

# FOLC4EVERNADAY PRODUCTIONS



**Description:** In the second part of the "What the Hey" trilogy series. Clark is left powerless after his attack as an old enemy makes his way into Metropolis and begins to run for president. Will Lois and Clark be able to stop him in time? (Part 2 of 3)

**PG-13**

## ***Doe For President?***

Folc4evernaday (folc4evernaday@gmail.com) | Rated: PG-13

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*Two Months Later...*

Lois fingered her husband's hand gingerly as she leaned back against the thin sheet that covered the exam table. This was it. In just a few minutes they were going to see their beautiful child once more on the ultrasound and hear his or her heartbeat...and hopefully find out if it was a boy or girl. So much had happened over the last few months.

Clark was still struggling to regain his powers. He'd never gone so long without being at one hundred percent. Superman had been missing for two months and people were beginning to talk. After the incident with Randy Goode and the rumors being thrown around about her and Superman's 'affair' she had kept the announcement of their little Lane Kent's existence under wraps with just family and friends.

They still hadn't told her parents yet. Her parents had been traveling and would be coming back in town this weekend. Hopefully she'd be able to tell them the baby's gender when they revealed the pregnancy to them. It had been a hard few months...

She still was dealing with the aftermath of the accusations from a lot of the paparazzi regarding her relationship with Superman. Clark had been struggling with it as much as she had. Despite the press conference a few months ago there were some that just wanted to believe the worst...

Clark blamed himself. If he was still able to BE Superman he'd have been able to nip everything in the bud, but now he couldn't... He could barely fly a few inches off the ground or light a candle... He said he would be okay... That being Clark Kent, her husband and father to their child was all he needed, but she knew it was killing him not being able to do what he was born to do.

"Okay, let's see if baby wants to cooperate today," the technician teased as she squeezed the warm gel on her small bump and rolled the ultrasound wand over her bump.

"This is it. Sure you don't want to place bets..." Clark whispered, teasing her as he kissed her cheek.

"Healthy baby," she said quietly.

"Healthy baby," he repeated.

The sound of their child's heartbeat filled the room. Lois took a deep breath, sighing heavily as she tightened her grasp on Clark's hand. She never thought she could love someone so much without meeting them. This was her and Clark's child squirming around on the screen and from the looks of it ...trying to wave at them. "Honey, look..."



“Looks like someone is waving ‘hi’ to mom and dad,” the technician grinned back at them. She turned to look back at the screen, taking some pictures as Lois and Clark watched in anticipation. “You look to be right at twenty weeks...”

Lois smiled back at Clark. It had taken both her and Clark by surprise when they’d learned she was already twelve weeks along when she’d had her first appointment after the attack from Randy Goode. It definitely added to the apprehension she’d felt about impending motherhood but there was also something so amazing about seeing their child for the first time... a child she and Clark had created.

“...everything looks healthy. Do you want to know the gender?”

“Yes!” Lois and Clark said in unison, grinning at each other a moment before turning back to the screen.

The technician smiled, “Well, let’s see here...”

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Lois gazed happily at the ultrasound picture in her hand as they exited the office. “A boy...”

“I know,” Clark whispered in amazement, placing his hands on each side of the small bump where their unborn child was growing.

“A little boy...” she grinned back at him, happily.

“Our son,” he kissed her softly.

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Later that day, Lois stared at the walls of the courtroom shakily. It had taken them two months to get here. There were so many things she’d rather be doing than sitting in this courtroom.

“How does the defendant plead?” The judge asked.

“Guilty, your honor.”

Lois watched in disbelief as the woman she and Clark had come to know as Samantha Roberts entered her plea for attempted murder. Samantha had made both her and Clark’s lives a living hell two months earlier. She had worked with Randy Goode in trying to slander Superman’s reputation by fabricating a smear campaign accusing Lois of having an affair with Superman.

The desperation with which Randy Goode and Samantha had pursued the campaign was what had landed them here in this courtroom today. Samantha had pulled a gun on both her and Clark and attempted to kill a potential witness against her. Jimmy had luckily intervened, stopping the



situation from escalating out of control and helping to distract everyone so Clark's secret was still safe.

"Do you think he'll decide on the verdict now?" Jimmy whispered in her ear.

Lois shrugged, looking back at her young friend. She was no wiser to what the judge's decision would be than he was.

"Samantha Roberts, do you understand that by pleading guilty you are waiving your right to a speedy trial by a jury of your peers?"

"Yes, your honor," Samantha nodded.

The judge glanced at the file in front of him, then looked back up. "I'm ready to give my ruling."

Lois looked at Jimmy with a half smile. 'That was fast,' she mouthed.

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Dr. Klein placed ten paper clips in various positions on the counter of his lab. After assuring himself that the paper clips were secure, he nodded at Superman. "Melt the paperclips." He watched in anticipation, but nothing happened. "Uh, I meant you can start now."

"I am starting," Clark replied through gritted teeth.

"Oh," Dr. Klein sighed, realizing Superman was attempting to melt the paperclips but didn't appear to be having any effect on any of the paperclips.

"Forget it," Superman shook his head, pacing around the lab. "It's useless. They're never coming back."

"Superman, don't get frustrated. You've never had this kind of exposure to Kryptonite before. It's going to take some time."

"How much time?" he asked. "Everyone is asking questions! I've been out of commission now for almost two months!"

"I don't know," Dr. Klein shrugged his shoulders. "Are you able to do anything right now?"

"I can do this," he said, floating about an inch off the ground. "Pretty pathetic, huh?"

"No, no," Dr. Klein soothed. "It's a start."

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A woman that everyone had come to know as Angela Cross made her way through the smoke-filled bar, looking for her partner, Mr. Smith. They were supposed to meet regarding their plan to destroy the Daily Planet's famous reporting duo, Lois Lane, and Clark Kent. Unfortunately, it seemed Mr. Smith was nowhere to be found. "Ms. Cross?" An unfamiliar voice called out from behind her.

She turned around looking for whoever had called her name. "Yes?"

A tall man with curly brown hair and a crisp blue suit approached her with his hand extended towards her. "Pleased to meet you, I'm Leslie Luckabee."

She scrunched her nose at him, uncertain who he was and how he had recognized her. "Who are you?"

"I'm sorry," Leslie apologized. "I'm Mr. Smith's partner." He motioned to the table behind him, "Shall we?"

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"Probation?! Time served at Shady Brook?" Lois shrieked as she stomped down the stairs of the courthouse. "Are you kidding me?"

"The judge said—" Jimmy began.

"I know what the judge said!" she snapped. "Of all the pea-brained, ignorant, feeble-minded..." she muttered. "The woman almost killed us, and they let her off with probation?"

"Hey, she had to go to Shady Brook," Jimmy chipped in. "That's something. She's obviously disturbed."

"Yeah, right, so what happens when they discharge her?" Lois asked.

"I..."

"Exactly," Lois said, "She gets off scott-free."

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Echoes of maniacal laughter could be heard through the halls of the Metropolis Sanitarium. Some laughed with the voices while others were frightened. Samantha scanned the hallway she was led down. Her attorney had urged her to take the insanity plea and serve her sentence in the Metropolis Sanitarium rather than the Penitentiary. He had promised she'd be released whenever the doctors found her mentally fit to rejoin society.

Another echo of laughter filled the hall. She just wasn't sure if she could remain sane in a place like this.



The guard behind her laughed, “You think this is bad? You should see Arkham in Gotham City.”

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Across the hall, Tempus yawned in boredom as he listened to the laughter-filled halls. “Doesn’t this bother you?” his cellmate asked, agitated.

“He’ll be out in a few minutes,” Tempus remarked dryly.

“How do you know?” His cellmate then rolled his eyes and snapped sarcastically, “Oh, I forgot. You’re from the future.”

“Not ‘from’...I’m a part of the future. Your present is my history. I always loved history...I’m going to miss it when I’m gone.”

“Gone?”

“Yes, I have to return to my time to face the penalty for my crimes.”

“Like robbing that bank?”

“That, and kidnapping, attempted murder... I tried to kill Superman as a baby, you know?” He stood up, ignoring the man’s doubtful look, and glanced at the wall of his cell. “The Peacekeeper should be showing up any moment now.”

“If this is all true, then why are you telling me?”

“Because you are, in a word, Looney Tunes,” Tempus replied with a smile.

“Looney Tunes is two words,” the man said.

“Not if you say it fast.”

“How do you know this peacekeeper guy is going to show up?”

A window appeared in the cell, revealing a man in his early 60s dressed in a dark red robe. He had white hair, pale skin, and piercing blue eyes. “Citizen Tempus, I am Andrus, peacekeeper of the future Utopia. I have a warrant for your extradition. I will read from the list of charges.”

“I don’t know. How did I know he was going to show?” Tempus grinned at his stunned cellmate and struck him in the head, causing him to fall to the ground in pain.

“I see you haven’t changed your ways, Tempus,” Andrus reprimanded.



“I know. I know. Crimes against humanity, blatant disregard for human life, blah, blah, blah...” A sinister look came over his face. “Can we just go?”

“I leave in your place this replica.” Andrus pressed a button on a small silver device, and another Tempus appeared on the bed. “This replica will keep the people of this time period from asking too many questions.” Andrus stepped into the time window with Tempus and pressed a button on the device once more.

Tempus looked over Andrus’ shoulder and pointed. “What’s that?”

Andrus, turning back to look at Tempus asked, “What’s what?”

Tempus hit Andrus upside the head, and the elderly man fell inside the time window as the window closed.

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Angela Cross laughed “You really think purchasing the Daily Planet will work? It’s been attempted before. Stern won’t sell to ANYONE.”

Leslie smiled, taking a puff of his cigar as he leaned back in his chair. “Well, he hasn’t received an offer from me.”

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Clark stood in an empty room, taking in his surroundings. He was alone and uncertain of where he was. A light glowed in the middle of the room, revealing a large statue of a man’s fist sat on display. He was alone.

A brilliant flash of white light enveloped the room, and Lois was there with him. “Lois?”

She opened her mouth to speak , but nothing came out. He looked at her in concern. Something was wrong. She began to drift away. He ran towards her but was unable to reach her. “Lois! No!”

She continued to drift away; just out of reach. An invisible force kept him from her, from his family. “No! Lois!” A mysterious man appeared in the shadows behind her and pulled her through a window that had appeared, taking her from him.

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“Clark!” Lois shook his shoulder, trying to wake him. “It’s a dream,” she breathed a sigh of relief when she saw his eyes shoot open.

“Lois?”



“I’m right here.” She reassured him, placing a hand on his bare chest. His breathing was heavy; beads of sweat poured down his back. He slowly became more alert of his surroundings, reassured that she was there with him. He breathed a sigh of relief as he sank back against the headboard, pulling her with him. He held her close, placing a kiss against her temple.

Nightmares. They’d been haunting him ever since the ordeal with Randy Goode. He would awaken, calling her name—just as he had tonight. He never seemed to recall the details of the dreams.

“Lois...” he rasped out in between shallow breaths.

“I’m right here.” She repeated. His body relaxed against her touch, and she rested her head against his chest, holding him close. “Clark—”

“I don’t know,” he said solemnly before she could finish her question. “I can’t remember.”

“It’s okay.”

“No, it’s not,” he muttered. He then turned his attention towards her and looked at her in concern. “Are you okay? I didn’t...?”

“No.” She reassured him. “I’m fine; the baby’s fine. You just startled me,” she reached her hand up to caress his cheek, reassuring him that she was indeed fine.

He tilted her chin with his hand to look at her. She smiled weakly when she saw the love and concern in his eyes. “I don’t know what I would do if anything happened and...” He wrapped his arms securely around her, pulling her towards him.

She guided his hand to the small bump on her abdomen where their child was growing. She smiled up at him. “It was just a dream.” She leaned up to kiss him, caressing the sides of his face as she pulled him into a deeper embrace.

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Franklin Stern sat in his office, looking over the final legalities of the contract before him. “So, you want to buy the Daily Planet, Mister—?”

“Luckabee. Leslie Luckabee.” The man held out his hand to Franklin. “I would very much like to purchase the Daily Planet. Just name your price.”

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Tempus exited a time window, a rolled-up poster in hand. He walked down the streets of Suicide Slum. On a nearby telephone pole, a sign advocating “Garner for President” in large letters was posted in large letters with a picture of President Garner in the middle. Tempus eyed the poster



critically then unfolded the poster in his hand and placed it over Garner's poster. The new poster read, "John Doe for President."

He walked away with a smile, leaving a homeless man to stare on in astonishment.

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The newsroom was filled with chaos as reporters scurried about, chasing leads and trying to make deadlines. Perry White smiled as he walked through the bullpen, content that the Daily Planet would be making the deadline for the evening edition. He walked over to Lois and Clark and motioned for them to follow him.

They quietly followed Perry into his office. "What's up, Chief?" Clark asked.

"Security guard." Perry handed them a file.

"Security guard?" Lois asked.

"Jumped to his death about twenty minutes ago."

"What?"

Clark read through the information in the file. "Malcolm Garrett. Age thirty-five. Worked at the Metropolis Communication Towers' Satellite Relay Station for fifteen years as head of security."

Perry nodded. A long pause fell between the trio, and he looked at them expectantly. "Well? What are you still doing here? Page one news story! Get!"

"Right," Lois nodded, grabbing Clark's arm as they headed out. "Well, I guess we can get caught up on the run."

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The day dragged on with very little evidence pointing to anything but suicide in Garrett's death. The police had closed the case, but Lois was convinced there was more to it than that. Officer Garrett had made plans with friends for the next week; not the actions of a suicidal man. Clark was consumed with his guilt over Officer Garrett's death. He was convinced he was to blame for not hearing the cries for help.

"Clark, it is not your fault. You couldn't hear the cries for help. There's nothing you could have done."

"Lois, I still feel guilty. I was given these powers for a reason: to help. Now, I can't even do that anymore. What if my powers never return? I'll be stuck in this limbo forever."

"Clark..." She gently stroked his cheek and pulled him into an embrace.



He kissed her forehead lightly and pulled her on his lap. “You can’t blame yourself. You nearly died. My God, I’m counting my blessings that you didn’t.” She took his hand and placed his hand on her abdomen. “You are alive, and our baby is healthy. Don’t push so hard. I know this has to be frustrating.”

“Lois...” She knew he was going to argue with her further. A knock at the door interrupted whatever argument was on his mind.

“I wonder who that is.” Lois got up to answer the door with Clark right behind her. “Mother!” Lois exclaimed, surprised to see her mother on the other side of the door.

“Oh, hi, baby!” Ellen pushed her way past Lois and Clark, entering the townhome with two grocery bags in her arms. “I know you two must have gone through so much these past few months. I just got into town and figured I’d check on you. I still cannot believe that awful woman. You must have been mortified to find out someone was watching you while you were...oh, my, I would be devastated.”

“We’re fine, Mother, really.” Lois said, trying to steer the conversation elsewhere. Discussing the incidents from a few months ago was not what she wanted to do.

“Nonsense. Now, I thought I’d cook up some ....”

“Uh, how about if we just order in? You just got back into town, and I really don’t want you overworking yourself, Mother.” Lois really didn’t want her mother to cook for them. She loved her mother, but Ellen’s cooking was worse than her own.

“But—”

“No ‘buts.’ I insist,” Clark replied, moving Ellen Lane out of the kitchen.

“So, where’s daddy?” Lois asked, trying to distract Ellen from her cooking project while Clark called for take-out.

“Oh, working. We just got back yesterday and he got a new partner: Miza? Or, was it Mesha? I can’t remember. Anyway, he’s working on some project, ‘Breasts in a Bottle’...No, I’m not making this up.” Ellen continued to ramble on.

“Uh-huh.”

“They’ll be here in twenty minutes,” Clark joined the conversation, standing next to Lois.

“Well, that’s too bad, Mother. We were actually wanting to have you and Daddy over....” Lois glanced at Clark with a smile, “...and share some news.”

“Really? Why? What’s wrong?” Ellen asked panicked.



“Nothing’s wrong, Mother.”

“We had some news that we wanted to share with you both,” Clark replied.

“I guess we’ll have to tell you both separately,” Lois shrugged her shoulders. “How do I say this? When I was in the hospital a few weeks back the doctors did some tests, and we found out...”

“I...I...I...I...Oh, God, it’s not cancer is it...You’re Aunt Liza had that...Oh, no, no, no....” Ellen rubbed her temples, trying to ease the anxiety that was building in her head.

“No, no, nothing like that,” Lois reassured her. “You remember when I fainted a few months ago?”

“Yes. You were arguing with that awful Barry Dunning. That man has no shame! The way he kept hounding you...I admire you for not knocking him out, Clark. Okay, I’m sorry. I’m interrupting again. You were saying?”

“Right. Lois passed out, and I took her to the hospital. The doctors ran some tests to find out why she had passed out.”

“What was it?”

“Well, they said I was dehydrated....” Lois explained.

“Lois, I’ve told you a hundred times you’ve got to slow down...” Ellen chastised.

“I passed out from the dehydration and all the stress I was under.”

“Well, I can imagine. Having your marriage dissected by the media can be stressful for anyone. I know when your father and I split up, the people at the hospital were constantly gossiping about his affairs and my drinking. It was horrible!” Ellen shook her head at the bitter memory.

“Anyway, so they ran a battery of tests on you and...?”

“And the tests came back with some interesting results,” Lois said, savoring the suspense for just a moment longer.

“Well?” Ellen pressed impatiently.

“Lois is pregnant.” Clark beamed.

“Pregnant?” Ellen gasped, covering her mouth, “You mean I’m going to be a...?” She looked at Lois and Clark for confirmation. When they nodded, she whispered inaudibly to herself, closing her eyes to savor the moment. “A grandmother? Really?” She got up from the couch and



embraced both Lois and Clark, tears of joy streaming down her face. “Oh, I’m so happy for you two! We have got to get started. We have to plan the nursery and the baby shower and...”

“Mother, slow down,” Lois said, feigning patience.

“Lois, you only have nine months to plan,” Ellen countered.

“Well, actually its closer to four...” Clark interjected.

Lois nodded, “The OB said I’m about twenty weeks now based on the last ultrasound.”

“Four?” Ellen repeated. “Lo-is! You waited until you were TWENTY weeks to tell me???”

“If it makes you feel any better I was twelve weeks when I found out,” Lois interjected. “I’m sorry. You and Daddy have been out of town the last few months... You didn’t exactly leave any good contact information...”

“Well, we wanted to leave WORK here in Metropolis,” Ellen explained. “So if memory serves me right you know what the baby is at twenty weeks...”

Clark grinned broadly, tightening his arms around her waist. They hadn’t told anyone else yet. He was ready to burst. Lois grinned back at him, sharing his enthusiasm. There was no way she could wait. “Yes, we are having a little boy...”

Ellen placed two tentative hands on the small bump below Clark’s hands. “A boy?” Lois nodded enthusiastically. She wrapped her arms around the both of them, holding them close.

