

# An Icy Reception

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Summary: In this introduction to the Ice Age series, Lois Lane, Clark Kent, and Jimmy Olsen are invited to see LexLabs' newest and greatest discovery.

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The air in LexLabs seemed to crackle as Lois Lane stepped forward between two massive pillars, and the world was consumed in light. After a soft “pop”, a sudden blast of frigid air pulled her skin into goosebumps and made her automatically hug herself in a desperate grab for warmth. Two more pops sounded behind her as she blinked away the spots floating in her vision.

“—to Luthortopia!” Lex stood grinning in front of her, his arms outstretched.

The walls of the laboratory were gone. The ground on which she now stood was covered in hardened snow, and it seemed to roll on forever towards an unbroken horizon. A few nearby tents were the only buildings visible, and a handful of scientists moved between them while inspecting various pieces of equipment. A desk with a computer sat out in the open, thick cables running from its tower to the pair of huge pillars they'd just passed through.

Lois gripped her arms tighter and turned to look in the direction they'd just come from. The empty space between the pillars only gave a clear, uninterrupted view of the surrounding tundra. In front of the gap, Jimmy blinked and rubbed his eyes while Clark's gaze snapped to hers. She circled around the towering structures, but there was no trace of the place she'd been only a moment ago.

“Incredible!” The word puffed out in front of her as a white mist that the wind soon carried away, and she felt Clark's jacket settle over her shoulders. She turned to Lex, wide-eyed, and raised her voice a little to be heard over the wind. “So this is your solution to overpopulation?”

The philanthropist nodded, beaming. “We have broken the boundaries of our own spacetime continuum and pushed through to an alternate universe! We are now standing where Metropolis would be, but on a much younger duplicate of our Earth. Here, Captain Hobbs has yet to sail; Columbus has yet to be born; even the first so-called natives have yet to cross over the land bridge from Asia!” He closed the zipper on his coat. “It's a world completely untouched by man.”

A stout, bespectacled man in a parka appeared at Lex's elbow. “Actually, according to the data we were able to gather, this world is currently in a state reminiscent of one of the Pleistocene glacial periods of our own. Given the parallels in other species such as local megafauna, we speculate that early humans may be just starting to spread away from Africa. The very first beginnings of technology would—”

Lex clapped a hand on the man's shoulder, smiling tightly. “Ah, yes. Lois, gentlemen,” He nodded towards Clark and Jimmy. “Allow me to introduce Dr. Eustace Diggory. He has been in charge of the little research expeditions here.”

“Er, yes. How do you do!” Dr. Diggory stammered, blinking against the flash of Jimmy's camera as the young man snapped a photo.

Clark frowned. “Dr. Diggory, are you saying this world is in the middle of the \*ice age\*?”

“Well, \*an\* ice age,” the scientist clarified, pushing his glasses further up his nose. “There have been many in our Earth's past. In fact, the long stretch of stable, temperate climate that allowed us to develop agriculture is something of a geological fluke.”

Clark's eyebrows shot up at that. “So then, would the citizens of...Luthortopia...be completely unable to raise their own crops?”

Lois rolled her eyes at him. “Really, Clark! You're standing in the middle of an alternate universe, and all you can think about is farming?”

“I'm thinking about survival,” her partner snipped, glaring at her. “Maybe \*farming\* isn't glamorous or impressive to you, but you depend on it more than you realize. Without it, how are these people supposed to get food, or clothing, or even basic medicine?”

Dr. Diggory nodded sagely. “Your friend here is correct. Before the domestication of—”

Lex stepped forward. “I assure you,” he said smoothly, “the issue of food and supplies is well taken care of. Before

any colonists arrive, we will have set up a reliable system of supply drops and goods exchange. Luthortopians will have not merely survival, but prosperity!”

Clark muttered something under his breath that sounded like the word “dependency”.

