

Welcome to the Tundra

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Summary: Three Daily Planet reporters, one billionaire philanthropist, and four LexLabs scientists all find themselves stranded on a parallel Earth much younger than our own. How bad could things actually be? (Part 2 of the Ice Age series, following [An Icy Reception](#))

Story Size: 2,198 words (13 kB as text)

Previously in this series:

[An Icy Reception](#)

Lois slowly drifted awake, unsure at first of where she was. Well, she knew where she wasn't: she wasn't in her own home and bed. Nor, despite the vividness of her recent dreams, was she in Superman's.

The dream had started out so wonderfully, with the caped hero flying her off to his secret castle in the Arctic. But then, just when things were starting to get interesting, a frigid breeze came along and cooled the mood. It turned out that Superman had left all of his windows open, so he left her sitting alone in her underwear while he flew off to close them.

Well, Superman wasn't really here, but the cold breeze certainly was. The memories of the day before coalesced in Lois's groggy brain as she shifted uncomfortably in the thermal blanket that the LexLabs scientists had scrounged up for her. Despite being completely wrapped in it, she could still feel the hard, frozen ground beneath the floor of the tent.

"Luthortopia", as Lex had so proudly christened it, was a prehistoric alternate Earth that would solve the overpopulation problem by giving humans a new place to settle. Unfortunately, the grand tour he'd given the Daily Planet's top reporters had gone somewhat awry. They now faced up to six months trapped in an ice age, and based on how things were going so far, it was going to be a very long six months.

The tent's zipper slid open and Dr. Plummer crawled in, smiling when she saw Lois. "Oh good, you're up!" She lifted a thermos. "Want some coffee?"

"Yes, please!" Lois scrambled into a sitting position, adjusting the blanket around her and taking care not to dislodge the jacket Clark had relinquished to her upon their arrival. Every scrap of covering was precious.

The lid doubled as a cup, and Dr. Plummer poured her some of the beautifully steaming liquid.

Lois reveled in the warmth of it before even bothering to note the taste. "Thanks. And...thanks for sharing a tent with me. I hate to come between you and Dr. Diggory."

"Oh, don't worry about that." Dr. Plummer fished a paper cup out of one of the pockets of her parka and poured herself a helping from the thermos. "Eustace and I can handle some time apart, so to speak. Although, I'm surprised you didn't want to bunk up with your own boyfriend."

She smiled into the cup. "Clark isn't my boyfriend. We're just really good friends."

"Um, I meant Mr. Luthor."

"...Oh." Lois blinked. Right. Lex. They had certainly gone on quite a few dates, so of course people would assume... She took another sip of the coffee, not looking anywhere near Dr. Plummer. Was Lex her boyfriend? Did he think of himself as such? As for the thought of sharing a tent with him... Well...

Lois shook her head. None of this mattered right now, anyway; their survival was more important than her love life, and having a tent just for women was a perfectly sensible arrangement.

"Pete and Ed are taking inventory of the supplies," Dr. Plummer continued, apparently unaware of the awkward silence. "We're going to have a meeting soon. Are you up for it?"

Lois gave a defiant snort. "I'm up for anything."

* * *

She buttoned Clark's jacket over her clothes and wrapped the blanket around herself like a cloak before exiting the tent. It wasn't exactly the best winter-wear, but being out in the morning sun was already making her feel much warmer! She turned around and caught Clark staring in her direction.

He sheepishly fiddled with his glasses and jogged up to her, somehow managing not to slip on the ice.

“Hey. Um, did you sleep okay?”

The wind stirred the blanket, and she pulled it tighter. “Fine. Just fine. Well, considering that the ground is solid ice, I didn’t bring a sleeping bag or pajamas, and we’re so far from home that not even Superman can rescue us. What about you?”

“Uh, same.” Clark scratched at the stubble on his jaw, looking suddenly uncomfortable. Maybe their predicament was getting to him. Or just as likely, it was the cold: his long-sleeved office shirt offered nothing against these temperatures!