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The streets of Metropolis were dimly lit by the occasional street light. Tempus checked his watch and smiled to himself. He pulled out what looked like an ordinary tape recorder from his jacket pocket and spoke into the microphone:” Attention, people of Metropolis. John Doe is your new best friend. He can do no wrong. He is making changes for a better and newer Metropolis. Oh, yeah, and John Doe is a darn nice guy.” He returned the device to his coat pocket and continued along his way.

Across Metropolis, the echo of Tempus’s voice could be heard through the phone lines....

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“It’s a pleasure doing business with you, Mr. Stern.” Leslie Luckabee shook hands with the elderly man, “I assure you the Daily Planet will be in good hands.”

“It better be. If I catch wind that you try any funny business with them, I’ll have all my investors on you like flies on a corpse. When I bought the Daily Planet, Lex Luthor had already destroyed it both financially and... Well, he blew the whole place to hell. I’ve put a lot of long hours and hard work into this place. I couldn’t have done it without the people that run this place. Perry



White, the active Editor-in-Chief is instrumental in this paper running the way it should. I hope to see that it remains a top seller at the newsstands.”

“I wouldn’t have it any other way, Mr. Stern.”

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The next day, the newsroom was in a chaotic state when Lois and Clark entered. “Lois, Clark! I need you on this! Page one!” Perry hollered across the newsroom.

“On what?” Lois asked, dropping her things at her desk and heading towards Perry’s office, Clark a few steps behind her.

“John Doe.”

“Who?” Lois and Clark asked in unison.

“Who? He’s running for president! He’s been giving President Garner a run for his money ever since the voting booths opened up this morning.”

“What? How is that even possible?” Clark asked.

“That’s what you two are going to find out.” Perry shrugged.

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Lois and Clark stood outside the Metropolis Diamond Hotel, waiting to get a glimpse of the mysterious John Doe. “This is kind of exciting,” Lois commented.

“What is?” Clark asked, slightly distracted.

“John Doe. I’ve never seen anyone shoot up in the polls this way. It’s exciting to see a candidate whose message is crossing overall barriers and speaking to the people.”

Clark just stared at her in shock, “What? Lois, what are you talking about? What message?”

“Well, you know?”

“Uh, no, I don’t. An hour ago neither you nor I had even heard of this guy, and now you’re suddenly so taken in by this ‘John Doe’. Last night nobody had even heard of him and suddenly everyone’s voting for him.

What is going on here?”

“I don’t know, Clark; I just think John Doe is a darn nice guy.”

“Darn nice guy? Lois, you’ve never even met the guy.”



Commotion began to build around the entrance to the hotel as reporters and photographers began shooting out questions and taking pictures.

Lois pushed her way through, trying to get a look. “Oh, look, it’s...” Her face fell when she saw the face of the man everyone had been fussing over.

“Tempus,” Clark’s eyes narrowed, watching the man enter a limo and drive away.

Lois let out a shaky breath. “Oh my God! How? When did he get out?”

Clark shook his head. “I don’t know, but we’re going to find out.”

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“Jimmy, I need you to find out everything we’ve got on Tempus,” Lois called Jimmy to her desk.

“You got it,” Jimmy said. “Oh, I almost forgot. This just came for you.” He handed Lois an envelope.

Lois took the envelope curiously, “Thanks.”

“What is it?” Clark asked.

“President Garner invited us to sit with him and his party to watch the returns come in election night,” Lois replied, reading the letter.

“Impressive,” Jimmy commented. “You know, I’ve always been a big supporter of President Garner.”

“Really?” Clark asked suspiciously.

“Yeah,” Jimmy replied, trying to look sincere.

“His daughter’s pretty cute isn’t she?” Lois asked, reading over the invitation.

“Total babe,” Jimmy sighed.

“Would you like us to see if we can get you invited to the after-party?” Clark asked.

“Seriously? Wait a minute; does this mean I have to vote?” Jimmy asked.

Lois smacked him on the forehead with a file and pointed at his desk. “Research. Tempus. Go.”

“Right.” Jimmy headed to his desk and left them to their own investigation of Tempus.



“So, let’s do a little digging. We know Tempus went to prison for that botched bank robbery attempt last year,” Clark said, pulling up a chair at Lois’ desk.

“Yeah, but he was taken to Metropolis Sanitarium for the Criminally Insane after his trial. Ravings about being from the future didn’t sit well with the legal system.”

“Well, I guess we owe them a visit,” Clark said, picking up the phone.

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Across town, the homeless man who had witnessed Tempus’s entrance into Metropolis a day before stood on the same street corner. “John Doe is the devil! The devil is here! He walks among us! I saw him myself. He entered through a porthole from hell! Why won’t you listen to me??”

Passersby ignored his ravings, leaving him alone on the streets once more.

The homeless man watched as another time window appeared in the same spot where Tempus had appeared only a day before, with yet another man appearing out of thin air. The man pocketed a small device and headed towards the Daily Planet, leaving the homeless man to stare at the recently vacated space in shock.

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Lois and Clark sat in Dr. Dussell’s office, listening to the doctor’s synopsis on Tempus, “Yes. Tempus. Fascinating case. Sociopath. He thinks he’s from the future. He was arrested for bank robbery and brought here ranting about Superman. Claims the Man of Steel has a secret identity... and that he knows what it is—” Dr. Dussell laughed.

Lois and Clark looked at one another hesitantly. “Uh, he didn’t happen to get specific?” Lois asked.

“No. He’ll say the most outrageous things, but that is the one piece of information he refuses to divulge. Don’t ask me why. The mind of the paranoid delusional is a complex thing indeed.”

“When did you first notice he was missing?” Clark asked.

“Missing? He’s not missing.”

“He’s not?” Lois asked.

“No. He’s here,” Dr. Dussell responded, gesturing to Tempus’s cell.

“He’s here?” Lois asked.



“Yes. As a matter of fact, we just finished a session about an hour ago. I have great hope. He’s finally responding to therapy.”

Lois and Clark stared at one another when they came face to face with an expressionless Tempus.

Dr. Dussell introduced them. “Tempus, this is...”

Tempus continued for the doctor, “Lois Lane and Clark Kent. Star reporters for The Daily Planet.”

Clark stared at Tempus for a moment, looking for any signs of evil in the man. Tempus continued to stare at Clark with no expression.

“Tempus, do you know why you’re here?” Clark asked.

“I do. Dr. Dussell explained it to me. I’m deeply disturbed. I’ve lost my identity. The result of some traumatic event in my life. I’ve fashioned a romantic alter ego for myself. Assuming this role allows me to avoid dealing with painful childhood issues,” Tempus responded in a monotone.

Lois and Clark stared at one another. They both sensed something was off with Tempus.

“And what about Superman?” Clark countered.

“Superman? Clearly, I’ve projected my own identity issues onto Superman. I’m learning that now.” Tempus continued to stare blankly at Clark. Clark narrowed his eyes; something wasn’t right here.

At that moment, orderlies carried an inmate into the cell next to Tempus. The inmate was ranting, “No! Please! Put me in solitary! Put me anywhere! Just don’t make me go back in there! You have to listen to me! They went out the window! I saw them!”

Dr. Dussell sighed, “You win some. You lose some.”

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“What do you think?” Lois asked as they walked to the Jeep. “Maybe John Doe is a present-day incarnation of Tempus? I mean, Tempus is a time traveler,” Lois reasoned.

“Let’s forget John Doe for a moment,” Clark replied. “Whoever was in that cell was not Tempus.”

“How can you be so sure?” Lois asked.

“He didn’t have it in the eyes.”



“Have what?”

“Evil.”

“So that wasn’t Tempus, but you’re sure John Doe is?” Lois asked skeptically.

“Just put me in a room with him. I’ll know.” Clark responded. They climbed into the Jeep and headed back to the Daily Planet.

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“No, no, no!” Mr. Smith roared, pounding his fists against the wooden desk in front of him in fury.

“Technical difficulties?” Leslie mused.

“I don’t need any side comments from the peanut gallery,” Smith snapped. “If Vixen is going to succeed I must make sure... No!” He pounded his fists once more.

“Need some help?” Leslie offered.

“Stick to your strengths,” Smith sneered.

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Lois and Clark rode in silence on their way to interview John Doe. Both Lois and Clark were concerned with Clark’s lack of super powers. Lois cautiously stole a glimpse at him. He looked tired. She wasn’t used to seeing him like this. “So, how are you feeling?” Lois asked.

“I don’t know. Some powers seem to have come back completely, like the vision, and invulnerability, while others still are coming and going. The heat vision is still not up to par,” Clark replied.

“Maybe we should give Dr. Klein some more information about how you got like this...” Lois prompted. “Whatever he’s doing obviously isn’t working...and maybe if he had all the facts....”.

Clark shook his head adamantly, “No. I don’t want to put him in any more danger than I have to. Telling him.... It’s too dangerous.”

“I know, but Clark, it’s been almost two months...” Lois argued.

“I know.” He sighed. “My powers are coming back, Lois. It’s just going to take some time.”

“If you say so,” Lois sighed. “All right. We’re here.” She parked the Jeep in front of the Metropolis Diamond Hotel.



“Let’s go.”

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Tempus sat in his hotel suite reviewing the voting polls with his aide, Randolph. “Randolf! I’m rising in the polls everywhere except these pocket communities. Why is that?”

Randolf looked at the read-out Tempus was pointing to. “Well, those would be Amish communities, sir.”

“So? Have you done your get-out-the-vote phone drive?” Tempus asked, confused as to why his message hadn’t affected everyone.

“Sir ... The Amish don’t have telephones,” Randolph replied.

“No telephones?”

“No, sir. Sir, there are reporters outside...”

“Of course there are, Randolph.”

“Yes, sir... but there are a couple of particular reporters.”

“Lane and Kent?” Tempus asked.

Randolf nodded. “You said you wanted to know if they showed up.”

Tempus smiled broadly. “Yes. Good. Bring them in.”

Randolf nodded, leaving to escort Lois and Clark in. Tempus pulled out the mind-control device he had been using and spoke into the microphone. “The Amish are not your friends.

They are anti-John Doe. Boycott their quilts. They’re overpriced, and the workmanship is shoddy anyway. Oh, and John Doe is a darn nice guy...”

Randolf approached Tempus with Lois and Clark behind him. “Sir?”

Tempus rose to greet Lois and Clark, extending his hand to Clark. “Welcome, I’m John Doe.” Tempus noticed the disdain in both Lois and Clark’s expressions. Sensing he would not receive a handshake from either one of them, he let his arm fall and gestured for them to take a seat in the living area of the suite. “You won’t mind if my aide sits in?” He leaned back in his chair.

Lois and Clark sat in the love seat across from him, eyeing Tempus critically. “We were a bit surprised when you agreed to see us, Mr. Doe,” Lois began.



Tempus smiled broadly, feigning surprise. “Oh? And why’s that?”

Lois looked at Clark for help, but he was too busy sizing Tempus up. “Well, there has been a complete media blackout from your campaign. This is actually the first interview you’ve given, isn’t it?”

“Well, I’ve just been waiting for the right journalist—someone who wouldn’t misquote or misrepresent me. I’ve read your work and I think we stand for the same things.”

Lois laughed lightly. “Yes. What is it you do stand for, exactly?”

Tempus continued to be evasive. “Oh, you know. The usual.”

“Uh-huh... maybe you could give us a little background, Mr. Doe. Where are you from? Have you ever held public office before? We’ve looked, and we can’t seem to find anything.” Lois said.

“No skeletons in the closet, you mean?” Tempus asked.

“No closet.”

Tempus laughed, “I’ve kept a low profile.”

“Oh? Well, you must be amazed at your sudden surge in popularity given that nobody knows a thing about you,” Lois countered, going in for the kill.

“Ain’t America great? Just tell your readers that when John Doe becomes complete and absolute democratically elected public servant... their lives will vastly improve.”

Clark leaned forward. “Mr. Doe, has anyone ever told you that you bear a striking resemblance to... someone else?”

Tempus’s tone changed immediately. An aura of evil could be felt around Tempus as he stared back at Clark. “Just who else would I look like, Mr. Kent?”

Clark leaned closer, his tone cold and challenging, “A nihilistic sociopath from the future who’ll stop at nothing to quench his bitter thirst for power.”

Lois laughed lightly, trying to cover. “For example.”

Tempus seemed amused at the accusation. Clark remained seated, leaning towards Tempus with no signs of laughter or humor on his face. Tempus sized Clark up, then leaned forward as well. “It is said that we all have a twin somewhere in the world, Mr. Kent. Why without those glasses, Mr. Kent, I’d say you look exactly like... Well, duh. I’m sure you get my meaning.” The threat was evident.



Clark stared Tempus down, refusing to back down. “Oh, yeah. I get your meaning.” Lois felt a chill down her spine as she watched the exchange between Tempus and Clark. Any doubts she may have had about John Doe being Tempus had now been squashed.

Tempus stood up from his chair. “Good. Then we’re clear. Now if you’ll excuse me, I have babies to kiss.”

Lois and Clark allowed themselves to be escorted out of the suite, neither one of them saying a word until they were safely inside the Jeep. “My God, Clark ... It is him. I mean, he practically came right out and admitted it.”

Clark shook his head in disgust. “Not ‘practically’, Lois, that’s exactly what he did. We have to figure out how he’s doing this... how he’s swaying public opinion.”

Lois shook her head adamantly. “He’s not just swaying public opinion, Clark. He is getting into people’s heads. I know two things for sure: Tempus is evil and has to be stopped, and John Doe is a darn nice guy.”

Clark looked at her in shock. “What? You still believe that?”

“No, but it’s in my head. He put it in my head. Just like he’s put it into everyone else’s head. The difference is that I know who Tempus is and what he’s capable of.”

Clark nodded grimly. “And he knows who I am.”

Lois sighed, “He must’ve known you wouldn’t be affected. That’s why he allowed us to speak to him. It was a warning.”

Clark shook his head. “No; it was a challenge.”

“What are we going to do?”

“Stop him.”

\*\*\*

Lois and Clark sat on the couch later that night, sifting through book after book, hoping to discover what Tempus was using to control the minds of everyone around them. “I don’t know what exactly we are looking for here,” Lois muttered, throwing another book to the floor.

“Anything that could explain the mind-control Tempus seems to have used on everyone. That’s the only thing that could explain the way the country’s suddenly become so taken with John Doe,” Clark said.

“This is really getting dangerous, Clark. All these riots—”



“I know. I really hate that I wasn’t able to stop any of this. I know if I had been at full capacity, I would have been able to save some of those people.” Clark sighed. “I don’t know how much longer we’re going to be able to keep avoiding questions about Superman’s absence.”

Lois leaned her head on his shoulder. “I still think it’s rather suspicious that people would start attacking those Amish communities. They’ve been there for years without any problems.”

“They’re different. It’s hard being different—not fitting in. When people don’t understand you, they try to get rid of you by any means necessary. I feared being found out for years. Before I created Superman, I was constantly moving around.”

Lois leaned over to give him a peck on the cheek. “Well, I’m glad you decided to stick around when you got to Metropolis.”

He smiled back at her. “You gave me something to stick around for.” He cupped her cheek. “Superman was created so I could stick around you.”

Lois laughed, “Now I know you’re full of it.”

“That hurts,” he said, with a hurt puppy dog look.

“Poor baby,” she cooed, “Seriously, though, this whole thing reeks. Those people had been there for years, and suddenly people decide out of the blue to burn their homes down. It doesn’t make any sense.”

Clark threw the final book to the ground and sighed. “I don’t know, but I’m starting to see double. We can work on this tomorrow.”

“Yeah, I think we’ve had enough shop talk for the night.” She laughed when Clark pulled her onto his lap, nuzzling her neck as he tightened his arms around her waist. “Sure you don’t want to start looking at the other stack of...” Her teasing was silenced when his mouth came crashing down on hers.

She deepened the kiss, stroking the sides of his face as she explored the inside of his mouth with her tongue, devouring the remnants of the taste of their dinner on his tongue. She shivered against him as he brought her closer to him. She sighed against him when she felt the hardened flesh pressed up against her through their clothing. His hand slipped beneath the hem of her sweater, caressing the soft skin on her back.

There was a knock at the door. Lois and Clark both groaned in disapproval. “Are you kidding me?” Clark pulled away from her, displeased with their unwelcome visitor already.

“Um, just a minute!” Lois called as she and Clark stood up from the couch smoothing out and repositioning their clothing.

At the door, they found H.G. Wells and Superman.



“Mr. Wells!” Lois was in shock. “What are you doing here?” Lois asked.

“Lois, Clark, I heard of the dilemma with Tempus, and I am here to help.” H.G. Wells and Superman entered the foyer as Lois closed the door behind them.

“Okay. But why did you bring Superman? And who is this anyway?” Clark asked. Seeing this doppelganger dressed in the Superman suit was quite disconcerting for him, only reminding him of his own anger at not having all his powers.

“Ah, yes, Clark, you two haven’t met yet. This is the Clark from the alternate universe Tempus had trapped us in a year ago. Lois helped to create his world’s Superman.”

“Yes, I remember, but why are you here?” Lois asked, still confused.

“Well, with the current predicament you two are both in and the murderous agenda of Tempus, I figured you could use all the help you could get. Metropolis needs Superman now more than ever,” H.G. Wells continued.

“What agenda? He’s running for president,” Lois said. “He’s gotten some votes, but he just jumped into the race yesterday.”

“Tempus’s mind control of the country can only be stopped by Superman, and with Clark’s powers wavering after his exposure to the Kryptonite...” H.G. Wells trailed off.

“I’m not trying to step on anyone’s toes here. I just wanted to help. Mr. Wells said your world was in danger. You helped save me last year and I just wanted to return the favor,” Superman said.

Lois sighed, trying to wrap her mind around everything. “You’re not stepping on anyone’s toes. This is just a lot to take in. We’ve been dealing with a lot lately.”

“You’re more than welcome to help,” Clark added. “But how exactly are we supposed to stop Tempus? He’s using mind control on the entire country and neither Lois nor I can figure out how he’s doing it. No technology is advanced enough to explain the extent of the control he has taken over everyone’s minds.” He motioned for them to sit on the couch across from him and Lois.

“Yes. He is probably using something from the future. I still am unable to put my finger on exactly what he is trying to do. Utopia has been replaced by a world of violence and mayhem.”

“What does that mean?” Lois asked.

“I’m not sure,” H.G. Wells said, thinking for a moment. “But I’m going to find out. I will be in touch.” He stood and walked to the door. Lois closed the door behind him and sighed.

Clark sat quietly across from Superman, unsure of what to do. “Well, this is awkward.”



“Yeah,” his doppelganger replied, amused. “So—Tempus again, huh?”

“Yeah, gotta hand it to him. He loves trying to take over the world, and he never stops,” Lois muttered.

“So, what should we call you?”

“What do you mean?”

“I think what Clark means is we can’t necessarily call you ‘Clark’ because it would get confusing. What should we call you?”

Realization dawned on Superman’s face. “Ah, uh, I guess ‘CK’ will work. My friends in high school used to call me that.”

