to wait for you?”

The other man grew quiet and answered slowly. “Oh yes, she had to wait for me to reveal my greatest secret. That was during a bumpy time in our relationship.”

Morgan stood up and went to the refreshment table. This time he made a cup of hot Earl Grey tea. “Interesting how that is. Joanna knew there was something very different about my personality; I can be rather gruff at times and a little too serious for my own good. That difference tried her patience on more than one occasion.

Clark nodded sagely, “Wives have a way of getting secrets out of their husbands. In my case, Lois figured out my deepest secret before I could reveal it. She was angry and very disappointed.”

“Why did you remain silent?”

Clark sighed; it was a question he had asked himself over the years. “The best answer I can give is my fear of her reaction, it always stopped me.”

His companion nodded thoughtfully, Clark Kent’s fears were understandable and mirrored his own while telling Jo all about his long life. After Abigail’s death he had become somewhat reclusive and abrasive to everyone around him. As a result of his bluntness he had very few friends. When he began to have a greater share in tracking down criminals with Jo Martinez and his protégé Lucas he began to cherish spending time in their company. Not wishing to interrupt the narrative; instead he blew on the hot liquid and took a contemplative sip, allowing Clark to continue.

“We had grown close over a three year period. The closer we became, the longer I put off telling her, the harder it became to say anything.”

“How did she find out? When did you provide the final clue?”

“That’s just the point, I didn’t. My cat Pepper did.”

A look of complete surprise crossed Henry’s face, than a chuckle escaped his lips he said, “I beg your pardon? Did you say your *cat*?”

Clark rubbed the back of his neck, as a blush his cheeks. “Well yes, it was after Lois had broken into LexSolar and was shot while trying to escape ...”

His amusement vanished when he said, “Shot? What happened?”

“She came to my apartment, covered in blood. I nearly lost it, but thankfully, it looked worse than what it really was. My old friend from Smallville, Dr. Pete Ross came over and stitched up the wound. He was a good friend to do so; as a medical man you know all gunshot wounds must be reported to the police.”

“It sounds like this Dr. Ross is a true and good friend.”

A shadow passed over the other man’s face. “Was. He died some years ago.”

The two men sat quietly for a while, remembering that most of their contemporaries were long gone.

Clark cleared his throat and continued, “Pete didn’t want Lois moved, so she spent the night at my apartment. I had to go to work that morning, I thought she would sleep at least until noon.”

“Something happened when she awakened?”

“My cat, Pepper was scratching at the door to my closet. Lois thought there was a mouse inside. She opened the door and discovered my Superman uniforms and other items that gave no doubt as to my secret identity.”

“I see. How long did she remain upset?”

“For a few days. We spent a long night talking everything out. That conversation drew us closer than we had ever been. We have been blessed with sixty years of conversations and now there will be so many more. But for a time there was an interruption Lois and my family suffered greatly. Ignatius Klein made an error in judgment.”

Henry took in a quick breath blew it out and not hiding the annoyance in his voice replied. “The news service reported Clark Kent’s death from an apparent heart attack. Leaving behind a devoted wife and loving family. That’s more than an *error in judgment* it’s an abominable mistake. Dr. Ignatius Klein and I have crossed paths a time or two at science conferences. I have always considered him brilliant, but rather pompous fellow, yet it is inconceivable he could be so callous.”

With a hapless shrug Clark replied, “When I regained consciousness in a glass chamber which had direct access to the sky, the first thing I asked about was Lois. Iggy told me what had happened and that my family assumed I was dead. He thought it was best this way since Lois was so old that the shock of discovering I was still alive and growing younger would surely kill her.”

Henry snorted. “What rubbish! She did retreat for a time, as would any woman who had lost her husband. But in time her interest in life was restored. There was even a mention in the online edition of The Daily Planet that she and the family totally renovated the townhouse. That does not sound like a frail old woman to me!”

“Exactly. But I didn’t know that at the time. In any case, Iggy didn’t want me to leave my chamber confines until the sun’s radiation could speed up the rejuvenation process. But while my body was still vulnerable he continued taking samples of my blood, hair and skin.”

