

FOLC4EVERNADAY PRODUCTIONS

FRIENDS OR LOVERS?

FOLC4EVERNADAY



Description: A rewrite of the episode "Resurrection." Lois has discovered Clark's secret the night Mayson died and struggles with the emotional rollercoaster this revelation brings on. When DEA Agent Dan Scardino comes on the scene things begin to get more heated. Will Lois ever trust Clark again?

PG-13

Friends or Lovers?

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“Oh, my God!” Lois covered her mouth in shock.

“Mayson ... “ Clark knelt numbly on the concrete as paramedics removed Mayson’s body from his arms. Lois watched as the paramedics zipped up the body bag and carried it away.

Who would do such a thing? Mayson hadn’t been a saint, but she certainly didn’t deserve this. ‘Poor Clark.’ He looked like someone had just sucker-punched him. He stood next to her, staring at the scene which had unfolded before them. Police were everywhere, along with ambulatory workers. A few members of the press had approached and were questioning the officers on the scene.

“Clark?” She laid a hesitant hand on his arm.

She was surprised when he pulled her into his arms, burying his face against the nape of her neck as he let out a shaky breath. “I ... I’m so sorry,” he murmured quietly.

Lois buried her face into his chest and tried to block out the chaos around her. She felt him sigh and tighten his arms around her. She sighed with relief against his chest, taking in his innate male scent, wrapping her arms around his waist, and keeping him within her grasp.

She opened her eyes and stared curiously at his torn cotton dress shirt. There was a rip in it. She reached up to stroke the rip and gasped when she saw what lay beneath his shirt: the familiar red and yellow emblem stared back at her. She shuddered slightly as the implications of this began to sink in. Why would Clark be wearing Superman’s shield? His suit? A shaky hand lightly caressed the familiar spandex. Yes, definitely Superman’s suit, which meant only one thing. Clark was Superman. How could she have been so blind? Anger consumed her as the last year of lies ran through her mind.

“Hey, you okay?” His arm moved around her shoulders and guided her towards the courthouse steps. His voice was cracked and full of uncertainty, a characteristic she would never think to associate with Superman.

She’d never seen him like this before. He pinched the bridge of his nose, trying to regain control of his emotions. The sadness in his eyes was evident, unshed tears already forming in the corners. The anger she felt moments before subsided. She couldn’t confront him like this, not when he was obviously already in pain. He may have lied to her but he was still her friend, her friend that needed her tonight. She offered him a watery smile and took a shaky breath.

“I ... I guess it’s just been a long night,” she said shakily.





“Yeah ... “ he murmured quietly. “Here, I’ll walk you home.”

“Sure.”

The walk to Lois’ apartment was quiet, both Clark and Lois were thinking about the events that had unfolded that night. Mayson had just died in his arms while he and Lois had been sharing their first kiss, a turning point in their relationship. He should be on cloud nine right now, but instead, he was attempting to suppress the guilt he felt swallowing him up from inside.

If he had just been a few seconds faster ...

“Here we are,” he said, opening the door to her apartment building. He followed her inside without a word. Lois seemed distant. He was scoring two for two in the last two days. Their first date ended with him having the door slammed in his face and their first kiss ended with watching a friend die. He swallowed the bitter bile that grew in his throat. ‘Don’t go there,’ he told himself. Lois opened the door and turned to face him, offering a hesitant smile. What now?

Lois looked up at Clark hesitantly. The look in his eyes was unnerving. It broke her heart to see Clark so disconnected. She pitied him. She couldn’t imagine what it would be like to lose someone close to her like that. He was hurting. The last thing he needed tonight was to be confronted about his alter ego. She tried to suppress the anger she felt inside her.



“Goodnight, Lois,” Clark whispered, looking down at her hesitantly. His hand cupped her cheek, his touch was uncertain. She moved her hand to squeeze his gently. He seemed to relax slightly. She wasn’t sure what his next move would be. Was he going to try to kiss her? Did she want him to? The memory of his kiss was still seared into her mind. The spark between them was incredible. She had known they’d had chemistry, but not how intense it would be.

Mayson’s murder had turned a precious moment into something bittersweet. She cringed inwardly at the memory. Now, she would remember this day as the day she figured out the truth. He’d lied to her. Her best friend had lied to her.