Clark smiled. “Yeah, that’s what Jimmy calls me all the time.”

“Jimmy?”

“Mr. Olsen,” Lois explained.

Superman just shook his head in disbelief. “Weird.”

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Across town, Tempus sat in his luxurious hotel suite going over his election polls when he heard a knock at the door. “What is it, Randolph?” He turned around to find the peacekeeper, Andrus, facing him.

“Playtime is over, Tempus,” Andrus replied coldly. “You are to be extradited back to the future where you will cause no more trouble.”

“Really?” Tempus pulled out the device for his time window and opened it. “It was fun while it lasted. Catch me if you can.” He jumped inside only to find himself suspended in the window.

“After your escape, the peacekeepers suspended the code to that transport that you stole. It’s useless.”

“Really? Well, I doubt you got here by train, Andrus.”

Andrus just laughed. “We’ve taken precautions, this time, Tempus. The transport is set so that only I can operate it. If you were even to touch it while in operation, it would explode sending you into eternity. Which is probably where you belong, anyway.”

“And you wonder why you never get asked out.”



“Come. We return for your trial.”

“Hmm. I don’t think so,” Tempus scoffed. He hit a button on his desk and several Secret Service men with guns surrounded Andrus and Tempus.

Andrus pleaded with Tempus as the men began to surround him. “Tempus, I speak to you as a fellow Utopian. Return with me now and make amends for your crimes—and save what is left of your soul.”

Tempus scoffed, “Funny. No matter how you pretty it up, it still sounds like prison to me.” He then turned to Randolph. “Send in my photographer.”

A short man carrying a large camera that looked to be from the late ‘80s entered the room. Tempus put an arm around Andrus, shaking his hand and the photographer took the picture. The flash from the camera surrounded the room.

Tempus then turned to his Secret Service detail. “Lock him up,” he instructed. He then removed the time transport from Andrus’ coat pocket and placed it in his desk drawer. His laugh echoed throughout the room as Andrus was carried down the hall.

H.G. Wells stared on in horror as he watched the scene from the hall. He flattened himself against the wall as Tempus strode near him. Tempus eyed the door to his suite suspiciously then continued past it.

H.G. Wells sighed in relief only to come face to face with the barrel of an 8mm gun. Tempus laughed, “Herb, I’ve missed you. Shall we?” He gestured to the suite. “If you were going to come and visit you should have called. I really hate eavesdroppers.”

H.G. Wells strode into the suite, displeased with his predicament. Unsure of Tempus’s next move he waited to be told what to do.

“Sit down, Herb. Take a load off. We need to catch up.”

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“So, basically Mayor White is still Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Planet, Mr. Olsen is a gopher and photographer, and Tempus is running for president? Does that about sum it up?” CK asked.

“I guess,” Lois said. “A lot of the things are the same but different here. Like the secret identity. Nobody knows Clark is Superman here.”

“It still amazes me that you were able to fool everyone with a pair of glasses,” CK said.

“People see what they want to see,” Clark replied.



“I guess,” CK sighed. “So, what now? Should I do a patrol around the city?”

“That’d probably be best. It’s been a few months since the people of Metropolis have seen Superman. It’s probably best if the criminals see him flying around. Kind of let his presence is known.” Clark said.

“Do you always talk about yourself in the third person?” CK asked.

“Constantly,” Lois replied with a smile.

CK nodded and headed for the window. “I guess I’ll check the city. See if there’s anything going on.”

“Yeah. Also, check and see if you can find any traces of Tempus’s mind control device anywhere,” Clark added.

“You can use the spare bedroom. It’s the second door on your left once you get to the top of the stairs,” Lois said

“Thanks.” CK nodded to them both and flew out the window.

“Wow.” Clark had never been on the receiving end of the sonic boom left in Superman’s wake.

Lois shrugged and pulled Clark into her arms, tugging at the collar of his shirt. “Come on, we have unfinished business.”

A bit confused with her aggressiveness, he pulled back slightly. “What unfinished business?”

She rolled her eyes slightly and captured his mouth, tracing his lips with her tongue, eliciting a moan from him. She pulled away breathlessly. “We got interrupted, and I was nowhere near done with you for the night.”

Squeals of laughter could be heard from their townhome as Clark scooped her into his arms and carried her upstairs as fast as his body would allow him. Their new visitor and the president-elect, John Doe, were far from their minds as they focused on more important issues until the break of dawn the next morning.

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CK returned to the townhome after a long night of rescues. Apparently, Superman’s absence for the past few weeks had given the criminals of Metropolis a false sense of comfort. A series of burglaries, sexual assaults, and vandalisms had kept him busy until the wee hours of the morning.



He returned emotionally and physically exhausted. He changed into a t-shirt and pair of shorts that had been laid out for him and climbed under the covers, seeking solace from the memories of the night's rescues. He sighed in relief as the cool sheets hit his skin.

He wasn't sure what he thought or felt about his current predicament. He was unsure of this other Clark. He didn't know the man and had nothing to go on other than what Lois had told him. He knew the other Clark had to be wondering the same about him as well.

*"Oh, God, Lois..."* The sound echoed through the walls of the bedroom down the hall.

His eyes widened in horror. *'No, dear God, please, no.'*

*"Yes, Clark, please...."* Her voice echoed.

*'No, please, no...'* his mind begged. He could deal being buried or shot with Kryptonite, but this—having to listen to the woman he knew he was destined to be with—the woman he could never have.... in the throes of ecstasy with his other-self was too much. He swallowed hard as he felt the sweat beads begin to drip down his forehead.

*"God, baby, I love you so much..."* his doppelganger's voice echoed through the walls once more.

CK stood up from the bed and changed back into the suit. He couldn't do this. He couldn't sit there and listen to them. He knew they had every right to make love. It was only natural; they were married and in love, but it still was hard to listen to.

He made his way to the window once more and headed towards the arctic. He knew it would take several laps in the arctic to clear his mind of the voices echoing in his head. He sighed to himself as he headed north. It was going to be a long night.

\*\*\*

The next morning, the chill in the air amongst the trio was evident. Lois eyed CK suspiciously. He had been awake most of the night, the lines under his eyes evident. "Are you okay?" she asked.

CK jumped up, startled "Huh? I'm sorry, what did you say?"

"Did you sleep okay?" Clark asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine. I just—uh, it was just a busy night," he managed, trying to avoid eye contact with the duo as much as possible.

"Uh-huh," Lois said, still not believing him, but she let the issue go. She didn't want to press him if he didn't want to share what was bothering him. This was obviously as awkward for him as it was them.



CK continued to stare down at his plate as he spoke. “So, what’s the plan for today?”

“Well, we’re going to see if we can’t find the source of Tempus’s mind control and try to put a stop to it,” Clark replied.

“There has to be something we’re missing here. I mean, Tempus couldn’t have gotten to everyone,” Lois said.

CK nodded. “Has anything out of the ordinary happened since Tempus returned? I mean, aside from him trying to run for president?”

“Now that you mention it, there were a couple of incidents that didn’t jibe right with us,” Lois said.

“Yeah, there was a riot against the Amish yesterday afternoon,” Clark said.

“The Amish?” CK echoed, confused.

“I know,” Lois said. “They had their homes destroyed by picketers. It was horrible.”

“Hmmm...”

“My guess is that Tempus is behind that incident. Why would everyone suddenly turn against the Amish when they’ve been living in peace for so long?” Clark remarked.

“True,” CK said. “I still wasn’t able to find any signs of Tempus’s mind control device anywhere. I’m really not sure where to look.”

“It would have to be something everyone came in contact with,” Lois cut in.

“What could everyone be coming in contact with that the Amish are not?” CK queried.

“Electricity. Phones...anything considered a technological advancement,” Clark mused.

“Hmm...I’ll take a look around and see what I can find out,” CK said, standing from the table. “I’ll let you know if I find anything.”

“Great. Just be careful,” Clark said.

“Tempus probably has a stash of Kryptonite somewhere. Best not to give him the chance to use it,” Lois added.

“I’ll be careful. Don’t worry.”

“Thanks,” Clark said. CK nodded and was out the window before anything more could be said.



“Never get used to that,” Clark muttered.

“Tell me about it.” Lois winked at Clark. “We need to get going or Perry’s gonna have our hide.”

Clark nodded and grabbed his coffee on the way out the door.

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“So, Herb, I hear Superman is back in action. How is that possible? He wasn’t scheduled to return for another week,” Tempus asked as he paced around H.G. Wells, whom he had tied to a chair in his office.

“The human spirit cannot be confined to one place or time. It’s everywhere,” H.G. Wells shot back confidently.

“Oh, save that drivel for your overrated novels, you treasonous little bug! I know what you’ve done! You brought that muscle-locked boy scout from that other universe to this one!”

H.G. Wells laughed. “Do you really think you can stop Superman just because he has no powers? Did you forget how many times he has put his life on the line for his family and friends? Even in his weakened state, he fought Randy Goode tooth and nail to protect Lois and his child...what makes you think a lack of super powers will keep him from defeating you?”

Tempus brightened as H.G. Wells’s words sank in. “Oh, that’s right. She’s pregnant.”

“Oh dear,” H.G. Wells muttered to himself.

“Thank you. Now I remember why I liked to keep you around, Herb.” Tempus’s laugh echoed throughout the room while H.G. Wells shook his head. In his attempt to fight Tempus with words, he had actually helped Tempus. He hoped two supermen were enough to defeat the scoundrel and return him to prison. If not, he dreaded the future that lay in store for them.

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“John Doe is the Devil! I am telling you he is not nice! Why won’t you listen to me?” a homeless man cried out on the streets of Metropolis.

CK narrowed in on the voice and landed next to the homeless man protesting against John Doe.

“Superman!” the man cried out. “I am not going to stop. You can’t make me. I know what I saw, and the people of Metropolis have the right to know.”

“Know what?”

“John Doe. He is the devil. I saw him enter through a portal from hell,” the man cried.



“You...you saw this? When?”

“A few days ago. It happened right here.” The man pointed to the street he had seen John Doe enter from.

“What did this window look like?”

“It was weird. It looked like a door that folded out and then a blue window appeared, and John Doe stepped out of it.”

“Would you be willing to testify to this?”

“Of course. Anything I can do to help.”

“Great. What’s your name?”

“Henry.”

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Lois glanced around the newsroom as she stepped off the elevator with Clark, “The sooner we get to the bottom of this Tempus situation the better...”

Ralph sauntered up to them with a smug look on his face, “You guys see the latest on Top Copy last night?”

“No...” Clark edged cautiously. “Why?” He had a feeling he really didn’t want to know.

Ralph showed them a copy of Dirt Digger’s cover with a picture of Clark and Lois leaving the doctor’s appointment with Clark’s hands on her abdomen and another picture of Superman in their foyer. The caption “Superman’s Back! Lois Having Superman’s Baby!!” splashed on the cover.

“They never stop...” Clark muttered bitterly.

“Knocked up, huh?” Ralph leered at Lois with a wink.

Lois angrily threw the tabloid back in Ralph’s face. “Don’t you have a congressman to blackmail?”

“Funny,” Ralph sneered, “So, you don’t waste any time. Or I guess according to this Superman didn’t. Tell me something is he faster than a speeding bullet...or...?” Ralph backed away as Clark took a few steps towards him, but was unsuccessful in escaping his wrath. Clark grabbed him by the collar, pulling him to him until he was a few inches away from him.

“Nice...gri..iip...you got there...Kent...” he wheezed out.



“Clark, let him go...” Lois hissed. “He’s not worth it...” Lois tugged on her husband’s arm to loosen his grasp on Ralph.

“Don’t you *ever* talk that way about my wife again!” Clark hissed, throwing him back against the wall.

Ralph was about to respond when Perry walked through the elevator doors with a tall slender man about mid-thirties with curly auburn hair and light brown eyes. “Chief...” Ralph grinned, pulling another copy of the Dirt Digger out. “Good to see you...Did you catch the latest on...”

Perry shook his head, “I told you not to bring this trash in my newsroom!” Perry threw the paper to the ground. Lois and Clark eyed Perry carefully. He’d obviously already heard the latest the paparazzi was trying to spin.

Perry turned his attention to the duo with his guest in tow, “Lois, Clark, there’s somebody I want you all to meet. Leslie Luckabee, I’d like to introduce you to--”

“Well, these two hardly need introductions, Perry. Lois Lane and Clark Kent, it’s a sincere pleasure to meet you.” Leslie nodded at them.

“Well, thank you,” Clark said, unsure of what to make of the man.

“I’ve been a fan of your work for quite some time. Really top notch journalism; had a lot to do with my final decision.” Leslie winked at Perry.

“Final decision?” Lois asked confused.

“Mr. Luckabee here is the, uh, the new owner of the Daily Planet.” Perry drawled.

“New owner???” Lois asked in surprise.

“Yes. Disappointed?” Leslie asked.

Lois looked back and forth between Clark and Leslie. She was a bit taken aback by the news. “No, no, it’s just that--” She looked at Clark for help.

Clark noticed Lois’ dismay and stepped in to help her, “It’s just we didn’t even know the paper was for sale.”

“Well, uh, neither did I up until an hour ago,” Perry replied with a conspiratorial look.

Leslie smiled, “The negotiations were all handled through my home office in Australia. I didn’t want the competition to get wind of it beforehand, you understand.”

“Of course.” Lois nodded. “So, you’re from Australia?”



“Born and raised-- wondering where the accent is, eh? Well, I guess I watched too many American cartoons growing up.” Leslie smiled, “I want everyone to know that I’m not planning on making any wholesale changes around here. The last thing I want to do is ruin a first class operation. My philosophy has always been the best way to lead is from behind.”

Clark nodded in recognition of the quote, “Sun Tsu, ‘*The Art of War.*’ Impressive works.”

“Yes, it is. I’m impressed, Clark, although hardly surprised. You obviously didn’t win that Kerth award for nothing.” Leslie nodded in Clark’s direction. He caught the smile Lois gave Clark.

Perry noticed Jimmy over at his desk going over the research files, “Jimmy, come say ‘hello’ to the new owner. Leslie Luckabee, I’d like you to meet Jimmy Olsen.”

“Nice to meet you,” He took Jimmy’s hand in a firm handshake, “Let’s talk cameras as soon as I get settled. I’m thinking we oughta upgrade the whole department. Maybe go digital?”

Jimmy grinned at Leslie, “Cool.”

Leslie then turned his attention back to Lois and Clark, “As far as everything else, like I’ve been telling Perry, the only thing I know about a paper is how to buy one. The rest I hope to learn from all of you if you don’t mind.”

Lois nodded, “Not at all, Mr. Luckabee.”

“Ah, Leslie, please.” He corrected.

“Leslie.” Lois corrected herself.

Perry called Leslie over toward the stairwell, “Come on, Leslie, I’ll show you the rest of the place.”

Leslie nodded in Perry’s direction then turned to Lois and Clark, “Looking forward to working with you.”

Clark took Leslie’s hand in a firm handshake, “Likewise.”

“Nice grip.” Leslie smiled at the couple before chasing after Perry.

Jimmy, who had been forgotten during the exchange, watched Leslie leave and shook his head, “Man, remind me not to give any tours of this place to any of my dates when he’s around. Guy’s a real stud.”

Lois gave him an odd look, “What are you talking about?”



Jimmy did a double take at Lois then shook his head, “You didn’t notice?” He then looked between Lois and Clark before heading to his desk, “Never mind, Lois, you’ve got it bad.”

Lois shook her head and smiled at Clark, “He’s right, I do have it bad.”

Clark smiled down at her. “Must be contagious.” He whispered in her ear, He then turned his attention towards Leslie and Perry. “He seems nice.”

“Yeah. A bit young to own a newspaper, don’t you think?” Lois asked.

“Yeah.” Clark nodded in agreement.

“So, what are we going to do about this?” Lois asked, pointing to the tabloid she’d thrown on the floor earlier.

“I don’t know. Sorry I lost my temper earlier. He just makes me *so...*” Clark drew a fist in the air to illustrate his point, unable to articulate exactly how angry Ralph had made him with his lewd comments towards Lois.

“I know,” Lois said, placing her hand on his fist and pulling his arm towards her. “Ralph is the one stop shop for sleaze at the Planet. You know that.”

“Doesn’t give him permission to talk to you like that...”

“Clark, we’ve got to ignore it. The more attention we give him the worst he gets.”

“Doesn’t seem to be working...” Clark shook his head. “I don’t know. We have to do something...I just don’t know what.”

“Well, for now, I guess we ignore it ...” At Clark’s anguished look she continued, “Think of it this way, at least this time there’s no philanthropist and photographers with guns.”

“But Lois...” Clark interjected in a hushed whisper, “Someone saw...”

“I know,” She whispered, “We’ll have to talk to CK later and explain what’s going on.”

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So, tell me, Herb, what is the best way to get under Superman’s skin?” Tempus asked, pacing around H.G. Wells, who had been moved from the hotel suite to the same cell where Andrus was being held.

“Tempus, you are a fiend beyond comprehension. I will never understand why the tribunal ever acted so lax towards you. You have no conscience,” Andrus retorted.



“Andrus, didn’t your mother ever teach you not to speak unless spoken to?” Tempus asked before backhanding the elderly man, knocking him to the ground. Andrus grunted in pain, and H.G. Wells moved to check on him.

“I’m growing tired of your games, Tempus. What do you want?”

“Revenge.”

“For what?”

“Superman is the reason I had to live in that God-awful Utopia for so many years. You saved me, Herb. You gave me a chance to fix things. And fix things I shall.” Tempus smiled smugly. “Now, as I was saying, the best way to get under Superman’s skin—anyone know the answer?” He looked from H.G. Wells to Andrus. Neither of the gentlemen was forthcoming, so he continued his speech. “I guess you didn’t pay attention to your Lane-Kent history in college, huh, Andrus? The correct answer is Lois Lane. Actually, now it’s Lois Lane and baby Kent.” Tempus laughed. “I just need to figure out a way to work around that copy-cat, Superman.” He pulled out the small silver device in his pocket and spoke into the microphone. “This goes out to the people of Metropolis. Superman is not your friend...”

\*\*\*

CK headed towards the Daily Planet building to check in with Lois and Clark. Just then, the sound of a bank alarm reached his ears. He changed direction and headed towards the bank.

He landed outside Metropolis Bank only to find two men wearing ski masks and carrying two large bags of cash headed for their getaway car. He grabbed the two crooks by the collar and took their weapons.

Several police cars pulled up, and he handed the crooks over to one of the officers. “Here you go.”

“What happened here, Superman?”

“What do you mean, what happened? They tried to rob the bank. I caught them coming out with this stolen money, wearing ski masks, and carrying guns.”

“The Constitution allows them to carry a weapon, and last I heard skiing wasn’t illegal.” The officer retorted, “How do you know they weren’t making a withdrawal from their own account?”

“Well...”

“Did you even read them their Miranda Rights before you took them into your custody?”

“What? I never do that. You guys always do that—”



“Look, thanks for trying to help, but next time let the professionals handle it.” With that, the officer walked away, and CK watched as they let the criminals go free.