Henry’s eyebrows went up in surprise. “You weren’t in the least bit suspicious?”

“No. Please try to understand Henry; the Klein family has worked with my family for generations. There was no reason for me to distrust him. At first it made me uncomfortable and then when he kept insisting I remain within the chamber, it occurred to me I was being kept as a lab rat. It was the most horrible feeling I ever experienced. As soon as my powers were a little above normal I escaped and went straight home.”

“Your wife must have been shocked by your appearance.”

“Of course! Put yourself in my position ...”

Before Clark could finish his sentence, Henry cocked an eyebrow and said somewhat drily. “You were saying?”

“Sorry, forgot who I was talking to. But you must admit it is not every day I talk with someone who is over two hundred years old.”

“I quite agree, it is not every day one converses with the Man of Steel in his normal guise.”

My biggest problem now is resolving my new identity without revealing my old one. Clark proceeded to tell Henry everything.

“Might I suggest a rather bold move?”

Suspicious about where this conversation was going Clark said, “What do you suggest?”

“Reveal everything.” Henry said with a shrug.

“Excuse me?” Clark said somewhat aghast.

“Well, that is to say, stay as close to the truth as possible. I understand you were ‘cloned’ after being ‘shot’ by Clyde Barrow?”

“Yes, but what has that have to do with now?”

“Undergoing the cloning process by Prof. Hamilton caused your body to age normally, but at the time of your supposed ‘death’ it was actually regenerated to the point where it was at the time of your cloning.”

“No. The scientific community, my friends and former colleagues would never accept such an outlandish theory!”

Henry shrugged. “Why not? The renewal process has been accepted with open arms. People are living their lives anew. Besides, Professor Hamilton himself said that some of the chemicals he used in the process were extremely rare and ridiculously expensive. Your particular story, Mr. Kent, shall merely be a little different. After all, your late ‘best friend’ could fly.”

“What if the scientific community decides they want to know more about how this happened and want to study me? I’ve experienced being a lab rat once before, I have no wish to go through that again!”

Henry shook his head. “With the renewal process in full swing, cloning research has been abandoned. Do you remember sulfa drugs? They were once considered very promising in the middle part of the twentieth century.”

“Vaguely.”

“Precisely. Today there are much more reliable drugs being used. No one concerns themselves with those rather lethal chemicals anymore. The same attitude prevails towards cloning. Why bother creating inferior copies of a human when the person’s life can be extended by much less dangerous means? Your life will not be hampered by genetics experts seeking to unlock the mysteries of Clark Kent’s DNA. I think I can speak with full authority since that is my profession.”

Before Clark could reply, the door opened, Lois entered the waiting room and Clark stood up, walked over and gently folded her into a comforting embrace. Heedless of Henry’s presence, she began to cry.

Wordless, Henry stood up and exited the room, shutting the door firmly behind him, giving the couple privacy.

“How is Ignatius?” He said while cupping her face in his hands.

“After the ray’s effects stopped, he looked at me with confusion. He asked me what I was doing in his office, especially since you were waiting for me in the lounge. He doesn’t remember anything about your secret identity. Thanks to the device Aykira gave us last night, our family is safe from his interference!”

A breath expelled from Clark’s lungs he did not realize he was holding. “Mrs. Luthor certainly has saved our lives again. That’s good news. We have to tell Mercedes.”

Looking just a bit sheepish, his wife replied. “Already taken

care of. She wasn’t happy to hear what I had done but considering the circumstances it was understandable. No one in S.T.A.R. Labs besides herself knows the relationship we once had with him. I ... I really didn’t want to do it Clark. But he was so arrogant! He wanted to *publish* what he had learned about your Kryptonian DNA! To him you were nothing more than a lab rat!”

“It’s a shame. Bernie would have been very disappointed with him. Maybe ‘under the circumstances’ you and I should leave Earth as soon as possible. Let some time go by before the world finds out I’m alive.”

“Alive? But Clark we discussed this! Thanks to Iggy’s interference, Clark Kent is dead.”