His lips brushed against hers lightly and were gone before she could react. Even in the split second, their lips touched, she felt the same spark from their kiss at the courthouse. Without thinking, she pulled him to her level and kissed him thoroughly before pulling away. “Good night, Clark.”

She sashayed into her apartment, locking the door behind her.

The funeral was slow. Mayson’s voice echoed through his mind. “So, that’s what you’ve been hiding ... “ and “Resurrection.”

Guilt consumed him as Mayson’s family and friends attempted to console him with knowing smiles, causing his guilt to eat at him even more. Everyone seemed to think Mayson and he had been an item. If he had only set her straight, not led her on the way he had. He had so many wasted chances to tell her he only wanted to be friends. The look of pity in everyone’s eyes ate at him as he listened to the minister’s words numbly.

She had been so young, her whole life ahead of her. She had challenged Superman and seen past the glasses Clark Kent wore. He hadn’t known what to think. He did care about her but as a friend. Now, it was too late. Had she seen him with Lois when she opened her car door that night? If only —

His guilt had been consuming him the past few days. He and Lois seemed to be walking on egg shells around one another. He wanted nothing more than to be with her, but he couldn’t seem to control his guilty conscience. He loved her. He wanted to be with her and pick up their blossoming relationship where they had left off, but he couldn’t seem to shake himself out of the guilty reverie he was consumed in.

Work had been the only safe topic for him and Lois lately. She went out of her way to avoid speaking to him, keeping as much distance between them as possible. Did she pity him too?

The sound of Mayson’s car exploding kept him awake every night. He kept recalling that night over and over as he tried to figure out what he could have done differently. The kiss he had shared with Lois had been incredible. He had dreamed of a night like that since his first meeting with her. Now his memory of their first kiss was tainted with the memory of Mayson’s murder.



Lois had surprised him that night when she had kissed him so thoroughly; her kiss was the last thing he had expected. He had lain awake that night recalling her taste as he fought to silence the voices of guilt that rang through his subconscious.

Lois watched Clark cautiously as the minister spoke. She gave a sideway glance towards him, unable to read his expression. He seemed so distant lately. Ever since that night, she had hardly been able to talk to him. It was hard to wrap her mind around the idea that this was Superman struggling with the death of a friend. A liar; he was a liar. She had been working beside Superman for over a year and didn't even know it.

Her best friend flew around in tights, coming to the rescue whenever he was needed. 'Cheese of the Month? Yeah, right,' Lois thought to herself in disgust. How had she been so blind? She was furious. She was the top investigative reporter for the Daily Planet and she hadn't seen it. All the excuses; lame excuses at that. She was angry at him, but she was also angry at herself for not figuring it out sooner.

What was she supposed to do? It hurt. Forgiveness had never been something to come easy to her, but she knew she had to forgive him if she wanted to continue their relationship. If only it didn't hurt so much.

Clark was hurting too, she knew that. She had been so tempted to confront him over the past few days, but had never been able to do it. That blank look in his eyes had silenced any anger or fury that consumed her. She had never seen him like this before. "Are you okay?"

"The last thing she said to me was 'Resurrection'. What was she trying to tell me?" he murmured in a monotone voice as he stared at the ground.

"Maybe you'd like a few minutes alone ... to say good-bye. I'll meet you in the car," Lois said as she walked away.

The expressionless look in his eyes and the emotionless tone of his voice was eerie. This was not the Clark she knew. Not even Superman had ever been so detached. She knew he had cared about Mayson, but had he loved her? He seemed to be taking her death very hard. 'Don't cry ...' she told herself.

She had never known the extent to which his and Mayson's relationship had developed. She had always been jealous of the woman but refused to admit it. She had been uncertain of her feelings for Clark when Mayson had shown up she had fought against the jealousy that had consumed her. She hadn't realized she was in love with him until a few days ago, the night of their first date.

She wouldn't be his second choice. If he had loved Mayson then she would know where she stood. She brushed away a few stray tears from her eyes. She wouldn't give in to self-pity. She was above this.



A slight groan could be heard from the graveyard as she walked by one of the open graves. Lois looked around and centered in on the coffin the sound had come from. Curious, she opened the coffin and found a man's corpse inside. He was dressed in a black tuxedo that looked like it came out of a bad horror film. His face was slightly purple and his lips and eyelids held a slight bluish tint to them.