“What?” He shook his head in confusion. What was going on here?

\*\*\*

Later that evening, Lois and Clark sifted through various files and books on memory and the study of the mind. They were trying to find something that could help explain the control Tempus had taken over the country.

“Clark, I don’t even know what to look for. I mean, we are looking for a needle in a haystack here.”

“I know,” Clark replied, rubbing his temples.

“You don’t look good,” Lois said.

“I’m just not used to going on such little sleep without my powers,” Clark replied.

“Clark, I really want you to talk to Dr. Klein again. What if they didn’t get all the Kryptonite out of your system?”

Clark sighed. He knew she was probably right, but his last experience with Dr. Klein left him feeling even more frustrated. He kept asking more and more questions. He was afraid the only way Dr. Klein could help was if he knew everything, and he wasn’t sure if he and Lois were ready for that step.

He had grown up with a fear of discovery and his experience at the hospital had triggered a lot of bad memories for him. His nightmares of being dissected like a frog had come back to him with a vengeance, adding to the anxiety he already felt. “Lois, I just really don’t want to involve him right now.”

“Why not?” Lois pushed.

Clark sighed in aggravation. “I just don’t, okay? Can you just drop it?”

Lois was getting angry. “No, I will not drop it! That rock could still be inside of you and be slowly killing you as we speak — only we wouldn’t know because you refuse to see Dr. Klein about it!”

“Lo-is...” Clark let out a long breath. “A little louder, I don’t think they quite heard you in Central City.”

“Do you think you are the only one this is affecting, Clark?” Lois whispered, tears forming in her eyes. “I can’t stand to see you like this. It’s tearing you apart, and I know you’re still hurting. Why won’t you talk to me?”



One look into her teary eyes and he caved. She was as scared as he was. His fears about being exposed were heightened after seeing the covers that were all over the newsstands. It wasn't as bad as it had been a few months ago but there were still paparazzi outside the Planet when they left work that evening. A few were even outside their home. He just wanted it all to stop. All the questions...

He felt so exposed, but it wasn't just him that was exposed now. It was Lois too. She was scared. Truth be told he was scared too, but he just wasn't ready to take that leap of faith yet. With everything so raw after the Superman scandal it was hard to trust. Besides, just because he went to see the good doctor again didn't mean he had to tell him anything new...

"All right. I'll go see Dr. Klein."

"That still doesn't answer my question. What is going on with you?"

Clark sighed in exasperation. She wasn't going to let this go.

\*\*\*

After several hours of catching criminals only to have the police let them go, CK landed in the foyer of the townhome Lois and Clark shared. He opened the front door and closed it behind him. He noticed all the curtains in the living room had been closed and clasped shut with paperclips. 'Weird...' he thought to himself.

He opened a closet door and changed into a pair of jeans and a t-shirt. He heard sounds in the kitchen and made his way to where Lois stood at the stove stirring a suspicious looking pot and Clark sat at the breakfast bar watching her quietly.

"Hi," Lois smiled weakly at CK when she saw him come in. He wasn't sure but something seemed off with them. There was a chill in the air.

"Bad?" Clark asked.

CK shook his head, "I found this homeless guy over on Suicide Slum ranting against John Doe."

"Against John Doe? So, Tempus hasn't gotten to everyone," Lois remarked.

"Yeah. It was really weird. He was saying John Doe came in through the window," CK said.

"That sound familiar," Clark remarked.

Lois snapped her fingers. "You remember that inmate at the asylum? He was saying Tempus went out the window."



“Hmmm...think there’s a connection?” Clark asked.

“Well, there’s only one way to find out,” Lois replied. “Was there anything else?”

“Yeah. The officers were acting really strange,” CK said.

“Strange how?” Clark asked.

“Something about reading Miranda Rights and not to bother trying to help...” CK shook his head. “It didn’t really make that much sense to me.”

Clark shrugged, “I’m not sure; unless Tempus is playing more games. Have you heard from H.G. Wells?”

CK shook his head. “No.”

Lois sighed, “Well, we can try and figure out what’s going on later. We’re supposed to go watch the ballots come in with President Garner. I guess we can make an appointment with Dr. Dussell tomorrow. Have you eaten?” she asked CK.

“Uh...” CK eyed Lois’s attempt at soup suspiciously then looked at Clark, who was shaking his head ‘no.’ “That’s okay. I already ate.”

“Oh. Okay,” Lois said. “I’ll save you some for later then.” CK watched her pick up a spoon and take a sip of her concoction. She cringed when the soup hit her taste buds. “Or maybe not.”

\*\*\*

Lois and Clark entered Bibbo’s Bar where they found President Garner sitting by himself, watching the news. “Mr. President?” Lois asked.

President Garner turned to the couple. “Lois, Clark, glad you could make it. I see you got my note. I didn’t see the sense in renting that big hall if it was just going to be us, diehards. I, uh, I had a lot of last-minute cancellations.”

Clark nodded. “So, where’s your wife and daughter?”

“Huh? Oh, they’re at the John Doe rave over at Club L7.”

“Mr. President, we need to talk—” Lois began.

The anchor from LNN interrupted the conversation, “With eighty percent of precincts reporting ... It looks as if John Doe is going to take Manhattan...”

“Oh, he took Manhattan!” President Garner whined.



“...the Bronx, and Staten Island, too,” the anchor continued.

Lois rolled her eyes and continued, “Mr. President, we have reason to believe that John Doe is—”

“A darn nice guy. I know. Hell, even I voted for him.”

“You? You what?” Clark asked in disbelief.

“Well, I was in the voting booth this morning. I meant to vote for myself, but I thought about John Doe... and, well... I just felt like I had to vote for him.”

The LNN anchor interrupted. “This is unprecedented in our time, ladies and gentlemen. Never before in the history of our country has a write-in candidate taken the White House! But LNN is now predicting the projected winner and the next President of the United States... John Doe!”

“Yeah! Way to go.” President Garner shouted. “Wait a minute, that means I lost?” Lois and Clark nodded. President Garner’s face fell as he turned his attention back to the television screen, and watched the people in the street rejoicing.

\*\*\*

“John Doe is the Devil! He and his minion came into this sphere through a porthole from hell! I saw it myself! They came in through the devil’s window! Through the window!”

A limo pulled up across the street from the ranting of the homeless man. The window to the limo rolled down and revealed Tempus holding a gun. He twisted on a silencer to the gun and eyed the homeless man with disdain. A look of evil crossed over Tempus’s face as he raised the weapon and aimed it at his target.

A short popping sound could be heard along with a large thud. Tempus watched the man fall and smiled to himself. “Well, finally a workable solution to the homeless problem.” He then turned to the driver. “Drive...”

\*\*\*

That evening CK sat on the couch, watching the news reports of John Doe’s anticipated win of the presidency. News stations were celebrating the upcoming inauguration of President-elect John Doe. CK shook his head in disgust. Tempus obviously had a hold on the city and he wasn’t sure where to begin looking.

He sighed as he leaned back into the couch. It had been a long night and an equally eventful day. The exhaustion he had been fighting the last 24 hours finally overcame him. CK was soon fast asleep, oblivious to the television reports of John Doe’s victory. That was a battle to be fought another day.



\*\*\*

Lois and Clark entered the brownstone quietly, trying to make as little noise as possible so as not to awaken their guest. They were surprised to find CK fast asleep on the couch with the television still on.

“Poor guy. He must be exhausted,” Clark commented.

“Yeah. It can’t be easy being Superman 24/7,” Lois commented. She turned the television off and picked up a blanket to lay over CK.

Clark turned off the lights and locked the front door and headed upstairs with Lois. “I can’t imagine what it would feel like to be Superman all the time.” He closed the bedroom door behind him.

“I don’t want you to,” she said called out to him from the bathroom, getting ready for bed.

Clark began to undress. “Lois? What are we going to do about Tempus? I mean, unless we can find the device, he’s been using to control the country; there is no way we can stop him. Tempus’s plan for this country would be to send us back to ...” He muttered bitterly.

“I know,” Lois stepped out into the bedroom, wrapping her arms around her chest, “I don’t know. What are you going to do about Dr. Klein?”

Clark sighed, reminded of the fight from earlier. “I don’t know...”

She stepped toward him, placing his hands on her growing abdomen. “Clark, I’m pregnant.”

“I know.” He smiled down at her. “I was there.”

“You’re still not at one hundred percent and CK can’t stay here forever.” He hung his head at the last remark. “He’s the expert. Let him figure this out. Let him help you...” She turned his face to look at her. “...Let him help us...”

*<<Images of Lois being taken from him ran through his mind. A window. A shadow who revealed Tempus’s face as he pulled Lois away. Lois called to him, “I’ll always love you.”*

*“No!” he called out.>>*

Clark shook his head, pushing the memories of his nightmares to the back of his mind. All his life he’d wanted nothing more than to have what he held in his arms, a family. A woman he loved more than life itself and a child. All of that was being threatened now. He knew what he had to do. He knew it was a risk, but it was a risk he was willing to take if it meant protecting the thing that was most precious to him.



He tightened his arms around her and sighed. “Okay, I’ll call Dr. Klein in the morning...but it’s not going to be Superman he sees.”

“What do you mean?” Lois asked, taking a step back.

“I mean, everyone knows Clark Kent was attacked with Kryptonite. No one knows Superman was. I need to tell him...especially now.” He placed two hands on her growing abdomen.

\*\*\*

The next morning, CK awoke refreshed. He looked around trying to assess his surroundings. He didn’t recognize where he was. He began to move around, and then the memories came back to him. He was helping the other Clark and Lois fight Tempus.

“Oh, man...” he rubbed his eyes sleepily and stood up. He looked at the clock. “Nine-thirty. I must have been tired,” he murmured. He stood up and headed for the kitchen, looking for something to eat.

It amazed him how much junk food they had. He wasn’t sure if it was the other Clark or Lois who ate like that, but it was quite disturbing. He sighed and decided to just cook some eggs and pancakes. Hopefully, Lois and Clark would be up soon.

\*\*\*

Upstairs, Clark watched Lois sleeping peacefully. He had been awake for hours. He had checked on CK earlier and found him still asleep, so he had been content to remain in the bedroom with Lois until she awoke. He had called Dr. Klein earlier and made an appointment for later that afternoon since it was Saturday and they didn’t have to go into work until noon.

Lois began to stir beneath his gaze. She stretched her arms across the bed, protesting at the absence of his body next to hers. “Clark?” she mumbled, looking around the room for him. He moved to sit next to her on the bed. “Hey, no fair. You’re not supposed to get up without me.”

He laughed good-naturedly. “I thought you needed the rest,” he replied. “I called Dr. Klein. We have an appointment with him at one o’clock.”

“What time is it?” she asked.

“Nine-thirty.”

“WHAT? Clark, why did you let me sleep that long?” She pushed past him and rushed to the bathroom to get dressed.

Clark just laughed and moved to make the bed she had just vacated. “Honey, you looked like you needed the sleep. Besides, that alarm clock was blaring for twenty minutes, and you still didn’t budge. Even CK didn’t wake up. I think everyone’s just had a rough couple of days.”



Lois harrumphed as she exited the bathroom fully dressed. “Clark, I hate sleeping in when we have to work.”

“A couple of hours of sleep won’t kill you,” Clark said, opening the door for her to head downstairs with him.

\*\*\*

As they entered the living room, they found CK sitting in the living room, watching the news. The smell of freshly made pancakes filled the air.

CK looked up when they entered and smiled. “I made some breakfast. I guess everyone’s having a late start this morning, huh?”

Lois shot Clark a glare, and he just laughed. “Lois is mad because I let her sleep in.”

“Ah,” CK replied. “There’s pancakes and eggs if either of you is hungry,” he gesturing to the counter.

“Thanks,” Lois replied. She made herself a plate and took a bite. “Mmm. These are delicious.” She offered Clark a bite.

“Thanks,” CK replied. He glanced between the couple then looked at the tightly closed curtains in the kitchen. “Can I ask...What’s up with the paperclips?”

“Oh, that...” Lois began softly. She was quiet and glanced at Clark for help.

Clark sighed, “A few months ago a paparazzi had followed Lois and I to a resort...”

CK’s eyes widened, “They stalk you too?”

“Sorta,” Lois said quietly. “Anyway, this woman...took some photos then had them edited to replace Clark with an image of Superman...”

“How did she know?” CK asked.

Lois shook her head. “She didn’t. She thought I was cheating on Clark with Superman.”

“Oh,” CK laughed quietly.

“Anyway, ever since we’ve had a paparazzi problem.” Clark explained. “Especially now with the latest accusations...”

“Accusations??” CK asked.



Lois pulled out the cover of *Dirt Digger* for CK to see. “Oh, well you know after awhile they’ll get tired of it.”

“Well, I don’t exactly have time to wait.” Lois explained. “With Clark still struggling to regain his powers, Tempus, and the baby...”

“Baby? So, you are...?” CK asked cautiously. Lois and Clark nodded happily. “That..That’s great...I guess I can understand why you’d want this...” he gestured to the paper in front of them, “to go away...”

“We just need to keep Superman’s presence here quiet so we don’t attract any more attention.” Clark explained. “For Lois and the baby’s safety...”

“I get it.” CK smiled. “I wish the world didn’t know so much about me. I feel like all I’m doing is fending off paparazzi.”

“I’m sorry,” Lois apologized. “I never meant to do that to you...”

“It wasn’t you. It was Tempus. Besides, I’ve finally been able to do what I was born to do.”

Clark nodded wistfully, “It’s a great feeling...helping...” He glanced at the T.V. in concern and reached for the remote to turn it up.

The trio then turned their attention to the TV screen where Tempus stood next to President Garner and his Secret Service detail. “Though the Doe administration doesn’t officially take power for a few months, I wanted to assure the American people that the transition will be as painless as possible. I’m already working with President Garner on that score...”

Lois stared at the television in disgust. “My God, Clark, it’s already starting.”

Tempus continued his speech. “My greatest hope is that former supporters of President Garner will join me in making this country great again...”

CK scoffed in unison with Clark. “Again?”

Lois shook her head. “Like back in the days of slavery...”

“In particular, Superman...” The camera tightened on Tempus’s image. Lois and Clark stared at each other and then at CK with wary looks. “Superman, if you’re listening... I hope we can find a place for you in the Doe administration. Once all citizens are working through the proper channels — especially well-meaning but lawless vigilantes such as yourself—the world will be a safer, more ordered place. I hope you can understand that ... and if you *Kent*... I mean *can’t* ...well. We’ll just have to figure out something else.”

Lois grabbed the remote and angrily clicked it off. “Clark, he said your name.”



“I know,” Clark said quietly.

“What are we going to do?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” Clark replied.

“Clark, I know this isn’t our usual approach, but I say you go over there and kick his skinny butt!”

Clark and CK laughed in unison. Clark put his arm around Lois, pulling her to him. “I would love too, but Lois, you know Superman can’t just go beat up the President-elect.”

“Why not?” Lois asked.

“Lois...” he warned.

“He’s dangerous,” She said.

“I know he is. But he’s also the most popular man in the country right now.”

“Elected by a landslide,” CK added bitterly.

“Exactly,” Clark replied. “We have to be very smart about this.”

“Tempus—President of the United States. What a nightmare,” Lois said.

“Tell me about it,” CK replied. “And I thought it was bad, him wanting to be Mayor of Metropolis.”

Lois rolled her eyes then smiled. “You know, you’re right: Superman can’t go beat up the President-elect, but Clark Kent can.”

“Lois...” Clark warned.

“What? It was just an idea, sheesh!”

“As tempting as that offer is, I don’t think it will go over very well,” CK said.

“Exactly. I don’t feel like serving time for beating up the president-elect,” Clark added. The trio laughed, then CK’s head shot up. “What is it?” Clark asked.

“Bank alarm.” He quickly changed and darted out the window.

Clark stared at the recently vacated space. He missed being the one to go on rescues.

“You hungry?” Lois asked, offering him the rest of her plate.



“Yeah,” he said, shaking himself from his reverie.

\*\*\*

CK soared through the sky, narrowing in on the source of the bank alarm. He was confused when he ended up landing in front of the same bank that had been robbed yesterday. The two men he had caught earlier were running out of the bank, carrying bags of money again and wearing the same ski masks and carrying the same weapons as before.

“Going somewhere, boys?” he asked sternly. “You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say or do will be used against you in a court of law...” he began, reciting the Miranda warnings verbatim as he grabbed the two men by the collar and escorted them to the approaching officers.

“Take care of them,” one officer said to her partner as she approached Superman. The other officer took the men into custody, only to release them again.

“What is going on?”

“You aren’t authorized to make an arrest, Superman.”

“I didn’t make an arrest. You guys do that.”

“You read them their Miranda rights. You acted as a law enforcement official in trying to take them into custody,” the officer said.

“But I was told I had to read them their rights. I read them their rights. I caught them in the act robbing this bank...TWICE. You can’t just let them walk.”

“Your word against theirs I’m afraid, Superman,” the officer replied and walked away.

At that moment a man in a suit approached him, flashing his ID with the FAA, “Excuse me, Superman, I’m Smithers. I’m with the FAA. Was that you flying overhead a few minutes ago?”

“What? Well... yeah.”

Smithers looked at him sternly. “I need to see your license.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“Your license to fly.”

“I don’t have a license to fly. I fly under my own power.”

“So you have no license?”



“No.”

Smithers pulled out his notebook and began to take notes, shaking his head in disapproval. At that moment, a woman in a gray suit approached him, “Superman! Agent Bower, IRS.” She flashed him her ID.

“We’ve been trying to contact you. We need your social security number.”

“I don’t have a social security number,” CK replied, his voice wavering slightly.

Agent Bower smiled. “Everyone has a social security number. Don’t become a tax dodger, Superman. Be honest. I’m sure we can work something out.”

“I am being honest. I don’t have a social security number.”

“Hmm. I guess that explains why we can’t locate any of your tax returns. Should we be looking under ‘S’ for Super or ‘M’ for Man?”

At that moment, another woman in a blue suit appeared, flashing her ID to Superman as well. “Superman, Emily Stevens with Immigration and Naturalization. I just need a quick look at your green card.”

CK scoffed, “Green card?”

“You are an alien, are you not?”

Smithers at this point tore a ticket from his notebook and handed it to CK. “Superman, I’m afraid until we get this cleared up, I’m going to have to ground you.”

CK stared at the officials approaching him and handing him tickets. He didn’t know what to do, so he shot up into the air, escaping the rally of government officials that had begun swarming around him. Just when he thought it couldn’t get any worse television newscasters pulled up, shouting accusations about affairs and becoming a father and abandoning Metropolis for the last two months. What had he gotten himself into? He did the only thing he could think of and flew out of there as fast as he could.

\*\*\*

Dr. Klein looked over his formulas and worked in peace until he was interrupted by Lois Lane and Clark Kent entering his office. “Ms. Lane. Mr. Kent.” Dr. Klein stood up as they entered.

“Dr. Klein, we need to talk to you,” Clark began.