The wind picked up again, and Lex shoved his hands into his pockets. “Now, we mustn’t keep these good people from their work, so if you’ll accompany me back to—”

“LOOK OUT!” A voice shouted from the far end of the small encampment, and Lois looked up in time to see something huge and antlered charging straight towards her. Clark’s arm pulled her back just as a reindeer passed by them at top speed with a giant cat right on its heels.

A majestic leap carried the reindeer clear over the desk by the pillars. The great cat scrambled after it, kicking the computer equipment away in its pursuit. A shotgun blast shattered the computer tower before it hit the ground.

The chase soon vanished into the distance. After a moment, the small band of scientists gathered around the fallen computer. None of their expressions seemed particularly hopeful or encouraging.

Lex grit his teeth. “Dr. Diggory?”

The pudgy man sheepishly lowered the shotgun. “Sorry, Mr. Luthor,” he mumbled.

“Sorry?” Lex stepped towards Dr. Diggory, and the man cowered. “We are trapped in a barren, ice age planet, and you’re sorry?” His voice held an unnerving edge.

Lois’ stomach began to twist. “Lex?”

Lex blinked and turned to look at her, as though he’d momentarily forgotten her presence.

“We have an emergency protocol for this situation,” the only woman among the scientists spoke up.

“She’s right,” said one with a mullet. “In the event that the laboratory loses contact with the outpost, an alarm goes off on the other side of the gate. A rescue team should force it open again within twenty-four hours.”

Lex visibly relaxed, and he was once again his familiar self. “Excellent.” He took Lois’ hand in his and kissed it. “Well, my dear, it seems your tour of Luthortopia must last a little longer than planned, but at least we’ll have you safely home by tomorrow.”

“Um...” Dr. Diggory cleared his throat. “Actually, Mr. Luthor, there is the small matter of...time dilation.”

Lex stared at the squirming scientist.

“It was in all my reports,” the man continued. “While it’s true that the rescue team should retrieve us within twenty-

four hours...on that side...from our perspective, it would be, um, up to six months.”

Lois gasped.

“Six months?!” Lex exclaimed.

Jimmy let out a groan. “Oh, we’re going to die...”

Clark put a hand on the younger man’s shoulder. “Nobody is going to die.”

“Look on the bright side,” the remaining scientist piped up. “We’ll have an incredible opportunity to really experience this environment in depth. Who knows what we could discover!”

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Mad Wolf dipped her fingers into the pigment and smeared it onto the figure slowly taking shape on the wall. The beast had been a terrifying sight: much larger than any man among her people, quick as lightning, and with sharp horns. But her husband had subdued it effortlessly, and now the scent of its roasted flesh still lingered in the warm air of the cave system.

Another familiar scent reached her nose just before her husband’s hand came to rest on her shoulder. Her smile was met with his own. Kal-El crouched beside her, and Mad Wolf shifted so he could admire her handiwork.

He pointed to the three legs on her depiction of the beast, then turned to her and held up four fingers.

Mad Wolf swatted at him and reached down for the pigment again, only to be interrupted by a sudden kick. She gasped. Her hand, still coated in red, flew up to her belly.

“Wolf?”

She looked up into her husband’s worried expression, aware that her own face was nearly breaking from a grin. “The baby!” She placed his hand over the site of the continued kicking and watched as his eyes widened with awe. For a while, they sat together, enjoying the moment.

Eventually, another sensation made itself known, even though she had already eaten not that long ago. “Kal? I want fruit.”

He stared at her, then turned to look towards the mouth of the cave and the frozen woods beyond. “Fruit?”

She nodded.

“Fruit?!” he said again.

“Sweet ones, if you can find them.” She gave him that imploring look he could never resist, her finger tracing curves over his chest.

He seemed about to say something, but then he sighed. “Mad Wolf,” he muttered as he rose to his feet. “Mad, mad wolf!”

With a crack of thunder, Kal-El was gone. Maybe finding fruit amid the ice and snow would be impossible for anyone else, but Mad Wolf and her husband saw the impossible every day. Who knew what he could discover?

The End

Next in series: [Welcome to the Tundra](#)