

Walking in a Winter Wonderland

By [Mary Potts \(AKA Queen of the Capes\)](#) <queenofthecapes@gmail.com>

Rated: PG

Submitted: September 2025

Summary: After getting stranded on a parallel Earth, Lois and Clark and the others are forced to search for a less barren campsite. (Part 3 of the Ice Age series)

Story Size: 3,300 words (19 kB as text)

A/N: If your favorite part of Lord of the Rings was all the walking, then this story is for you! :D

Previously in this series:

[An Icy Reception](#)

[Welcome to the Tundra](#)

The wind roared over the ice, blowing Lois Lane's hair in every direction and biting the exposed skin on her face and legs as she fought to keep pace without slipping. It didn't quite drown out her muttering as she heaped curses upon "Luthortopia", upon the reindeer that had accidentally stranded them all here, and upon whoever was responsible for making high-heeled shoes a mandatory part of women's fashion. She was fortunate that Dr. Carroll had found a pair of rubber galoshes for her to wear instead; they were slightly too large, but still better than having to hike over slippery ice in a pair of pumps. The LexLab scientists had also created some makeshift cleats for her and her co-workers out of what used to be some obviously expensive laboratory equipment; she still remembered Lex's eye twitching as the items were destroyed for their materials.

The uncharitable thought occurred to Lois that Lex could have warned her to dress for a frozen wilderness, but she shook the notion away. Lex had no way of knowing that the portal to his newly-discovered universe would get broken, stranding them all in an ice-aged Metropolis for what could be months. While he might be the only non-scientist in the group to be wearing warm clothing, he certainly didn't have any other advantages. The billionaire had been forced to squeeze into a small tent with Jimmy and Dr. Diggory last night, eat his share of cautiously divided rations with them that morning, and now he had to help load and pull a makeshift sled with the rest of them as they searched for the nearest woods. Considering the lifestyle he was probably used to, Lois didn't envy him at all.

At least the exercise was helping everyone to keep warm. She looked over at Clark, who was pulling the other cable on the sled she'd been assigned to and seemed to be intently watching everyone. "Are you okay, Smallville?"

He blinked at her in surprise, then smiled. On his unshaven face, it looked more roguish than she was used to. "I'm fine. Just...making sure everyone else is doing alright." His gaze fixed ahead at Jimmy's back, then swept over to the other sled where Dr. Diggory was struggling to help pull a load rather than be one.

"I probably shouldn't have mentioned it."

"What?" Clark looked at her in confusion.

She shrugged without letting go of the rope. "Smallville. You probably miss it. I mean, sure, it's only been about a day, and you were already living in Metropolis anyway, so it's not like you could just drop by any time you wanted..." She paused to shift her grip slightly. "But, still, at least you could have called home. Six months will be a long time to go without any contact whatsoever. Or, I guess, a long time from our end; Dr. Diggory said only a day would pass back home, right? They probably won't even realize you were gone." She mentally reviewed her words, then frowned. "I just made everything worse, didn't I?"

"I'm fine, Lois." Clark smiled at her again, his eyes twinkling with something she couldn't identify and really didn't want to think too much about. Maybe walking in silence would be better for a while.

* * *

They stopped again, mostly for the sake of the wheezing Dr. Diggory, and Lois took the opportunity to rub her hands and blow on them. By some miracle, she hadn't yet gotten frost-bite despite the lack of socks or gloves. Clark was obviously concerned about it, as she'd caught him staring at her hands and feet frequently throughout the trek. Of course, the fact that he didn't have gloves either didn't ever seem to cross his mind, nor would he let her give him back his suit jacket. If he froze to death... Lois shook the thought

away and carefully picked her way over to where Clark was inspecting Jimmy's fingers.

"...okay, but if they start to feel numb or anything..."

Jimmy smiled at him. "Don't worry, CK, I'll speak up."

Despite the cleats, Lois's last footstep gave way on the ice. Before she could even yelp, Clark somehow caught her under the arms and held her steady. "Are you alright?"

Once she had regained her footing, she gave him a shaky smile. "I was actually coming over to ask *you* that."

The tension left his shoulders. "We're both fine, Lois." After a moment, he seemed to realize where his hands now were on her body. He withdrew them, his face turning bright red beneath the burgeoning scruff.

The awkward silence was broken by Jimmy. "Sure could use some lunch, though."