“I thought you said it was Superman that had some concerns. Where is he?” Dr. Klein looked out his door for the Man of Steel but found him nowhere in sight.



“Dr. Klein, just listen please.” Clark gestured for the elderly scientist to take a seat. “About two months ago I was attacked with Kryptonite if you remember.”

“Yes. I heard about that. I’m still amazed you have no scars after that ordeal, Clark.”

“Ever since then, I haven’t been myself.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, normally he’s able to fly, bounce bullets off his chest, and leap tall buildings in a single bound,” Lois prompted, hoping he’d catch the hint.

Dr. Klein’s eyes widened in shock as Clark removed his glasses. “No, but you’re—that’s impossible. I ...I...”

“Dr. Klein, ever since Clark was struck by that Kryptonite bullet, he has not fully recovered his powers. Is there a chance that the Kryptonite is still in his system?” Lois asked, ignoring the man’s ramblings.

“Clark! You’re — you’re him,” Dr. Klein stuttered.

“Yeah.” Clark said softly. “Please understand us sharing this with you is....”

“...the hardest decision we’ve ever had to make.” Lois finished for him.

“I understand,” Dr. Klein nodded. “I won’t tell anyone. I promise.”

“Thank you,” Clark said.

“Dr. Klein?” Lois interrupted, wanting to get back to the issue at hand.

“Uh, right. Kryptonite. Let’s have a look. You know if you’d just told me a few months ago I could have done more...” Dr. Klein began as he pulled out a blue wand that looked to be about the size of his palm. He turned the light off, then turned to Lois, “You need to step out, Ms. Lane. The radiation isn’t good for ...” He eyed her small bump.

“How did you...?” Lois sighed, shaking her head. “I guess everyone knows now, huh?”

Clark gave her a peck on the cheek and she sighed, turning away, “I’ll be outside.” She then closed the door behind her.

“Well, that’s a first...” Dr. Klein muttered as he turned on a device that glowed neon blue.

“What is that?” Clark asked nervously.



“I call it the ‘Illuminator.’ Catchy, huh? This will detect anything radioactive by illuminating the source,” Dr. Klein said as he moved towards Clark with the device. “Here, I’ll show you. See how your chest has those blue specks? Those are traces of radioactivity. Let’s see, it seems to be mainly in the area where you were shot. I don’t see any other areas that have been affected.” Dr. Klein turned the light back on and turned the device off.

“Okay, so how do we get rid of the Kryptonite?” Clark asked.

“Clark, are you still invulnerable?” Dr. Klein asked.

“Yeah. Why?”

“Hmmm...well, I need to either cut the Kryptonite out of you, or I need to burn it out.”

“Burn it?”

“Yes, like chemotherapy.”

“But Dr. Klein, chemotherapy won’t work on me.”

“No, but I have something that will work,” Dr. Klein explained. “Do you trust me, Clark?”

“Completely.”

“I’m going to have to expose you to Kryptonite in order to remove the Kryptonite in your system. Afterward, we will run a full scan on you to make sure there are no more traces of Kryptonite in your system. You should be feeling back to yourself after this.”

Clark looked at Dr. Klein anxiously then took a deep breath, “Okay. Let’s do it.”

\*\*\*

“Oh, look, Andrus. They’re starting to ask about you,” Tempus remarked, throwing down a copy of the Daily Planet which featured a picture of Tempus and Andrus on the front page. “Everyone wants to meet the new Vice-President-elect; I don’t know how long I can cover for you. You might want to consider giving me the code to that transport so we can end all this unpleasantness.”

“You are a true force for evil, Tempus,” said Andrus. He struggled to break free of the bonds restraining him to his chair, his back to a similarly-restrained H.G. Wells.

“You despicable fiend!” H.G. Wells muttered under his breath.

Tempus laughed, “Oh, you’re just saying that because I’ve got you tied to a chair and am about to plunge the world into a thousand years of darkness...or words to that effect.”



“You won’t get away with this. Men of greater character will conspire to stop you. You will see justice, Tempus,” H.G. Wells retorted.

“Or not.” Tempus lay a copy of the Daily Planet before them showing the headline, ‘Superman Grounded.’

“What is this, Tempus?” Andrus asked, enraged. “If you don’t allow Superman to do his good work, then Utopia will never come about.”

“Ah, yes, Utopia. No thanks, Andrus, I’m creating a Dystopia. A world that suits my own unique sensibilities.”

“You’re a fool, Tempus. Utopia will always be man’s ultimate goal,” H.G. Wells said.

“Do you think a simple government bureaucracy will keep Superman down for long? You live in a fantasy world, Tempus,” Andrus said.

“You’re a coward.”

“Coward?”

“Using the government to do your bidding is despicable.” Andrus shook his head in disgust.

“Great men aren’t so easily neutralized,” H.G. Wells added.

“Yes, but I’m not neutralizing this dimension’s Superman, am I, Herb? I’m just trying to get rid of that copy-cat Superman so the real fun can begin.”

“You’re a fool,” Andrus scoffed.

“I may be a fool, but you’re the one strapped to the chair. I’m the one who has been elected president and ruler of the free world.” Tempus added, “But you’re right. I can’t underestimate that muscle-bound Boy Scout. If history has taught us nothing else, it’s this: never invade Russia, and don’t underestimate the power of Superman’s disgusting goodness.” He pulled a phone out of his pocket and began to dial...

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Lois placed a supportive hand on Clark’s back as they walked up the steps to their brownstone, “How are you feeling?” she asked nervously.

Clark sighed, “No pain no gain.” He said grimly. At Lois’ concerned look he smiled back at her, squeezing her hand gently. “Fine. I’m not feeling as weak as I was at the lab. I’m actually starting to feel a lot better.”

“Hopefully you’ll be feeling ‘super’ soon so I can have *my* Superman back,” she smiled up at him mischievously.



Clark nodded as he unlocked the front door, “Only time will...”

When he opened the door he found CK pacing around the living room. “What’s wrong?” Lois asked.

“This.” CK laid the tickets and forms he had been given by the many bureaucrats earlier that day. “Every time I’ve shown up for a rescue I’ve been hounded by these guys.”

Clark sifted through the papers, “FAA? IRS? Immigration? You’ve got to be kidding me.”

“Oh, no,” CK continued, “And I stopped the same robbers from robbing the same bank they robbed yesterday only to watch the police let them go *again*. I even recited their Miranda Rights. What the hell is going on out there?”

“I don’t know,” Lois said softly.

“...and don’t even get me started on the paparazzi....Something’s gotta be done. They’re not backing down.” CK continued. “Between these government bureaucracies and Tempus....”

Lois read through the paperwork. “Only 24 hours after the election and he’s already insinuated himself into the system,”

“We have to bring him down before the inauguration,” Clark said.

“I still can’t find where this device is.” CK threw his hands up in the air in disgust.

“He probably has it somewhere in a lead-lined location. Can you try listening for the sound waves? Maybe there’s a way to zero in on Tempus’s voice?” Lois offered.

“I don’t know. But there’s more.”

“More?” Lois asked.

“Oh, yeah. The homeless man I told you about? He was shot last night.”

“What?”

“Tempus shot him up,” CK replied. “I know he did.”

“Well, the best thing we can do right now is talk to Dr. Dussell. Maybe see if we can talk to that inmate. This window they mentioned—there has to be a connection,” Clark said.

\*\*\*



Lois and Clark sat across from a balding man in striped pajamas. He looked around him then whispered, “He doesn’t sleep.” He nodded towards Tempus in the other cell next to him. “Just sits there all night watching me.”

“How long has he been doing that?” Clark asked.

“Ever since they made the switch.”

“The switch?” Clark asked.

“Yeah. One’s fake. I don’t think he’s even human.”

“How do you know?” Lois asked.

“I saw the whole thing. The window appeared right there. Just like he said it would.”

“Who said it would?” Clark asked.

“Tempus. And that other guy, that peacekeeper...he’s the one that made the switch.”

Clark turned to Lois. “Someone came back for Tempus?”

Lois nodded. “And Tempus busted loose.”

“But no one believes me. They think I’m nuts. But I’m not nuts.” He looked from side to side to see if anyone was watching, then opened up his shirt to reveal a hand drawn ‘S’ shield on his undershirt. “I’m Superman.”

Lois and Clark just looked at the guy, hiding the mirth evident in their eyes. At that moment, Lois’s cell phone rang. “Lois Lane. What?” She stood up, struggling to find better reception. “No, I can’t hear you. Bad connection. I can’t...” She turned to Clark and whispered, “I’ll meet you outside.”

Clark nodded and watched Lois exit the building.

\*\*\*

Outside the building, Lois struggled to understand the person on the other end of the phone. “Hello?”

A voice from behind startled her. “I said, ‘Don’t come outside, or you’re dead.’”

Lois looked at the woman in shock, “You!”

“Night night.” The woman sprayed her with pepper spray, and Lois fell to her knees, wheezing slightly as she struggled to breathe.



\*\*\*

“Do you remember anything else? What did this peacekeeper look like?” Clark asked

“Oh, that’s easy.” The inmate pointed to the front page of the Daily Planet. “He’s right there.”

“The Vice-President-elect? That’s who came for Tempus?” Clark looked at the inmate for confirmation. The inmate just nodded and Clark stood to leave. “Thanks.”

Barrett stood as well. “You know I could break out of here anytime I wanted, but then they’d know I was Superman. So, I just stay locked up. Clever, huh?”

Clark smiled and winked conspiratorially at the man. “Very.” He then headed outside. The Jeep was still there, but he couldn’t find Lois anywhere. He looked on the ground by the driver’s side and found her purse and keys. Clark shook his head in disgust.

At that moment, he picked up the first bit of super-hearing he had experienced in over two months.

<< “*You thought you and your husband had gotten rid of me, didn’t you?*” >>

His stomach clenched at hearing the voice of Samantha Roberts, the voyeur who had been employed by Intergang to destroy Superman’s image. This was not good. “Lois..”

\*\*\*

Lois stood on the ledge of a building, experiencing a sense of déjà vu. She was unsure of her surroundings. Her hands were tied, she was blindfolded, and she could tell she was high up. It was in this position she had screamed for help in the alternate universe and had been rescued by the alternate Clark. She knew Tempus was behind this but had no way of knowing what his goal was.

“Okay, don’t panic. Don’t panic. It’s going to be okay,” she told herself. “I don’t think this is exactly what my doctor had in mind when she said to take it easy,” she laughed to herself.

Clark had still been weak last night from his exposure to kryptonite. Could he hear her if she cried for help? “Oh, God!” she cried. “I swear I don’t do this stuff on purpose...” she tried to explain to her unborn son. “I guess there’s only one way to find out if your daddy’s back...” She leaned back against the concrete siding of the building she stood on.

“*Clark!!!*”

\*\*\*



In the hotel suite, Tempus had tied H.G. Wells and Andrus to chairs positioned to watch the television screen. Samantha entered the room and nodded to Tempus. “It’s done.”

Tempus smiled. “Excellent.” He switched the television on, and the screen showed Lois standing on the ledge of a building many stories in the air. The two men watched, horrified. “Do you think she knows she’s 1000 feet in the air?” Tempus asked, laughing.

“You miserable fiend! Why are you doing this?” H.G. Wells demanded.

“Because it’s fun.”

“What purpose is there to kill her?” Andrus asked, confused. “Without Lois Lane... There is no Utopia...”

“I don’t want to kill her. If I wanted to kill her, she’d be dead and Andrus here wouldn’t exist.” Tempus laughed. “No, I want to torture her. Send her into spasms of terror.”

“But the baby..” Andrus argued.

“Oh, well...” Tempus added, “I’m just making good television here. If that happens to kill her child, then — oh well. I consider it an added bonus.”

“You devil’s *spawn*...” Andrus fumed.

“Now, Andrus, let’s play nice,” Tempus admonished. He turned his attention to Samantha. “Are the cameras ready?”

“Yes, Mr. Doe.”

“Excellent.” Tempus grinned. “Let the games begin.”

\*\*\*

Clark searched everywhere for Lois. His powers were back, but he was still slightly weak. Not a good sign.

“Lois!” he called out. Nothing.

CK appeared in front of him, dressed in his Superman suit. “What’s wrong?”

“I can’t find Lois. I think she’s been kidnapped.” Clark explained looking around in panic.

“*WHAT????*”

“I found this by the Jeep.” Clark held up the purse and keys he had found. “She went outside to use the phone, and now she’s gone.” CK just stared at the items, unsure of what to do.



\*\*\*

Above the city, Lois struggled to find an opening in the building she was standing against. “I never wanted this. I never wanted to be in constant danger. I guess it’s my curse. I just hope it doesn’t cost you your life, little one. I don’t think I could live with myself.” The tears began to fall as she spoke to her unborn child.

She felt her foot slip. “Oh, God...”she screamed as she fell, “*Clark, help!!!*”

\*\*\*

CK looked at Clark as the sound of Lois’ voice reached his ears; He could tell by Clark’s face that he had heard it as well. Before CK could even respond, Clark was gone. He started to take off after Clark but thought better of it. Clark had been acting as Superman longer than CK had, and knew what he was doing. CK just hoped Clark and Lois would be all right.

\*\*\*

Clark jetted towards the sky, not even stopping to change into his suit. He hadn’t brought it with him for several weeks, and he didn’t want to risk the life of his wife or child by taking the time to change. He caught Lois in mid-air, soothed her as she clung to him. “Shhh...” he soothed.

“I’ve got you, honey..”

“Clark...” she whimpered, clutching his shirt.

He set her down as they landed in a deserted alley. “Hey, you’re fine. I’ve got you. You’ve been in bigger jams than this and walked away...”

“Things are different now,” Lois said shakily, taking his hand to place it on her abdomen.

Clark rested his head against hers. “Yeah,” he acknowledged softly. “That woman, Samantha—how did she get out?”

“I don’t know. Tempus? Maybe...I have no idea. She sprayed me with pepper spray, and then I felt a cloth go over my face....I think it was chloroform.” Lois grimaced as she spoke.

“Are you okay? Is the baby—?”

“I think we’re okay.” Lois breathed a sigh of relief as she rubbed her abdomen.

Clark held her close, resting his forehead against hers. “I was so scared.”

“Met too,” She said shakily, reaching for him. “Clark, take me home.”



“Okay, but first I’m taking you to the doctor to make sure our son’s okay.” Clark held her tightly against him. Lois nodded quietly as he guided took them back to the Jeep and headed to the doctor’s office. He glanced at her as she stared out the window solemnly. She was as terrified as he was.

\*\*\*

Unbeknownst to either of them, Samantha was watching with a video camera, taping Clark flying with Lois in his arms. She smiled to herself. Mr. Doe would be pleased with these results. “So, that’s where Superman disappeared to…” she murmured, congratulating herself. She hadn’t been that far off base: Superman was sleeping with Lois Lane; she just also happened to be his wife.

\*\*\*

Clark watched Lois sleep. A wave of anger swept over him at the thought that his wife and child had almost paid the price of Tempus’s games. At the doctor’s they’d run a battery of tests to make sure nothing was out of the normal. Her blood pressure was abnormally high but considering what she’d gone through they’d chalked it up to her falling from a thousand-foot story building. He had called Jimmy earlier, only to discover that Samantha’s release was due to a presidential pardon from Tempus. Memories of his last encounter with the woman swarmed through his mind as he watched his sleeping wife. They had been so distraught by the scandal that she had created. People had turned against Superman, but Lois had received the brunt of the hostility. She had carried herself with dignity, even against the paparazzi. She never gave into the badgering. As time progressed it was getting harder and harder for them to keep their cool when dealing with the paparazzi.

He sighed to himself. She had been exhausted once they had gotten home and he suspected it was partially a result of the pregnancy. He hoped the baby was all right. The doctor said from what she could tell their son was okay but had warned Lois to take it easy. It had unnerved him to see Lois so distraught tonight. She was normally able to shrug off her brushes with death but not now. Now the threat of her life also threatened their child. He kissed her forehead. “I love you so much,” he whispered.

CK had been watching Clark for the last few minutes and hesitantly knocked on the door. “Is she okay?”

“Yeah,” Clark said shakily, standing up and walking out of the room. He closed the bedroom door behind him and followed CK out into the hallway.

“You all right?”

“No.” Clark shook his head. “The woman who started the whole mess with the scandal and with me losing my powers in the first place is out.”

“What?”



“President-elect Doe pardoned her.” Clark said darkly.

“Doesn’t he have to be in office for that to be official?”

“Not if the acting president agrees.” Clark shook his head. “I have rescued Lois from so many dangers over the years. The night of our wedding Lex Luthor kidnapped her and replaced her with a clone. It took almost a month for me to get her back. She’s always had this blasé attitude about it, though. Until tonight. Things are different now.”

“Because of the baby,” CK said, recognizing the fear in Clark’s eyes.

“Yeah. Listen, I’m going to go out. Can you please just watch her? I don’t want anything else happening to her.”

“Yeah. No problem.” CK watched him suspiciously. Something was wrong. He decided to follow Clark in secret, positive that Lois wouldn’t be going anywhere anytime soon.

\*\*\*

Tempus paced around his office, giving orders to Randolph, “—and see about hiring some painters for the White House. I despise the color.”

“Yes, sir,” Randolph said, taking notes. He looked up from his notebook and spotted Clark Kent in the doorway, arms crossed and a stern look on his face.

Tempus paused at Randolph’s distracted expression, then laughed. He popped a grape in his mouth and greeted Clark. “Mr. Kent? Come on in...”

Clark walked into the room, ignoring the Secret Service agents who attempted to pat him down. He reached out for Tempus and grabbed him by the throat. The grape Tempus had just swallowed popped out of his mouth. Randolph stared on in alarm. “Uh, sir, should I call security, Mr. President-elect?”

Tempus struggled to breathe as he spoke. “No, Randolph, he won’t harm me.”

Clark’s anger was blazing through him. He wanted to kill this man. “Don’t bet on it,” he warned. The look of hatred was blazing through his eyes as Tempus stared back at him expectantly. Clark’s inner conscience was fighting with him. He wanted to kill Tempus, but he couldn’t do it. He released Tempus and shoved him back roughly.

“You see, Randolph? That’s something you must learn about superheroes. No matter which way they turn, they’re constantly bumping into their own ethics.”

“Superheroes?” Randolph asked, confused.



“I’m going to bring you down, Tempus.” Clark warned.

“Who’s Tempus?”

“You’ve gone too far this time.”

“What are you going to do? Impeach me?”

“I’ll do whatever’s necessary.”

Tempus just smiled. “You may want to tell your friend Superman to cooperate with the new administration, Mr. Kent. One never knows when one’s wife will drive a car off a cliff, fall off the tallest building in Metropolis, or get shot crossing the street—does one?”

The threat was clear. “This is a warning: You stay away from her, or you will see my ethics disappear,” Clark growled, getting into Tempus’s face once more.

“What makes you think I give into threats, Mr. Kent?”