She reached out to run a warming hand over his arm. “Clark, you have got to be freezing! Do you want your jacket back?”

“NO!” he said quickly, then smiled at her. “No, you keep it. I...tend to run hot.”

Lois rolled her eyes at his pitiful attempt at deception. “Oh, please. With how long it took you to break a sweat during the heat wave, you’re probably colder than I am! Let me...” She reached for the buttons of the jacket, but he grabbed her elbow through the blanket.

“Lois, no! Uh...I’m a farm kid, remember? We’re pretty sturdy.” He smiled at her. As she stared at him, his gaze softened. “Just...keep it. Okay?”

She huffed. “Fine. But at least take a corner of the blanket.” She partially unwrapped it, bringing one end up to his shoulder. When he took it from her, her arm fell to wrap around his side, pulling him close. Even through the jacket and the rest of their clothing, she could feel the heat from his body. Which was the point. Heat, of course. Nothing more. Lois turned to look at their surroundings as Clark brought the edge of the blanket back over to enclose them both.

The large pillars they’d passed through yesterday still looked the same. There had never been any flashing lights or sciencey glowing back when they had been working, so nothing seemed different now that they’d stopped. No trace of hoof-prints or paw-prints could be seen on the hard ground, so the only remaining evidence of yesterday’s disaster was the wreckage of the computer that the pillars had been attached to.

One of the equipment tents had been emptied in order to accommodate the extra personnel. Computers and expensive-looking machines that she didn’t recognize were piled up next to it, now covered in ice and frost. Dr. Carroll had explained that the items wouldn’t be much use while they waited for rescue and could always be replaced after. The

tent itself didn’t look quite as weather-tight as the one she shared with Dr. Plummer, or the one that Lex had opted to share with Jimmy and Dr. Diggory when she’d made her sleeping preferences known. Lois leaned against her partner, hoping he’d been at least somewhat warm.

A sound of angry shouting drew her attention to the other tent. The flap ripped open and Lex stormed out, looking decidedly more disheveled than Lois had ever seen him. “—end to that atrocious snoring, or I will—” He broke off when he saw her. “Lois.” Something flashed in his eyes briefly before his features schooled back into his usual calm demeanor. “Kent. Anything I need to know?”

“Dr. Plummer said there’s going to be a meeting soon,” Lois replied as Clark’s arm around her tightened slightly.

Lex nodded. “Of course. We will definitely want to strategize; maybe even find a way to hasten our return to LexLabs.” The open flap shifted behind him, and his tentmates cautiously emerged. Lex stared at them for a moment, then shook his head and wordlessly marched off towards the large shelter that apparently held all of their supplies.

Jimmy scurried up to them, shivering despite the thermal blanket wrapped around his own shoulders. “Hey, CK, any chance you guys can fit four in your tent?” He lowered his voice to a whisper. “Dr. Diggory has some...breathing issues.”

Clark looked towards the former equipment tent. “We can ask the others. It’ll be a tight fit, but they might still say yes.”

Jimmy breathed a sigh of relief. After a moment, he seemed to notice that the two of them were huddled together under the same blanket. “Wait a second...you guys are brilliant!” He tossed the edge of his own blanket over Lois, wriggling in between her and Clark. “This is so much better!”

Lois felt inclined to disagree, though she couldn’t articulate why.

* * *

With everyone awake and as freshened up as possible given the circumstances, it was time to discuss what exactly those circumstances were. The Daily Planet’s three-headed reporter shuffled to the middle of the camp to stand in a circle with Lex and the four scientists.

Dr. Lewis spoke first. “Well, Ed and I went through all the supplies, and it looks like we’re meant to have enough of the basics to last the team for three months in the event of an emergency.”

“Three months?” Clark echoed. At Dr. Lewis’s nod, he frowned. “Even though Dr. Diggory’s reports all said you

could be stranded for up to six?” He narrowed his eyes at Lex, clearly blaming the owner of the lab directly for this oversight.

“We’re going to die,” Jimmy mumbled.