Clark stared as though he had somehow forgotten that Jimmy was even standing there, then shook his head. "Ed and Pete are discussing whether to give out the next set of rations now or wait until our next stop."

Jimmy's forehead scrunched. "Ed and Pete?"

"Dr. Edmund Carroll and Dr. Peter Lewis," Clark clarified. "Pete's the one with the..." He motioned to the back of his neck, indicating Dr. Lewis's mullet.

"Ah." Jimmy shivered. "You know, every time Dr. Carroll looks at me, I swear he's thinking about which seasonings to use!"

Clark patted him on the shoulder. "He isn't; I'm sure of it."

"KETCHUP!" Dr. Carroll suddenly yelled from some distance ahead.

Jimmy turned nearly as white as the surrounding ice. The three looked up to find the other sled already in motion. Lex walked slowly and carefully back to their own, a deep scowl on his face.

"CATCH UP!" Dr. Carroll repeated, releasing one hand to wave at them.

Lois headed back to her rope, one step in front of the other in an effort not to slip again. "I'd think more of a mustard," she teased as they once again took up their positions. "Or maybe horseradish."

Jimmy groaned. Clark smothered a laugh. Lex was silent.

The journey resumed.

* * *

The endless expanse of white still remained unbroken when the scientists finally distributed a few granola bars.

The wind kept whipping her hair in front of her face as she ate, but despite the impediment, the food in her hand was quickly gone. She shoved the wrapper into the pocket of Clark's jacket.

The sun was nearly overhead, and Lois wasn't ready to start thinking about what would happen once it set. Running back to the research base wouldn't be an option, nor would their situation necessarily be much better even if it was. At least there was hope of reaching the end of the ice if they kept heading south...

"ARE YOU KIDDING ME?!"

Lois carefully rose, re-wrapping the thermal blanket around her shoulders, and tottered over to the growing knot of people in front of the other sled. Lex was glaring at Dr. Plummer, red-faced, his heavy breathing causing white puffs of mist to billow around him.

"Mr. Luthor, I can explain—"

"BY ALL MEANS, EXPLAIN!" Lex had Dr. Plummer's compass for some reason, and he waved it in the woman's face. "I had assumed when I hired you, *Doctor*, that you had at least a basic level of competence! Was this wrong, or did you simply have a burning desire to meet SANTA CLAUSE?!"

Lois stepped further towards them, her concern growing. "Lex?"

He held the compass out to her. "Lois, Dear, are you able to read a compass?"

"Of course," she replied, taking it from him and looking down at its face. "The needle always points...north..." She trailed off, studying the little compass carefully and turning it from one side to the other just in case she'd misread.

The needle pointed exactly in the direction they were going.

She frowned at the other woman in confusion. "Dr. Plummer?"

"I—" she began, but Lex cut her off.

"Enough!" The word blasted white in front of him, like smoke from a dragon's mouth. "As your employer, I am assuming command of this little expedition. We are turning around. We will head back to the portal, and I will determine the best way to divide our remaining resources!" He stalked back towards their sled, his glare commanding the others to follow.

Jimmy glanced between Lex and Dr. Plummer, hesitating.

"It's the pole reversal, isn't it?" Clark suddenly asked.

Lex stopped. “The what?” He looked back over his shoulder, eyes narrowed at her partner.

Clark stepped towards him. “Dr. Lewis was telling me about it last night: the north and south poles are backwards here...I think. Do I have that right?” He turned to Dr. Plummer.

Dr. Lewis beamed. “So you *were* listening!”

A small cloud appeared in front of Dr. Plummer as she sighed with relief. “That’s what I was trying to say, Mr. Luthor: based on the data we had gathered before, this planet matches an epoch in Earth’s history when the magnetic poles were in their opposite positions. That compass is pointing south!”

“And even if you don’t trust the compass—” Clark pointed up at the steadily climbing sun. “The sun has been rising on our left all this time. If that’s still east in this universe, then south is in front of us.”

The group turned to stare at Lex. Mist formed and dispersed as he breathed in silently through his nose and exhaled. When he finally spoke, his words were barely audible above the wind. “Lead on.”

Lois handed the compass back to Dr. Plummer. She took it with a nod, and their slow trek resumed.

* * *

Clark stopped abruptly as if something had gotten his attention. In front of him, Jimmy pulled the cable taut and nearly slid as he was snapped to a halt. Lex grumbled in annoyance as the sled started to turn.