“What makes you think that’s a threat?” Clark stalked away, pushing the bodyguards away with ease. Outside Tempus’s window, CK watched the encounter between Clark and Tempus with dismay. Tempus was pushing Clark’s buttons, and Clark was buying into it. Why?

\*\*\*

Clark paced around the bedroom that evening, relaying his encounter with Lois. “I can’t believe what an idiot I was.”

“It’s perfectly understandable. The man tried to kill your wife and considering I’m your wife, I’m not sorry you did,” she retorted.

“Lois, I almost killed him.”

“You what?” Lois asked.

“I threatened him. I grabbed him by his skinny little neck, and—I should have killed him.” Clark fumed. CK had been nowhere to be found when he had gotten back and she had woken up when he returned. Clark was slightly miffed that he had left Lois here by herself.

Lois smiled, “Clark, you don’t mean that.” She stood up and placed a hand on his chest, trying to calm him down.

“Don’t I?” he challenged. “Lois, you’re supposed to be staying out of danger and avoiding stress. How is falling from a skyscraper healthy?”



He stood in his robe, arms crossed across his chest and struggling to control his anger. He was angry at Tempus, but he was also angry at himself.

“Clark,” Lois soothed, “I understand why you *wanted* to kill him, but I’m glad you didn’t.” She moved to hug him.

“Lois, he almost killed you...our son...” Clark stated hoarsely.

“I know,” she said. She noticed something else was bothering him but wasn’t sure how to get him talking.

“What kind of monster does that? I mean, how are we supposed to avoid stress with people like Tempus out there causing God-only-knows what kind of havoc and destruction? I will not let him take you from me.”

“Clark, I’m right here.” Lois wrapped her arms around his neck, “I’m not going anywhere. Why were you calling yourself an idiot?”

“I let him see my anger...my fear...it was so *stupid*.”

“Your fear?”

“Lois, when I left the asylum you weren’t there. I didn’t know where you were.”

“Honey, I’m fine now. We’re fine.” She placed his hand on her abdomen to prove her point.

Clark smiled, looking down at the small bump that had begun to form under his hand. “I know. It’s just I’ve been having those nightmares and then this...”

“Nightmares? I thought you didn’t remember what they were about.”

“I didn’t until the other night. Tempus is in them.”

“Tempus?”

“Yeah. He was pulling you away from me...I was trying to reach you, but I couldn’t...” the anxiety was evident in his eyes.

“Honey, it’s just a dream.” Lois pulled him closer. “I’m right here, and I’m not going anywhere.”

“Promise?” he asked hesitantly.

“I promise.” Lois smiled warmly. She reached over to cup his cheek. She felt him relax at the gesture.



He moved to cup her cheek in his hand, stroking the outline of her jaw. "I don't know what I would ever do if I ever lost you, Lois." The emotion he felt was threatening to overwhelm him. He moved to capture her mouth with his own.

She moaned her approval as she felt his hand move to cup the back of her head, pulling her closer into his embrace. The fear he felt from the dreams was evident. She pulled away from him slightly to whisper in his ear, "Make love to me, Clark."

She moved her hand up his chest and took a hold of the knot where his robe was tied around his waist, fisting it in her palm. He moved his hand to cover hers. She looked up at him; a shuddered breath escaped her lips. He untied his robe, allowing it to hang open on his shoulders as she lifted her head to meet his gaze. He lowered his mouth to meet hers. She moved her hands up to pull him closer, deepening the kiss.

\*\*\*

Downstairs, CK lay on the couch with a pillow over his head, attempting to block out the sounds of the couple upstairs. "Don't they ever quit?" he muttered to himself. In the last few days, he had been around the couple, he had overheard them together at least half a dozen times now. It was insane. They didn't know when to quit.

CK shook his head in misery. Hopefully, they would be done soon so he could get some rest. The tension over Tempus and his concern over Lois was getting to him. He needed his rest, and he wasn't going to get it by having to listen to them all night.

"Somebody hates me..." CK muttered.

He concentrated on the other sounds on the street, trying to drown out the sounds coming from upstairs. He heard a couple fighting with one another next door. Feeling like an intruder, he diverted his attention to the next house. All he could pick up there was an elderly woman snoring rather loudly. Deciding to broaden his range, he listened in on the police scanners at the Metropolis P.D. "President-elect Doe has released Tempus, a man accused of bank robbery who was serving his sentence in the Metropolis Sanitarium."

CK's ears perked up at this. Tempus had been released? But John Doe was Tempus? Something didn't make any sense here. He quickly changed and decided to investigate. He figured the other Clark was too occupied at the moment to be disturbed.

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Tempus unlocked the room where he had his captives locked up. "Come along, Herb, we have some sightseeing to do." He pulled out a 9mm gun to emphasize his point.

H.G. Wells grudgingly rose to his feet and followed Tempus. Tempus pulled out the transport device he had confiscated from Andrus and placed it on the table. He then turned to Randolph.



“I’m going out for a bit, Randolph. Unlock the Vice President-elect’s door and when he tries to escape, let him.”

“Yes, sir,” Randolph nodded, watching Tempus leave with H.G. Wells.

\*\*\*

Tempus entered the asylum armed and pulled out his microphone. “John Doe is Papa. Everything he does is right.” He then approached the guard in the lobby. “Release Tempus,” he told the guard.

“What? Why?”

“Because I’m John Doe.”

The guard thought about it for a minute. “Let me just call my supervisor, Mr. President-elect.”

“Of course.”

A glazed look came over the guard’s face as he spoke into the phone. “Mr. Grant? Yes, Mr. President-elect Doe wants us to release Tempus....Yes, everything he does is right. Right away, sir.” The guard hung up the phone and opened the doors for Tempus to enter. “Right this way, sir.” He motioned for them to follow.

H.G. Wells shook his head in disgust, looking for a way to escape. Tempus had the gun trained on him; if he even flinched, the gun would go off.

\*\*\*

Lois and Clark lay in one another’s arms. “Wow... I think we’re going for a record tonight.”

Clark chuckled. “I know...”

He moved to tighten his embrace when the mood was broken by the blaring of the doorbell. “What the...” he scanned the clock and groaned when he saw the time. “You have got to be kidding me. It is after midnight,” he muttered as he moved to put on his robe.

Lois moved to grab her blue robe from the bathroom. “Well, let’s see who it is, so we can get rid of them.”

Lois and Clark moved downstairs, surprised to see the couch empty. “Hmmm, I wonder where he is,” Clark muttered as he made his way to the door.

“Clark?” she whispered, motioning for him to put his glasses on.



“Oh!” he quickly grabbed his spare pair from the desk by the front door. He then moved to open the door.

“Clark Kent?” A very disheveled Andrus stood on the doorstep, staring in awe at Lois and Clark.

“Oh, my—you’re...” Lois began.

“My name is Andrus. I’m from the future and I need your help,” Andrus said.

The couple nodded and ushered the man inside.

\*\*\*

“What is the meaning of this, Tempus?” H.G. Wells asked as they stood in the lobby of the asylum.

“You’ll see.” He looked at his watch, “He should be here right about...” a sonic boom could be heard as CK landed outside the asylum. “—now.”

CK entered the asylum, looking for Tempus. “What is going on here?”

“Ah, Superman, right on time,” Tempus stated, applauding.

CK stared at Tempus. “What do you want, Tempus?”

Tempus smiled. “I’ve got everything I want except one thing.”

“What’s that?”

Tempus smiled, before firing his 9mm at the guard sitting at the front desk. CK caught the bullet at the last minute and threw it to the ground.

“That is enough!”

Tempus pulled out his microphone once more. “Superman is your enemy. Everything he does is wrong.”

CK turned to grab Tempus only to be surrounded by guards with their weapons trained on him. “What is going on here?”

“Kill him,” Tempus ordered the guards. The guards, in a trance state, began firing their weapons at CK. CK moved at super-speed to catch the flying bullets.

Tempus just stared on in amusement. He snapped his fingers then pulled out a small jewelry box. “Oh, I almost forgot.”



CK dropped the bullets to the ground and then moved to tie the guards up with a large chain and padlock. “That oughta hold you.”

“No!” H.G Wells cried out. “Superman, run!”

Before CK could respond Tempus opened the jewelry box and revealed a ring made of kryptonite, glowing green. “I have a present for you.” He placed the ring on CK’s finger as he fell to the ground in pain. “There’s only one Superman allowed per universe. Haven’t you read the time-traveler manual?”

He then turned to H.G. Wells and aimed the gun on him. “Let’s go.”

\*\*\*

“I can’t tell you what an honor it is to meet you. You two... You don’t know how many people your lives have touched. If it weren’t for you two, there would be no Utopia. Whole generations would never have had a chance. Men of peace such as myself wouldn’t exist as leaders. My world is extraordinary. A true Utopia. The world your love made possible,” Andrus relayed to Lois and Clark as he sat across from the couple in the living room. They had both changed into a pair of jeans and sweaters and were listening to the man tell of his plight with Tempus.

“Uh, thank you,” Clark replied. “What do you need from us?”

“I need your help in taking Tempus back to the future. There I can make sure he does no more harm to either of you ever again.”

“How?” Lois asked. “I mean, can’t he just escape once more and travel back here again?”

“Well, I...” Andrus began but stopped when he noticed Clark’s hand had begun to turn a shade of green. He was shaking his head, trying to regain control. “Superman, are you all right?”

“I...I don’t know. I feel kind of weak. Almost like there’s Kryptonite around...” Clark replied between pained breaths.

“I assure you there is no Kryptonite around,” Andrus replied. He moved to check on Clark who had fallen to the floor. The green ring that had formed on his hand had steam rising from the skin.

“Clark?” Lois moved to where Clark had slumped over. “What’s happening?”

“I—I don’t know. I don’t understand how something like this could happen.”

At that moment, Tempus opened the front door with H.G. Wells. “Ah, right on time. You see, Herb? I was right. All the Supermen are linked. You attack one, and the same thing happens to the other.”



“What are you talking about?”

“Oh, you don’t know yet. Mr. I’m-So-In-Shape had a mishap at the Asylum. He just didn’t like that Kryptonite ring I gave him. A pity too. I picked it out just for him.”

“You—you...” Lois stood up to threaten him but then stopped herself.

“Oh, that’s right. You can’t be having any stress can you, Lois? Not good for the baby.”

“Get out!” Lois spat.

“Oh, I will...” He aimed the gun at Andrus. “Open the window.”

“Never.”

“Open it or she dies.” Tempus moved the gun to point at Lois. Andrus agreed, unable to live with himself if he were the cause of Lois or Clark being harmed. Tempus pushed Andrus into the window. “We’re going on a trip, Andrus, and you’re driving.” He turned and reached for Lois.

“No!” Clark cried as he struggled to remain balanced. He reached out for Lois.

“Clark—”

Tempus just laughed and pushed Lois into the time window. Clark struggled to maintain his balance as he made his way to Tempus. “You son of a...”

“Now now, Clark, that’s very un-Superman of you!” He struck Clark with the butt of his gun, causing him to grunt in pain. H.G. Wells stared on in horror before moving to attack Tempus from behind with the lamp.

Tempus fell to the floor. Clark stepped inside the time window, reaching for Lois. “Lois?” he cradled her in his arms before moving to step out.

At that moment, another Tempus emerged from the opposite end of the room. Andrus stared on in horror. “No, one of them is the replica!”

The newly-appeared Tempus reached out to touch the time window. “Say goodbye to Utopia.” He laughed as the time window began spinning out of control.

“No!” H.G. Wells cried out as he watched the window begin to spin out of control.

Tempus laughed as he watched Lois, Clark, and Andrus struggle to escape the time window.

“Lois—get out now!” Clark cried as he struggled to keep the window open long enough for them to escape.



Lois felt a force pulling her back, keeping her from moving. The room spun out of control as the couple disappeared into nothingness. Lois watched in horror as Clark collapsed inside the window. “Clark?”

H.G. Wells looked on in horror. “What have you done?” He reached for Tempus, demanding, “Where are Superman and Ms. Lane?”

Tempus laughed. “Gone.”

\*\*\*

Across town in the Asylum, CK scanned the room for something to help remove the Kryptonite ring from his hand. Everything burned. The searing pain that enveloped his body was too much. He fell into unconsciousness as his mind cried out in pain.

\*\*\*

H.G. Wells stared on in horror, “You...you monster! Do you have any idea what you have done?” He began throwing things at Tempus. Tempus laughed with glee.

“I’ve created a new world. A dystopia. A world with no Superman and no Lois Lane.” Tempus leaned over until he was a mere few inches from the elderly man’s face and whispered, “Enjoy it while you can, Herb.” He then left the room, leaving Wells to sit and ponder the consequences of Tempus’s remark.

A scan of the room showed that he was completely alone. Seeing no sign of Tempus or his goons, he moved toward the front door and hailed a cab.

“Where to, mister?” the cabbie asked.

“Metropolis Sanitarium. Please hurry.”

“You got it.”

\*\*\*

Tempus arrived back at his hotel and barked, “Send up the most expensive bottle of champagne you have. We have to celebrate.”

“Yes, sir.” Randolph yawned. “Doesn’t he ever sleep?” he muttered to himself as he left the room.

Tempus lit a cigar. Yes, this was the life. No Superman to destroy his plans—for now anyway. It was only a matter of time before the goody two-shoes escaped once more but he would make sure Superman returned to a world of chaos and mayhem.

\*\*\*



“Superman!” H.G. Wells did his best to try to move the Man of Steel, so he could remove the Kryptonite ring. CK groaned in pain every time he tugged on his arm. The extreme pain had obviously caused him to fade into unconsciousness.

“Superman, please!” H.G. Wells begged as he tugged one more time on the Man of Steel’s arm. He was finally able to see the ominous glow of the Kryptonite ring that had been placed on CK’s index finger. Tugging once more, he grabbed the Man of Steel’s hand and pulled at the ring.

\*\*\*

Clark knelt down in the time vortex he and Lois were trapped in as he struggled to level out his breathing. The Man of Steel was in obvious pain, and nothing seemed to be helping.

“Isn’t there anything we can do?” Lois asked.

“No, the only way for this to stop is for the Kryptonite to be removed from the Alternate Clark’s presence.”

“What if it isn’t?”

“I’d rather not think of that future, Ms. Lane.”

\*\*\*

“Oh, God...” CK cried out. He tried to open his eyes, but it hurt to move. He felt weak all over. Where was he? What day was it?

“Clark?” H.G. Wells moved towards the young man hesitantly. “Are you all right?”

CK began to stir, his memories slowly coming back to him. “Tempus...” he murmured.

“You’re safe now. I’ve disposed of the Kryptonite,” H.G. Wells explained.

CK slowly opened his eyes and looked around. He was in Lois and Clark’s living room. “Lois and Clark—where are they?” he asked hoarsely.

H.G. Wells looked down at his hands. “Gone. I’m afraid I have no way of trying to find them.”

“What do you mean ‘gone’? Get in your time machine and find them, I want to go home. I cannot live like this forever.”

“I understand, Clark, but it’s not as simple as that.”

“What do you mean?”



“They were inside a time window when it exploded. They are trapped in a specific nanosecond of time that is out of space and time as we know it.”

CK sat up and looked down at his dress shirt and khakis, slightly shocked. “Wha...? What happened to the Superman suit?”

“I...I had to change you in order to move you here. I couldn't very well have people knowing Superman had been attacked,” H.G. Wells stated, avoiding CK's eyes.

CK was a bit uncomfortable about the idea of the elderly man changing him but decided not to press the issue. They had more important things to discuss. “All right, how do we stop Tempus?”

“We must find the device he is using to control the country. He must be stopped. Once that power has been stripped from him, he will lose the upper hand he now has.”

“But I've been looking and have found nothing.”

“Maybe you've been looking in the wrong places.” H.G. Wells sighed. “We've both had an exhausting day. Get some rest.”

“I don't know how much help I'm going to be without my powers.”

“Don't worry. They should return shortly. Just get some rest.”

\*\*\*

“Clark, how are you feeling?” Lois asked.

“I think I feel fine. I don't feel pain anymore. I guess that means CK is all right.” Clark looked around the spinning box that confined them.

“Andrus, where are we?”

“We've been trapped inside of a time vortex.”

“Meaning what exactly?”

“We're not in space, but we're not quite in time either. The moment that the time window exploded has been frozen. We're trapped in that moment.”

“Well, can't we break out of here?” Lois asked.

“It's too risky.” Andrus shook his head. “We could end up in any time period or any universe.”

“Isn't that better than being trapped in here? Look at this thing. It's shrinking with us inside of it.”



“But we could die, too, if we leave.”

“We could die if we stay here, too,” Lois said she began practicing various breathing exercises to help remain calm.

“Honey, what are you doing?”

“Trying my best to remain calm,” Lois snapped. “We need to figure a way out of here. How are your powers? Do you think you have enough strength to break us out of here?”

“I can try.” Clark stared at the transparent walls that were closing in around them.

\*\*\*

The next morning, Tempus began putting the final touches on the second part of his plan. Samantha watched eagerly, awaiting the next task John Doe needed her to complete since Superman and Lois Lane were the reason she was out of work and in the nutty farm.

“This is perfect, Samantha. The perfect leverage we need,” Tempus remarked after listening to the tapes—both visual and audio—that Samantha had acquired.

“You see, Superman is like a boomerang: he always comes back. That’s just a law of nature. However, we can always change the conditions he comes back to.”

“What do you mean, Mr. Doe?”

“You’ll see. Just trust me.”

\*\*\*

The next day, CK awoke with most of his powers back at full force. He felt a slight dizziness when he went at super-speed for too long, but that was normal considering his bout with Kryptonite from the day before.

He began searching the phone lines in the brownstone, trying to zero in on the source of the messages that were pulsing through. As he scanned the walls, he found not only were the phone lines affected, but the electrical wiring was acting as a conductor for Tempus’s messages as well. He sighed—it looked like he had a long day ahead of him.

H.G. Wells, in the meantime, was trying to track down the precise second the time window had exploded so that he could rescue Lois, Clark, and Andrus.

“Have you had any luck?” CK asked as he watched the elderly man look back and forth from his notes to the many watches and clocks he had about the office.



“I have the approximate hour and minutes calculated, but I need to narrow it down to the second Tempus touched the window,” H.G. Wells murmured. “I’m going on my own recollection.”

“Can’t you just guess?”

“No, my boy, that would take years to go from nanosecond to nanosecond. I need the exact time.”

“I have no idea,” CK sighed to himself.

\*\*\*

Clark continued hitting the walls that confined them in the time vortex. Each blow seemed to make the wall weaker, but he still was unable to create an opening for them to escape. Lois and Andrus watched in anticipation as Clark continued to strike the wall. Andrus had long given up his argument of staying put.

Clark struck the wall again. A crack began to form. “We’re getting somewhere.”

He struck the wall once more.

**CRACK!**

The time vortex shattered all around them. Clark moved to shield Lois and Andrus from the giant force pulling at them in all directions. He held onto them as they flew into the atmosphere, which seemed to have oxygen. He breathed a sigh of relief. At least, that was one less thing he had to worry about. He carried his passengers with him as he headed north, looking for any signs of Metropolis or his and Lois’ own time period. He wasn’t sure what he should be looking for, but he hoped he would find it.