“That might not be the case. I was having a very interesting conversation with someone from both our pasts who might have a solution to the problem. Do you remember the forensic specialist, Dr. Henry Morgan?”

Her brow wrinkled for a moment, than she said. “The one who was killed in a car accident? Wasn’t he the husband of Jo Morgan? I thought I saw her here during one of my earlier sessions. Did you talk to one of their children?”

“Not exactly. He released her, stepped over to the door, opened it and called out. “Ah ... Henry are you still here?”

Henry entered the room followed by tall woman wearing black pants and a turtleneck sweater with thick dark hair cut in layers, streaked with a few stubborn strands of white. She had a striking face; the most prominent feature were cheekbones so strong they looked like they could cut glass.

Startled by the use of her husband’s true name she said, “Why ... why did you call my great nephew Henry? His name is Ian.”

Lois stared at Jo and said, “I thought the same thing. But your great-nephew looks too much like your husband, the late Henry Morgan, did in the 1990s. Where have you been all these years? Were you recently renewed at another location?” She said all this while Clark closed gently the door and joined her on the couch. Henry sat down on the other couch and took Jo’s hand.

He began the conversation by saying. “Clark. We need to let our ladies know what we have been discussing while waiting for them.”

Jo and Lois looking at their respective spouses and said together, “What have you been talking about?”

“Our future, or should I say futures, Lois. I meant what I said earlier about leaving Earth. But we need to talk about revealing to the world that I never died.”

Jo Morgan had been looking at the man before her and was not completely confused. “Excuse me. Aren’t you Clark Kent? Didn’t you die last year from a heart attack? It was on the news services ...”

“Ladies. I suggest we leave S.T.A.R. Labs and go someplace quiet and warm where we can discuss our futures calmly.” Henry said calmly.

Jo’s dark eyes flashed, and her voice took on a sterner tone. “Henry, we did talk about this. The plan was to leave for the Asteroid Mining belt. There is an urgent need for experienced doctors and law enforcement officials. It’s like the Wild West out there!”

Lois joined in, with the words seemingly running together because of her swiftness of speech. “Remember after our conversation with Aykira Luthor I put in an interstellar uplink to Jason last night? He responded a few minutes ago. Our living quarters are set up. We even have jobs working for one of the online Mars publications. We just need to get there! I’m telling you there’s a story behind that crack in the Mars dome. My reporter’s instincts can feel it!”

“Well, in sixty-five years your instincts have never been wrong, but I think we can learn a thing or two about medicine and police detection from Henry and Jo.”

Lois nodded at her husband. “After knowing you for nearly three-quarters of a century, now is not the time for me to start

doubting you. Turning to the Morgans she said. “Please come to our townhouse. There’s plenty of room and we can put you up for the night. This storm doesn’t look like it’s going to let up anytime soon! As a matter of fact, S.T.A.R. Labs might be closing early because of it.”

Clark could not help but think that they had begun their married life a little over sixty years before. Nonetheless, it felt like yesterday that the adventure of their life together back at the Daily Planet had begun and now a new adventure beckoned with, perhaps, new friends and, possibly, a new planet.

“Lois is right, come over and we can talk. I make a great lasagna if I say so myself.” He walks out, his hand gently touching the lower part of his wife’s back.

Jo looked at the couple as they exited the lounge, then turned and studied Henry a touch of humor in her eyes when she sees him reaching for the ancient blue volume of poems by Keats.

“I heard something about Mars and a crack in the dome. Wasn’t that case settled months ago?”

“Perhaps. Perhaps not. The weather is rather beastly, driving home in this will be difficult. Might I suggest we take the Kents up on their offer and see what the night holds out for us? Besides, I want to know how Lex Luthor’s widow is involved ...”

She answers by giving Henry a full and very generous kiss; expressing gratitude they will share untold years together. He sighs in sheer contentment, Keats said it best:

*A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep.*

Dr. Henry Morgan and his wife of forty years, former NY PD Detective Jo Martinez depart arm in arm from S.T.A.R. Labs.

THE END