Lois managed not to lose her balance as the sled skidded to a sideways stop. “Clark?”

He turned his head, staring off into the distance, then cleared his throat and raised his voice to be heard at the front of the procession. “Hey, everyone? I...have a hunch...that we’ll find some trees if we head a little bit more towards the west.”

Dr. Plummer didn’t even look up from her compass. “Do you have any empirical evidence to support your idea?” she shouted back.

Clark looked torn for some reason. “Reporters’ intuition?”

The claim made Lois snort. “Reporters’ intuition only works for finding stories, not plant-life.”

“Farmers’ intuition, then,” he offered, still sounding nervous.

Lois couldn’t help rolling her eyes a little as she readjusted her footing. “Farmers’ intuition! Really, Clark, now you’re just pulling things out of your—”

“GRASS!” Dr. Lewis suddenly yelled from up ahead.

The rope fell from Lois’s hands and she crept forward, as fast as she could without slipping, to see what Dr. Lewis was pointing at. Sure enough, a few struggling blades of grass poked through the frost just ahead of the other sled. It was a more valuable discovery than oil or gold.

Dr. Carroll let go of his rope and soon squatted down to admire the green tuft. “We’ve got to be near the tree-line! If there’s enough soft ground for grass to root, the woods shouldn’t be much farther away.”

Dr. Lewis pulled a small telescope from his coat and swept it over the horizon. He paused on a spot somewhere off towards the right and adjusted the focus for a bit. “Looks like Mr. Kent is right, too: there’s a tree southwest of here. Looks like a larch.”

“What? Let me see.” Dr. Carroll put his hand out for the telescope and, a moment later, peered through it. He scoffed. “That’s a pine!”

Dr. Lewis shook his head. “Is not. It’s definitely a larch.”

“It’s our new campsite,” Dr. Plummer announced, returning to their sled and grabbing one of its cables. “Come on!”

* * *

The sleds eventually became much more difficult to drag, even as the cleats gained more traction. By the time Dr. Plummer finally called for a halt, Lois had no qualms about leaning back against the pile of cargo. Sure enough, it supported her weight without sliding back more than an inch.

A thin tree stood several yards away, with a few scraggly bushes for company. More were silhouetted against the orange horizon, and Lois had no doubt that they would seem closer in the morning. Right now, though, she had no intentions of taking another step. She slipped one foot out of the large overshoe in order to rub it, wincing at the blisters. “Perry had better give us all a raise after this,” she muttered.

“At least you don’t have frost-bite,” Clark noted, looking at her toes. They started to feel warmer from her rubbing, but ill-fitting galoshes and ruined hosiery were definitely not the best protection from the cold.

Jimmy sandwiched himself between her and Clark, sliding to the ground with his back against the sled. “I ache in muscles I didn’t even know I had!”

A few feet away, Dr. Carroll let out a groan and likewise collapsed against the other sled. “Same here, and I’ve memorized human anatomy! At least we found the woods.”

“Indeed.” Lex’s voice sounded bitter as he let the rope drop from his hands. “We may be exhausted and hungry and have pushed ourselves past all reasonable limits, but let us rejoice because now we are near some bushes!”

“We are near a steady supply of wood,” Dr. Lewis pointed out. “We’ll need it once the propane runs out.”

Dr. Plummer stood beside Dr. Diggory, rubbing his back as he doubled over, puffing and gasping. “And I’ll have you know, those of us who can’t write our names in the snow are very happy to see those bushes. Isn’t that right, Lois?”

A horrifying thought suddenly occurred to Lois, and she stiffened. “Um, Dr. Plummer? If we’re going to be here for...months...” She caught the other woman’s eye. “How are...you and I...fixed for supplies?”

Dr. Plummer’s grimace told her all she needed to know. “One crisis at a time, Ms. Lane. We’ll cross that bridge when we come to it.”

Jimmy frowned up at her in confusion. “What’s the problem?”

Lois mentally debated whether to answer. By the look of it, Dr. Plummer was doing the same.

Clark looked from her to Dr. Plummer with an expression of growing concern. “Is there any way I can help?”

The two women stared at him. Nearby, Lex made a sound that could have been a snort or a wheeze. Dr. Lewis came over and whispered something into Clark’s ear. After a moment, Clark’s eyes grew wide and his face blazed scarlet.