\*\*\*

CK landed on the balcony of Lois and Clark’s townhome and entered with a grim look on his face.

“What’s wrong?” H.G. Wells asked.

“This.” CK laid a copy of the Metropolis Star down in front of him. The front page read, “CLARK KENT IS SUPERMAN!!!”

“Oh, my! Tempus has obviously raised the stakes.”

“What are we supposed to do? I can’t show up to any rescues without being mobbed.”

“I...I don’t know.” H.G. Wells shook his head.



\*\*\*

“Where are we?” Lois asked, looking around.

“Metropolis...I think.”

“Yes. Metropolis,” Andrus said thoughtfully. He pulled out a device in his pocket and began dialing digits.

“I think the better question is, what time period are we in?”

“Ah, it’s not working. The explosion must have fried the circuitry,”

Andrus complained. “I was trying to see if I could request another transport.”

“How?”

“It’s really quite simple. You see in the 30th century....” Andrus began.

“I really don’t want to know the whole lesson. I just want to know if someone has to bring it to you or not.” Lois replied.

“Oh, no. It would appear in my possession within the requested twelve-hour time period,” Andrus replied.

“Uh-huh.” Clark looked at Andrus, somewhat unsure of the man’s sanity.

“How about we find out what time period this is and if this is even the right dimension?”

“Sounds like a plan to me.”

\*\*\*

Dr. Sam Lane angrily pounded on Lois and Clark’s door. “Lois? Clark? Open up! You have a lot of explaining to do!”

H.G. Wells looked at the front door, eyebrows raised. “Oh, dear.”

CK raked a hand through his hair. “Great. Now, what?”

\*\*\*

“This is really weird.” Lois remarked, looking at the statue commemorating President John Doe in the middle of the Metropolis Park.

“No. No. This isn’t right. This isn’t right at all.”



“Andrus, what are you talking about? Of course, this isn’t right; nothing has been right since Tempus broke free. We need to figure out where we are.”

“No, Ms. Lane, you don’t understand. This is Utopia. Or it was.” Andrus shook his head miserably.

“Utopia? You’re kidding. This place looks so....dark...”

“Where are all the people?” Clark asked.

Lois moved towards the statue to read the plaque. “On this day, we celebrate the great President John Doe who will always be remembered for erasing all democracy in the world and creating a regime of dictatorship once more. The famous Nuclear War of ‘97 was the turning point in this nation’s history and will always be remembered.”

“Nuclear War?” Clark shook his head. “We have got to get back.”

“But how?”

“If this is Utopia, then there has to be some form of time travel here.” Andrus reasoned. “Oh, my.” Andrus’ hand began to glow a bright blue as a solid rectangular shape began to form there. “I guess they got my message.”

“What is that?” Clark asked.

“My time-window replacement.”

“How is that even possible? We’re in Utopia, and it’s been destroyed.” Clark stated.

“No, we’re in one version of Utopia. There are many alternate universes. Every Utopia is linked with the others. This allows us to see when there is a problem in the time ripple.” Andrus opened the window and stepped in. “Shall we?”

“You sure it won’t be exploding again?” Lois asked hesitantly.

“No, Ms. Lane. I assure you, you are perfectly safe.”

Lois still looked skeptical but stepped inside the time window with Clark. “Just another day in the lives of Lois and Clark,” she muttered. Clark smiled and kissed her lightly on the head as the time window disappeared.

\*\*\*



Tempus sat in the fallout shelter he was using as a hideout while he carried out his plan of blowing up the earth. President Garner sat across from him as they played chess. “This is fun. We should do this more often.”

“Yes, President Garner. It’s not every day I get to associate with someone as simple-minded as you.”

“Aw, thanks,” Garner gushed. “Do you think the nuclear warheads will stop the traitor Superman?”

“Of course. That’s why we traded presents: I gave you my autograph, and you gave me the missile launch codes.”

“Yes. I still feel I got the better end of the deal.”

“Ah, well, we’ll work something out.”

\*\*\*

“What am I supposed to do?” CK asked.

“Answer the door?” H.G. Wells asked.

“But the missiles....”

“Just answer the door, Clark. And remember that man is your father-in-law.”

“Right,” CK muttered as he spun back into the dress shirt and khakis he was wearing before. He went to answer the door.

“Well, it’s about time. Where’s Lois?” Sam Lane reprimanded as he stepped inside the townhome, looking around.

“Uh, she had an errand to run. She should be back shortly,” CK stammered.

“Uh-huh. Who’s that?”

“Oh, I’m a friend.” H.G. Wells nodded at Sam. “Herbert George Wells. It’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance.”

“Uh-huh. Clark, you may want to have your friend checked out. He seems to think he’s a dead writer.”

“Yeah.” CK shot H.G. Wells a silent plea, unsure of what he was supposed to be doing.

“So, aren’t you going to invite me in?” Sam asked.



“Oh, sorry.” CK backed away from the door and gestured towards the couch. “I don’t know where my head is today.”

“Hmmm. Not your usual self, huh? Well, that comes with the territory of impending fatherhood.”

“Yeah, no kidding...” CK stopped short.

“Yes, indeed. Which brings me to the bone I have to pick with you.”

“Bone???”

“Yes, why didn’t you and Lois tell me?”

\*\*\*

Tempus stared at the timer on his computer impatiently. “Thirty minutes and counting.”

“Well, thanks to that overgrown boy scout you all will be trying to throw me in jail. I’m going to make sure there’s no jail for you to throw me in.”

“But John Doe, there’s no way we could ever hate you,” President Garner stated with a glazed look and smile pasted on his face.

“You say that now,” Tempus remarked. “Besides, I also want to blow up billions of people.”

Tempus laughed to himself. Little did they know he would be using Herb’s time machine to escape the nuclear war.

\*\*\*

Andrus stepped out of the time window with Lois and Clark. Lois looked around uncertainly.

“We’re back. Why are we in our bedroom?”

“I figured it would be best. Superman, your alternate self is downstairs trying to explain a delicate situation to your father-in-law.”

“Oh, my God, poor Clark,” Lois gasped. She then turned to Clark, “How do you want to handle this?”

“Hold on. I’m picking something up,” Clark said as he listened with his super-hearing.

“What?” Lois asked.

“The countdown for the nuclear launch,” Clark replied. “Go ahead and try to take care of Sam. I’ll be back as soon as I’m done.”



A sonic boom could be heard as Clark left. Andrus stared at the recently vacated space in awe. “Quite remarkable.”

“Yeah.” Lois sighed. “Come on, let’s go rescue Clark from my father,” Lois said as she walked out of the room. She then thought better of it and turned to Andrus. “On second thought, you’d better just stay in the spare bedroom.” She gestured to the room next door. “I don’t think I can explain you to my father.”

“Yes, Ms. Lane,” Andrus replied. He opened the door to the spare bedroom and sat down in the chair by the window. “Let me know once Superman has captured Tempus. I still need to take him to the Utopian Council, so he may answer for all the damage he has caused.”

Lois nodded. “Yeah, I just hope Clark can stop the nuclear missile launch in time.”

She headed downstairs, unsure of what story CK had given her father for her absence. She walked into the room and saw her father pacing around CK, who was raking a hand through his hair nervously as Sam continued to grill him.

“I just can’t understand why you wouldn’t tell me about this. This is something I should know about,” Sam was saying. He looked in Lois’ direction and saw her standing there. “Lois, I thought you had an errand you were running.” He shot a look of disapproval towards CK, assuming the young man had lied to him.

“Oh, I did. I just came in through the back,” Lois stuttered.

“Are you all right? You look exhausted!”

“Yeah, I’m fine. Uh, Clark, could I see you in the kitchen for a minute?”

Realizing she was talking to him, CK’s head shot up. “Wha...yeah, sure.”

Once they were behind closed doors, CK started grilling her. “Where the heck have you been? Where is Clark? I’m getting asked five billion questions about why I didn’t tell your father you were pregnant...or Superman...” CK was pacing around the kitchen, gesticulating wildly. Lois couldn’t help but be amused. As much as he might look like her husband, he certainly didn’t act like him. “Now, I need you to cover for me because I have got to stop that nuclear missile attack.”

“Clark is already taking care of it. Nice to see you too. We’re fine, by the way,” Lois replied dryly.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to come off so harsh.” CK glanced toward the kitchen doors. “So, I’m stuck here?”

“I’m afraid so.”



“What is his problem?” CK asked.

Lois laughed. “You think my father’s bad? You should meet my mother. It’ll be fine. Just act normal.”

“You’re kidding, right? My normal is your ABNORMAL. That’s the problem.” CK muttered dryly.

“Just shut up and follow my lead, would you?” Lois instructed. CK nodded and followed Lois into the living room.

\*\*\*

Clark flew down to an area he knew held several fallout shelters. He tuned his super-hearing in order to listen for Tempus’s voice. Once he was able to find him, he zeroed in and crashed through the building at super-speed

“You’re too late, Superman! You have to have the missile launch codes in order to cancel the sequence.”

Clark focused on the computer Tempus was using and scanned the hard drive. He punched a hole into the hard drive, removing it completely from the computer.

Tempus just stared at the hard drive that lay crushed into a ball on his desk as his computer screen went blank. “Or that. You could do that.”

Clark grabbed Tempus by the collar. “John Doe, you are hereby impeached!”

“Show-off,” Tempus muttered. “Do you think that’s all it takes to finish me? All that spandex must be cutting off the circulation to your brain.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“It means now everyone knows you are a liar. Your secret identity has been exposed to the world. In chess, this is where I’d say ‘Check.’”

Clark glared at Tempus, unsure of his next move. President Garner shook his head, appearing to come out of a trance. “Superman. I did a horrible thing. I gave him the missile launch codes.”

“It’s okay, Mr. President. It’s not your fault.” Clark reassured.

“It’s not?”

“No, it’s his.” Clark said sternly, looking at Tempus.



“Wow...I—I think I’m up for re-election—what do you think?”

“You’ll be a shoe-in Mr. President.”

The Secret Service agents began shaking their heads as well, trying to assess what had just happened. President Garner pointed to Tempus and ordered, “Arrest this man.”

“Right away, Mr. President.”

Clark’s expression was grim as he watched Tempus be carried away. He wasn’t sure how true Tempus’s statement was. If his secret identity had been revealed, then nothing would ever be the same again. He didn’t know how he and Lois would deal with this revelation.

\*\*\*

CK watched the encounter between Lois and her father in confusion. She seemed kind of distant with her father. Did she not like him? He wasn’t sure how he was supposed to act around this man so he listened in frustration as Sam Lane lectured Lois on the importance of family. He felt like he was in a living hell. She kept giving him looks like she wanted him to say something, but he had no idea what to do or say.

“Daddy don’t believe everything you read...” Lois managed before Sam continued on his tirade. They had managed to convince him the story about Clark being Superman was false but now he was upset about not being told about the baby.

A voice popped into his head that sounded like Clark’s.

*“Is everything okay? You seem kind of tense.”*

*‘WHAT? How did you do that?’*

*“Telepathy. Kryptonians have the power of telepathy with one another.”*

*‘Oh. I never realized... Yeah, Lois’ father is still here. He’s lecturing Lois on the importance of family.’*

*“You’ve got to be kidding me! After his track record! Find an excuse to leave. Either go upstairs or go in the kitchen, so I can switch places with you.”*

*‘All right. Hey, Clark?’*

*“Yeah?”*

*‘This is kinda cool.’*

*‘Yeah. I’ll see you in a few.’*



CK stood up from the couch. “I’ll be right back. I forgot I left the stove on.”

Lois glared at him. He had a feeling she was upset at him for not stepping in to ward off her father.

“Now, Lois, you should know better than anyone how important it is to keep your family close. When were you planning on telling me?”

Clark entered the living room through the kitchen doors CK had just exited. Lois immediately noticed the change in his demeanor. She pleaded with her eyes for him to help her. He nodded and made his way over to where Sam was lecturing Lois. “Sam? Are you finished?”

“What? No, I’m not finished.”

“You should be. Lois doesn’t need any more unnecessary stress right now, and lecturing her because we were unable to find the time to let you know about your grandchild is not helping. I apologize for any distress this might have caused, but you’re upsetting your daughter and I cannot allow that.”

“Upset? I’m the one that found out I was going to be a grandfather from the local newsstand!” Sam spat. “I thought we had moved past all this...”

“We have...It’s just been a stressful few months. We told mom the other night but hadn’t had a chance to tell you...” Lois explained.

Clark nodded, wrapping an arm around her, “The paparazzi have made it near impossible for anything to remain private. We hadn’t planned on announcing it until after we’d told you,”

“Really?” Sam asked skeptically.

“Really,” Lois sighed, standing up to give her father a hug. “I’m sorry you had to find out like that, but I’m glad you know.” She glanced back at Clark with a smile, “There will be plenty of firsts you and mom will get to see. With this being the first grandson on both sides I’m sure ...”

“Grandson?” Sam repeated in awe.

Lois nodded happily, glancing back at Clark as he wrapped an arm around her waist. “We just found out a few days ago,” Clark said happily.

“Is there anything I can do? I can make some calls—I’ll find out who’s specializing in this field and get you in to see the best there is.” Sam was slipping into protective grandfather mode.

Clark smiled, “We appreciate that Sam, but I think Lois is happy with our doctor,” Clark replied.

Sam nodded, “Well, good.” He extended his hand to shake Clark’s hand, “Congratulations, son,”



Clark took his hand and shook it, “Thank you, Sam,”

Sam looked at Lois in concern as she clamped her hand over her mouth, “Lois, are you okay?”

\*\*\*

Jimmy Olsen stared at his monitor a moment, unsure of what he was doing. He looked around the newsroom and couldn't quite remember how he had gotten there. He looked over at Dianne and Allen, who were shaking their heads as well.

Perry's voice came up behind him, “Jimmy, you okay?”

“I...I don't know, Chief.”

“I know. Something doesn't feel right,” Perry replied. He then turned his attention to the rest of the newsroom. “All right, everyone, listen up! We need to get on the phones and get cracking. Find out what's going on!”

The staff just stared at him. “Well? Get on it! Find out what's going on! I need my front page pronto!”

The staffers started scurrying about as they shook their heads, trying to break free of the reverie they all had been in. “Where are Lois and Clark?”

“I haven't heard from them,” Jimmy said as he tried to remember the past few days.

“Well, find them.” Perry stalked into his office and slammed the door behind him.

\*\*\*

CK sat in the living room with H.G. Wells and Andrus, contemplating their next move. Lois and Clark had been upstairs for a while. “So, what do we do now?”

“Well, we need to tell them of Tempus's misdeeds while they were away.”

Andrus looked confused. “Misdeeds?”

CK pulled out the Metropolis Star for Andrus to read. “Oh, my goodness. This is not good. If the people learn of Superman's true identity before the designated time, the trust they have in him will vanish and be replaced by hate and prejudice.”

CK nodded. His life in his Metropolis was exactly that world of prejudice and hate Andrus spoke of. Mayor White and Mr. Olsen had turned out to be his only true friends. Neither judged him because of his alien origins. He would hate to see Lois and Clark go through the same.



\*\*\*

“Lois?” Clark gently knocked on the bathroom door. “You okay?”

“I’m fine, Clark.” Truthfully, she felt horrible. Her throat was sore. Her stomach was still fluttering with the nauseous feeling that had started the whole mess, and her head was pounding. She leaned against the cool tile wall as she tried to regulate her breathing pattern.

“Lois, you’ve been in there a while. Are you sure you’re okay?”

“Yeah,” she replied hoarsely. She knew Clark had the best of intentions, but she just didn’t feel like being around anyone when she was sick.

Clark listened to her breathing patterns through the door. She was not fine. He could tell she was sick. He knew she hated to be around people when she didn’t feel well, but he was worried about her. He opened the door and knelt down next to Lois. He took her in his arms and held her there a moment. “I told you I was fine,” she murmured.

“I know,” he said. Without another word, he scooped her up and carried her out of the hall bathroom. “You need to rest.” He laid her on the bed and brought her a warm washcloth for her forehead.

“I don’t want to rest. We have to make sure Tempus is—” she tried to sit up in the bed but found two strong arms pushing her back down.

“It’ll be fine,” Clark said. “CK and I can handle Tempus. You need to rest. We’ve been through a lot these past few days.” Clark noticed the hurt look on Lois’ face. “Honey, what’s wrong?”

“Is this how it’s going to be from now on?”

“What are you talking about?”

“I have to stay back while you go get the story?” The tears began to fall simultaneously as she spoke. She made no move to try and brush them away. “I know I have to relax, but this is my story too, Clark.”

Clark was unsure of what had just happened. She had been sick a moment ago, and now she was angry with him, accusing him of trying to cut her out of the story. “What? Lois, I’m not trying...”

“Then what are you trying to do, Clark? I have been working on this with you the whole time. I have stayed out of trouble as much as possible—look, just because I’ve been a little inconvenienced doesn’t mean I have to always sit on the sidelines.”

“Lois, you know that’s not what I meant. I just meant you need to rest. You’ve been through a lot. We both have. You just got sick...”



“Would you stop that.” Lois was getting angrier and angrier the more she listened to Clark reason with her.

“Stop what?”

“Stop being so reasonable.” She crossed her arms across her chest in defiance.

“Honey, I know this is hard for you.” Lois just glared at him, and he chuckled. That earned him a sharp look from her once more. “Sorry. I just meant we can get Tempus put away and then you and I can write the story up...”

He was interrupted by the ringing of the phone by their bed. He sighed. “Ha, always something.” Lois smiled at his attempt at humor. He answered the phone. “Hello? What? Slow down, Jimmy, what’s going on? *What?* No, I’m—yeah...listen...okay—okay. Bye.”

Lois looked at him expectantly. “That was Jimmy. Apparently, a news story just broke that Superman didn’t stop John Doe because he was too busy with...other things.”

“What other things?” Lois asked.

“They’re claiming I haven’t been performing my Superman duties for the past month because we were too busy...with you.”

“What?” Lois’s mouth went dry as the implications of his statement sank in. “You just got your powers back.”

“I know. But there’s no way of proving that to the rest of the world.”

“How do we fix this?”

“I don’t know.”

CK knocked on the door dressed in his Superman suit. “I think I may have an idea.”

Lois and Clark turned their attention to CK, who stood in the doorway.

\*\*\*

Tempus sat in his 4x4 cell once more, drumming his fingers on the desk before him. He hated that Superman had beat him on the John Doe front, but he couldn’t help but compliment himself on exposing Superman as a liar to the world.

“You look well, Mr. Doe. Or should I say Tempus?”

Tempus smiled at his visitor, “Samantha? What’s in a name anyway?”



“True. I wanted to know something.”

“What is that?”

“How did you do that?”

“Do what?”

“How did you brainwash all of us like that? I’ve never seen anything like it in my life.”