Lois decided to be optimistic. “Maybe there’s a way to stretch things a little,” she suggested.

The scientists all looked at each other, shuffling uncomfortably. Dr. Carroll coughed. “The, uh, three-month reserves were calculated for, um, a team of four people.”

Four sets of eyes all turned to stare at the three journalists and one billionaire.

“Now, we’re not entirely out of options,” Dr. Carroll announced, drawing everyone’s attention again, “I would just like to point out that cannibalism—” Dr. Lewis elbowed him in the side. “—is not something we have to bring up yet,” he finished.

“We’re going to die,” Jimmy repeated.

Clark pulled Lois closer, squeezing Jimmy between the two of them, and Lois wondered if the gesture was meant for her, Jimmy, or both. “What about fishing?” he asked. “There might be some decent fish to catch in Hobb’s Bay.”

Dr. Diggory pushed his glasses further up his nose. “While that may be a possibility, it won’t be as easy as you might expect. For one thing, the sea levels are lower, which puts the water much further away from us.”

“There’s also the matter of fishing equipment,” Dr. Plummer added, raising the hood of her parka as the wind picked up. “We would have to make some, though it could be done.”

“Having a fish fry every day doesn’t sound too bad,” Jimmy chimed in with an awkward chuckle.

Dr. Lewis suddenly went pale, his eyes growing wide. “Fuel!”

The others gasped, and Lois quickly realized why. “Let me guess: three months’ worth of heating and cooking?”

The scientists nodded grimly. “And that’s if we’re frugal with it,” Dr. Lewis added.

The biting wind continued to blow.

Dr. Diggory gulped and turned to the woman beside him. “Jill, did you ever find any indications of where the tree line might begin?”

She shook her head. “If we go south, I suspect we might eventually find the end of the ice sheet, but I can’t be entirely sure. Even if this world doesn’t suddenly have an extra ocean where Gotham should be, we could still be looking at tens or even hundreds of miles.”

“I can scout ahead.”

Lois double-taked, realizing that Clark had spoken. His voice had taken on a serious edge that reminded her of... something. She couldn’t quite put a finger on what.

Clark slipped out of their blankets, letting them fall around Jimmy’s shoulder. “I’ll head south and look for trees. If I find any, I’ll come back with as much firewood as I can carry.”

“Good man,” said Lex.

Dr. Lewis shook his head. “You can’t go off into the wilderness alone. That would be suicide!”

“I’ll go with him,” Lois offered.

Everyone stared at her.

“Lois...” Clark began.

Lex’s eyes flashed. “Lois, don’t be insane! You would die out there!”

She met the philanthropist’s gaze. “If I’m going to die in a frozen wasteland, I’d rather die while out there, trying to help everyone, than while cowering here with a half-eaten piece of Jimmy’s leg!”

Jimmy whimpered.

“You’re not going to die,” Clark promised. “And nobody is going to eat Jimmy.”

“Well, don’t think I’m first,” muttered Dr. Carroll.

“We should all go,” suggested Dr. Plummer. “It makes more sense to try to relocate to a place with resources than it does to stay here.”

Lex’s eyes narrowed. “Ah, are you forgetting something, Dr. Plummer?” He motioned to the pillars at the edge of the camp. “What happens when the rescue team comes and finds this place abandoned?”

Dr. Lewis snorted. “What happens when the rescue team comes and finds us dead?”

“We can leave a message somehow,” Dr. Diggory offered, “maybe set up markers as we travel. But, I agree with Jill. There’s little reason to stay.”

“We’d better get moving, then,” said Dr. Carroll. “We’ll need all the daylight we can get.”

Lex looked like he still wanted to argue, but he said nothing.

The matter was decided. Everyone got their instructions. The council broke and, then, so did the camp.

At least the hard work of packing made Lois feel warmer. She looked up to find Clark staring at her again but quickly ignored him, refocusing on the task at hand.

It was going to be a long six months.

The End

Next in series: [Walking in a Winter Wonderland](#)