Lex eventually cleared his throat. “Speaking of such...country matters, as Shakespeare referred to it...” A tiny smirk flicked over his face. “I have a proposal about the sleeping arrangements.”

Lois felt inexplicably nervous.

“I understand Olsen is to be changing tents?”

“That’s right,” Jimmy replied without raising his head again. Dr. Carroll and Dr. Lewis mumbled agreement.

“Well then, that leaves the remaining tent populations at two and two,” Lex pointed out. “Given such a situation, it hardly seems fair to keep doctors Diggory and Plummer away from each other, now, does it? I’m sure they would much prefer each other’s company.”

Clark narrowed his eyes at Lex.

“Of course, we needn’t leave Lois without a companion.” He turned to smile at her. “In light of our budding relation-

ship, I certainly wouldn’t be averse to sharing my own accommodations, however meager they may be. What say you, Lois?”

Lois struggled to think of a response. Lex watched her, still smiling, waiting for her answer. Dr. Diggory stared up at Dr. Plummer, his eyes full of longing and undisguised hope. Dr. Plummer looked curiously at her. Clark looked slightly ill.

“Actually, Mr. Luthor,” Jimmy cut in before her thoughts could stop spinning, “I’m only switching out with Dr. Lewis. Their tent won’t fit four people.”

Lex’s smile evaporated. “I see.”

Something like relief washed through Lois, though she couldn’t think why. Sharing living arrangements with Lex would eventually be a natural progression in their relationship if things kept going well, as would...sharing warmth. Her eyes involuntarily flicked to Clark, and his innocently-made offer of assistance with the “monthly problem” played through her mind again.

She shook her head to clear it. It didn’t matter. She was still bunking with Dr. Plummer for the time being. Thinking about anything...else...would be a waste of time, and they had to focus on surviving until the rescue team arrived. Besides which, Dr. Plummer had been right about one thing: now that they’d left the port-a-johns behind, she really wanted to see those bushes.

* * *

There must have been something to Clark’s claim that Kansas farmers were a hardy bunch, because he somehow still had the energy to help put all three tents up. Just having a respite from the wind made a world of difference; Lois didn’t even care that she could still feel how cold the ground was through the floor of the tent. She pulled the thermal blanket tighter around herself and scooted closer to Dr. Plummer and the small heater.

“We can only run it for a few more minutes,” the woman warned.

Lois nodded absently, already half dozing. Her muscles were still screaming at her, and she would probably be already sleeping like a rock by the time Dr. Plummer switched it off.

Dr. Plummer suddenly chuckled.

“What?” Lois cracked open an eye that she hadn’t even realized had fallen shut.

Dr. Plummer tugged at the edge of the sleeping bag that had been left unzipped to serve as another blanket for two rather than just a bed for one. “Just thinking about Mr. Kent’s offer to help with the menstrual situation.” The

corners of her mouth twitched. “I mean, he’s not really my type, but it would be an effective solution!” She let out a rich, full laugh.

Lois started to join her, then stopped as something the woman said snagged in her brain. “Wait, what do you mean he’s not your type? Clark’s gorgeous!”

Dr. Plummer blinked at her in surprise.

She flushed. “I mean...I wouldn’t date him, of course, but I do have eyes!”

“So he’s your type, then?” Dr. Plummer folded her arms behind her head and lay back.

Lois sputtered. “Of course not! I mean...” Her face started burning. Obviously, the heater was set too high. “There’s more to consider than just looks, of course,” she decided. “A guy has to be smart, and caring...and...and...” Her fingers drifted to the lapel of the jacket Clark had given her when they first arrived, the one he’d still refused to take back. The granola wrapper still crinkled in the pocket, from that meal-break-turned-standoff where Clark had used the position of the sun to help vindicate Dr. Plummer’s course. “My type is Superman!” she blurted out. “Yes, Superman’s my type, so...” she looked over at Dr. Plummer, only to find that the woman was sound asleep.

She stared at the heater, still burning away. It would be so easy to just turn in and let it warm them all through the night. They’d found the trees, so what was one night’s worth of propane when they had all that firewood? And as tired as everyone was, no one would question that she’d simply fallen asleep without realizing...

With a sigh, she reached over and shut off the heat. The cold seeped into the tent immediately, as though the warmth had never been, and Lois forced herself to lie back and shut her eyes. “And they’re both a bad influence on me,” she muttered, though it was drowned out by the roaring wind.

The End

Next In Series: [Into the Woods](#)