“That’s my little secret.” Tempus laughed. “Unlike Superman’s secret, mine can’t be exposed to the world. I’ve already told everyone the truth. They just refuse to believe me.”

“So it is true? Clark Kent is Superman?”

“Of course.”

CK revealed himself from behind the shadows he had been hiding in, wearing the Superman suit. “Only a fool would believe the ravings of a madman.”

“Well, I may be a fool, but at least I’m not parading around in tights,”

Samantha stated confidently. “I’ve got the scoop on the biggest story of the century: The real scoop on the Man of Steel.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure of that,” CK replied smugly.

“We may look alike, but we are different,” Clark replied, stepping out of the shadows as well.

“Oh, really? Then how do you explain you flying with Lois Lane?”

Samantha looked back and forth between the two men. How was this possible? No, she wasn’t wrong. She knew what she had seen. “This is just some trick. I saw you flying with Lois Lane.”

“What are you talking about?” Clark asked.

Samantha pulled out the video in her purse. “I have it on tape.”

CK aimed his heat vision at the tape, and Samantha howled in outrage as the tape melted in her hands. “NO!! This is some trick or hologram. I know it is. I know what I saw and I’ll prove it to the world...I’ll...”

“We live in skeptical times. You need proof to back up your story. Which you don’t have.”



“I may not have proof that you’re Superman, but I have leverage...I have a tape you definitely don’t want the world to see,” Samantha retorted, remembering the tape she had of Lois and Clark making love.

“What are you talking about?” CK asked, annoyed.

“Unless you want the tape of you and your wife all over the six o’clock news you will back up my story. You will confirm that you are, in fact, Clark Kent.” The menacing tone of her voice was disturbing. “I know what I saw. I saw you fly.” She pointed an accusing finger at Clark, who was rolling his eyes at her.

Tempus watched the exchange in amusement. He knew what was coming next, but he just sat back and watched. He could always escape and wreak havoc later on. The woman was so galactically stupid it was poetic justice that her plans blow up in her face.

“What tape?” Clark asked.

“This one.” Samantha pulled out another tape from her purse. “You don’t want your precious wife to suffer in the eyes of the media, do you, Superman?”

Clark’s eyes narrowed. He looked at CK, who nodded. CK then shot a beam of heat vision at the tape Samantha was holding. “OW!!!” She then turned to CK. “Why you little...”

Clark motioned to the guard. “Officer, you appear to have an escaped inmate here.”

The guard came over and looked at Samantha. He shrugged and took her into custody. Legal could sort it out later. He just wanted to get back to his game.

“Hey, let me go! I am not—I am a reporter! Let me go! Can’t you see they’re lying?”

The echoes of her screams could be heard down the hall as she was taken into custody.

“Clever, but no cigar. The word is still out that you’re Superman. Now everyone will be looking more carefully at you when you are reporting and doing your rescues,” Tempus smirked.

“We’ll see,” CK replied. “John Doe, you’re late for your press conference.”

“What press conference?” Tempus looked around hesitantly as the guards began to apply black duct tape over his mouth, silencing him from any further outbursts.

CK smiled then turned to Clark. “I’ll see you later.” Clark nodded and left as CK helped escort Tempus out of his cell.

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“There has been a lot of speculation over the past few days as to my whereabouts. There has been speculation about my identity as well as my personal life. I am here to set the record straight and make sure the man behind this madness for the past few days is brought to justice.”

“Superman, where have you been?” a reporter from the Star asked.

“I have been involved in the investigation with Lois Lane and Clark Kent into Randy Goode and his connections with Intergang. As we speak, the leader of Intergang is still at large, but we have proven that Samantha Roberts was responsible for the smear campaign against my friends and myself as much as Mr. Goode was. I have also been involved with the investigation into John Doe and his mind control plot.” CK took a deep breath then turned to the crowd before him once more. “Next question?”

“There has been speculation that you are indeed Clark Kent from the Daily Planet and the reason that John Doe was successful in manipulating everyone was because you and Lois Lane were otherwise occupied. How do you respond?” Barry Dunning asked.

CK smiled slightly; he had been anticipating this question. “Well, the Kents are right behind you. Why don’t you ask them yourself?”

The crowd turned behind them where they saw Lois and Clark approaching the crowd, hand in hand. The cameras and microphones were shoved into Lois and Clark’s faces as questions were thrown at them.

Lois spoke into the microphone that had been shoved in her face, “As you can see, the rumors of my husband and Superman being the same person have been vastly exaggerated. Clark is just an ordinary man.” She smiled up at her husband, “Albeit an extraordinary one at that.”

“What about the rumors of your relationship with Superman?”

“Lois and I have always maintained a good rapport with Superman. He is a good friend, but that is it. He has a life of his own,” Clark replied.

“What about the rumors regarding your pregnancy?” another reporter asked.

Lois looked at Clark uneasily and he opened his mouth to speak, but was thankfully interrupted by CK, “As you can all see, John Doe was a myth. He planted the image of ‘John Doe’ in your heads using a very sophisticated form of brainwashing. He’ll return now to prison where he will do no further harm.” CK turned to Tempus and whispered, “By the way, in chess, this is where I would say, ‘Check Mate.’”

He watched as Tempus, who had been gagged during the conference to prevent any unwarranted outbursts, was carried away by two police officers. Tempus struggled in his binds, but to no avail. Superman had won this battle, but the war still lived on.



“So, you are stating that you have never had an illicit affair with Lois Lane?” Barry Dunning cried out as the reaction to Tempus being carried away began to die down.

CK shook his head in amusement. This guy just didn’t give up. “No, I am not having nor have I ever had an illicit affair with Lois Lane.” CK said. “As President Kasparov and General Navance explained a few months ago... That supposed photograph was a *fake*...”

“We’ve still yet to see any proof.” Barry Dunning countered. “The ‘original’ photograph was never released so what are we supposed to do? Take your word for it?”

“The ‘original’ photograph will *never* be released because I think Lois and Clark have suffered enough.” CK said sternly. “...and yes, you will have to take my word for it.”

A hush fell over the crowd and another question was asked, “Superman, you’re friends with Lois Lane and Clark Kent. Why didn’t you come to Clark Kent’s rescue when he and Lois were attacked?”

CK looked a bit surprised. He hadn’t been prepared for that question. He answered the most truthful way he knew how, “I didn’t know about it until later. If I could have helped that day I would have. Lois and Clark are good friends and I wouldn’t want anything to happen to them.” He scanned the crowd then continued, “I hope this puts a stop to all of the accusations that have been flying around. They’re reporters just like you and I know none of you would want to have your lives turned upside down the way theirs has been the last few months.” With that he stepped away from the podium and ricocheted into the sky.

“Wow!” Jimmy tapped Lois and Clark on the shoulder, “Hopefully that stops them, huh?”

Clark glanced at the crowd of reporters that were staring up into the sky in awe, “Something tells me they’ll be thinking twice before printing anything else about us,”

Lois wrapped her arms around Clark as they headed back to the car, “Come on, your son is hungry and your wife wants Chinese.”

“Son?” Jimmy looked at her with a gleam in his eyes.

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Angela Cross looked through the newspaper with a thoughtful look. “I guess John Doe wasn’t such a bad guy after all,” she commented as she puffed on her cigar. “But I don’t know. Maybe this John Doe was onto something. I mean, starting a nuclear war might be a bit drastic, but maybe holding a country ransom. That could work.”

“It’s doable,” Garrett Grady agreed.

“Why don’t you get working on it? After that fiasco with my brother, money’s been kind of tight.”



“Of course, Ms. Cross, anything you want.”

Angela Cross leaned back in her chair and puffed on her cigar in delight. Things were coming together perfectly. Superman wouldn't know what hit him. She would hold the country hostage and make a few bucks. She had to move slowly if things were to work out right. Her silent partner in the Cayman Islands had pulled out all the stops to help create a new identity for her. This time, Superman would be brought down, along with Lois Lane and Clark Kent. She hoped Leslie Luckabee, Mr. Smith's partner, knew what he was doing with his plans to purchase the Daily Planet. She knew Smith had a reputation for being ruthless and cut-throat on assignments. It seemed only time would tell if she had invested well.

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“Thank you for all your help,” Clark said, shaking CK's hand.

“You're welcome. Thank you for giving me a legend to live up to.” CK shook his head as he stared at Clark. “This is so weird.”

“Tell me about it.”

“We really do appreciate everything you've done,” Lois said, giving CK a hug. CK embraced her hesitantly, unsure where to touch her. “I can't tell you how grateful I am.”

“Nobody should have to live the way I do,” CK stated firmly. He turned to leave then stopped a moment. “I hope you know you are the luckiest man alive.”

“I know,” Clark said, placing one arm around Lois and a protective hand on her abdomen.

“If my Lois had lived, my world would have been a better one, especially for me.”

H.G. Wells tapped him on the shoulder. “I've been meaning to ask you, my boy: You said she died in the Congo?”

“Yeah. Which is kind of weird...you know, missing someone you've never even met. I've tried looking for her, but it's impossible.”

“My boy, never say impossible.....”

Andrus spoke up at this point. “Now, Herbert, don't start trying to borrow trouble.”

H.G. Wells just laughed as they left Lois and Clark's brownstone. Clark shook his head as he watched them leave. “He worries me sometimes.”

Lois laughed. “Mmm. Let's focus on more important things.” She began to nip at his neck.



“Lois...” Clark laughed.

“Race ya upstairs,” she said with a glint in her eyes.

He shook his head and followed her upstairs at super-speed, scooping her up along the way.

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Tempus shook his head as he stared at the wall of his 4x4 cell. Superman had outsmarted him once more. He knew he would be ready the next time. He had outsmarted Superman before, and he would do it again. He just needed time.

A time window appeared in his cell. “Well, Andrus, this is a surprise.”

“Walk in or be dragged through; it makes no difference to me,” CK stated in full Superman persona.

“Is there a third choice?” Tempus asked.

CK rolled his eyes and grabbed Tempus by the arm, pushing him towards the window.

“Thank you, Superman,” Andrus replied. “This time he will be brought to justice.”

“Oh, Andrus don’t be so smug,” Tempus complained as the window disappeared once more.

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Lois lay in bed with Clark, contemplating the roller coaster of emotions they had experienced over the past few days. “Do you think he’ll find her?”

Who?” Clark asked as he nuzzled her ear.

“Lois. His Lois. Do you think Mr. Wells will find her?”

“I’m sure he’ll do his best. I mean, I hope for CK’s sake; he can find her. I can’t imagine how it must be to live a life like that. No one to love.” He placed a kiss on her collarbone and began inching his way downward.

They had made love three times already, but they seemed unable to satisfy their appetite for one another.

“It must be so lonely,” she murmured as she felt Clark nuzzling her breasts. “Oh, God, Clark...”

He smiled against her chest. He loved distracting her like this. “What?” He looked up innocently before capturing her lips with his own.. “Mmm. I could get used to this.”



“Oh, yeah,” Lois agreed as she struggled to catch her breath.

“Making love all night....I could definitely get used to this.”

“Mmm...it seems to definitely help with the nausea,” Lois commented. “Do you think it was just morning sickness or something else with the pregnancy?”

“I don’t know. We’ll find out at your next appointment.”

“I’m sorry I flipped out on you earlier, Clark. I just felt like you were trying to cut me out of the story.”

“I would never cut you out of a story, Lois. I know how much your career means to you.”

“I’d give it all up you know. If I had to, I mean—I would give it up in a heartbeat if I had to.”

Clark placed a finger on her lips, stopping her from saying more. “We’ll cross that bridge when we get there, Lois. For now, I want you to just promise you’ll be careful.”

“I am just really scared, Clark.” She cried, “I want our baby to be healthy. When I was falling off that building all I could think about was everything I wasn’t going to get to do with him...We have so much we have to do to prepare...”

“Everything will get taken care of. We’ll take it a day at a time. We’ll get through this just like we always have...together.” Clark replied, kissing her once more. She moaned in approval as they continued their earlier activities well into the night.

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Dr. Weston sat in her office analyzing the paperwork once more before her. Mrs. Kent had had an abnormal amount of undue stress placed on her when the blood had been drawn. Maybe that was what was causing these results?

She would have to make a call she never liked making, but she had to know...

If this was what she thought it was then the Kents would need to be prepared.

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“I believe she’s ready, sir,” Dr. Martinelli said, motioning Mr. Smith to follow him into his lab.

“You followed the program?” Mr. Smith asked.

“Yes, she’s been programmed to follow your commands as entered into the system. Once we finish the voice pattern, all systems will be a go,” Dr. Martinelli reassured.



Mr. Smith watched as Dr. Martinelli turned on the light switch over a long table with a drape over it. A long humming noise erupted from the table, and the drape fell to the floor, revealing the cold gaze of a young woman with short blonde hair, dressed in black, staring back at him.

“Vixen,” he breathed.

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Lois paced the waiting room cautiously as Clark watched her amused. Dr. Weston had called them first thing in the morning and asked that they come in immediately to go over her test results from the blood drawn after the fiasco with Tempus. She knew something was wrong. She could feel it. Doctors didn’t tell you to come in immediately if it wasn’t something big...

“I really hate doctor’s offices. Did I ever tell you that? I hate hospitals too. I’m not sure what it is. Maybe it’s the smell. Maybe it’s all the nurses or the doctors? I don’t know. I just don’t like them. I never did.” Lois rambled.

Clark smiled. “I wouldn’t know. The only doctor I’ve ever seen was Dr. Klein.”

Lois continued pacing, “Did you ever notice what horrible reading material they have in these waiting rooms?”

“What?”

“The reading material.” She sat down next to him and picked up the magazine on the table in front of them. “This copy of Metro Woman is like two years old. What’s the point in reading this if it’s outdated?” She leaned forward in her seat, rubbing her temples to help calm her nerves down.

“I...I wouldn’t know. I don’t read fashion magazines, Lois.” He pushed a strand of hair out of her face and tipped her chin to look at him. “It’s going to be fine, honey, just relax.”

Lois visibly relaxed a bit and leaned into his embrace. “I am just so scared, Clark. What if there’s something wrong with the baby?”

“We won’t know until we see Dr. Weston.”

“What is taking her so long?” Lois groaned in aggravation.

“I don’t know.” Clark held her tightly. He was as nervous as Lois was if not more, but he was trying to hide it.

“Lois Lane Kent?” the nurse called.

“That’s us,” Lois said, gathering her things with Clark right behind her. She cast a sideways glance at him before stepping through the door. This was it.



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“Pregnancy Induced Hypertension,” Dr. Weston said as she handed Lois and Clark a brochure. “Also known as preeclampsia. It occurs most often in young women with a first pregnancy. It is more common in twin pregnancies, in women with chronic hypertension, preexisting diabetes, and in women who had preeclampsia in a previous pregnancy. I’m not going to lie. It’s dangerous.”

“How dangerous?” Clark asked as he gently squeezed Lois’ hand in his.

“Worst-case scenario it could kill you.” Lois inhaled deeply and covered her mouth in shock. She tried to swallow the tears that were forming. Dr. Weston continued. “Only about five percent of women with this condition died from this disease. If treated properly both mother and child go on to live healthy normal lives.”

“How do you know that’s what I have? I mean, maybe you misdiagnosed me or the samples you were testing got mixed up with someone else?”

“I’ve had your blood work checked four times just to be sure,” Dr. Weston shook her head, “I’m sorry.”

“So, what are our options?” Clark asked grimly.

“Well, you have to watch your stress. Your blood pressure in particular. You have to watch what you’re eating and make sure your cholesterol, sugar, and blood pressure are at a normal level. It’s still early enough in the pregnancy that this could clear up on its own, but if it worsens it could push you into preterm labor. It is a disease that attacks your blood pressure, so staying away from stressful situations is the best way to keep both you and your child safe.”

Lois wiped her eyes gently. “So, what are we to expect?”

“Anytime a situation becomes too stressful for you to handle, your body will go into a state of shock. Your blood pressure has already risen to its max by the preeclampsia, so any added stress will only complicate things.”

“Doctor, what symptoms can we expect?” Clark asked, slightly annoyed that the doctor was avoiding the question.

“You could pass out, or if it’s a more severe case you could have a seizure. It depends on how extreme your case is. We won’t know until you’re further along how severe your preeclampsia is. I’m really sorry.”

Clark nodded sadly at the doctor. “Thank you, Doctor.”

“Now, there is a list of doctors on the back of that pamphlet that specializes in preeclampsia treatment. You should call one of them and get into see a doctor as soon as possible.”



The couple just nodded blankly. The news was still settling in, and neither knew what to do.

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“I called Perry and told him we were going to be working from home for the rest of the day.” Clark sat on the couch next to Lois. “What are you watching?”

Lois just pointed at the television. The LNN newscaster was reporting on the events over the last few days. “No, I am not having nor have I ever had an illicit affair with Lois Lane.” The image of CK as Superman was on the screen with images of Clark and Lois.

Clark took the remote and clicked the television off. “Enough of that,” he said, turning to Lois. “We need to talk, Lois.”

“I know,” Lois said quietly. “I think I may have to take a leave of absence.” She got up from the couch and began pulling items out of the refrigerator.

“What?” He followed her into the kitchen, unsure of what she was doing or where this talk of a leave of absence had come from.

“Come on, Clark, I get more stress from my job than anything else. It makes sense.” Lois began pouring water into a pot and placed various items into the water before turning the stove on.

“No, you don’t have to take a leave of absence, Lois. Maybe just cut back a little. Less jumping off buildings...” At Lois’ stern look, he caught himself. “Sorry. Just trying to lighten the mood a bit,”

“What am I supposed to do? I have to avoid stress.” Lois sighed, exasperated.

“I know that, but I think you may be jumping the gun here, Lois. We haven’t even spoken with any of these doctors yet. Let’s talk to one of these specialists then make a decision. Until then, I do agree you should take it easy. No investigating without me. No breaking and entering. No undercover work.”

“Now where is the fun in all of that?” Lois asked sarcastically.

Clark laughed. “I know this is going to be hard, Lois.” He looked at the pot she was stirring. “Honey, what is that supposed to be?”

“Dinner?” she replied matter-of-factly. “It’ll be worth it, though.” Lois sighed, leaning back against him. He encircled her waist, pulling her close to him. “Once this baby comes things are going to have to change anyway. I just hope I’m able to carry him to term.” Clark kissed her head lightly and held her.



“Lois, you are the most stubborn woman I have ever met. If you’re determined to do something you’ll do it.”

Lois smiled back at him, “Only you could turn an insult into a compliment like that.”

“Well, us romantic spacemen have a reputation to keep up,” he whispered, scooping her up and turning off the stove.

“That was supposed to be dinner.” She argued.

“We’re going out.” He said with a grin. The sound of laughter could be heard in the sky along with a sonic boom.

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Perry White hung up his phone. Something was up. He had heard the despair in Clark’s voice when he had called. There was something he wasn’t saying and whatever it was, it was big.

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The End

Stay Tuned for the conclusion in “Collateral Damage,” the final segment in the “What the Hey” Series.