He opened his eyes and looked straight up at her. She yelped, stepping back a few feet. He reached for her and she slammed the coffin down on him. A groan of pain could be heard within the coffin.

"Clark! Clark! Clark!" she cried as she ran as fast as she could to him. Angry at him or not, he was still the only person she could turn to in this type of situation.

Across the cemetery, a balding man sat in an SUV with a petite man in his mid-thirties.

"Albie, what just happened?"

"I ... I don't know, Mr. Gables."

"Fix it!!!"

"Yes, Mr. Gables!!" He rushed out of the car and ran to the coffin. Albie retrieved a small blue pill from his pocket and forced it into the man's mouth, forcing him to swallow it. He then shut the coffin once more and returned to the car.

"Just a mix up with the dosage, Mr. Gables."

"Albie, if Resurrection is to succeed I can't have any more of our dead friends WAKING UP!"

Clark looked up from his daze when he heard Lois calling his name frantically. "Lois, what's wrong?"

She jerked his coat sleeve towards her and forced him in the direction of one of the plots in the cemetery. He had never seen her so rattled before.

"Clark! There's a man in a coffin! He, he looked at me! He opened his eyes and he looked at me! He's not dead!"

"Lois, Lois ... calm down."

"Clark ... "



“All right, show me where.” He let her lead him over to where two cemetery workers were burying a coffin.

“Hey, wait! Stop!” Lois yelled at the workers; they continued to lower the coffin into the plot, ignoring her protests.

“You got a problem, lady?” one of the workers asked her.

“The body you just buried is still alive. He opened his eyes and looked at me.”

The worker stared at Lois for a moment then began to shovel dirt into the grave once more.

“Hey! I know what I saw!” Lois glared at the worker and proceeded to take the shovel from the offending man. “Dig him up!”

“Lady, they don’t pay me enough for this aggravation.” The worker grabbed his shovel back from Lois and began to shovel more dirt onto the coffin.

Clark looked down into the grave using his x-ray vision. He could see a man lying completely motionless and at peace. He tried listening for a heartbeat or any kind of breathing, but still found no sign of life.

“Doesn’t it bother you the tiniest bit that you could have buried a man who is still alive?”

“Look, I got a work order to plant this guy in 29B. Now, unless I get a court order telling me not to, I’m plantin’ him. And if you don’t get out of my face you may become the first person ever ejected from a cemetery.” The man continued to shovel dirt into the burial plot.

“Lois, come on. Think about everything we’ve been through the past few days ... Maybe it wasn’t what you thought — “

“Clark ... “ Lois was near tears at this point. Why didn’t he believe her?

“Please.”

“Fine,” she huffed as they walked away.

“Here, let’s go get some coffee.”

“Fine.” Lois handed him the keys to her Jeep and climbed in, too upset to drive herself.

Clark sighed as he climbed into the driver’s seat.

<<“Lois, trust me on this, I am not your ordinary man. ”>>



<<“Poor Woman”

“Who?”

“Your wife. She’s married to Mr. Right. Mr. Always Right. ”>>

<<“Lois, you don’t need a partner. You never did.”

’Well, maybe not, but I was starting to enjoy having one.”>>

<<“I have been in love with you for a long time. You had to have known.”

“I knew ... well, I knew that you liked me, were attracted to me, but ... I’m sorry. I don’t think of you that way ... ”>>

<<“If you were just an ordinary man ... if you had no powers at all, I would love you just the same.”>>

<<“Oh, Clark, I don’t care if he used crazy glue, you’re back!”>>

<<“No matter what happens, I’ll never lose Clark.”>>

<<“This isn’t dancing.”

“It’s not?”

“This is. ”>>

<<’Lois, I’m trying to ask you out, not negotiate a nuclear arms treaty ... ”>>

<<“When you think about it, the only time people really express themselves is when they’re passionate and the polite veneer of society drops away ... like when they’re fighting ...”

“Or make love.”>>

<<“What about Mayson?”

“Well, the guy’s only got two tickets.”

“Clark ... ”

“Lois, I’m asking YOU out. ”>>

<<“Fortunately there are no doors here tonight ... ”



“Fortunately ... ”>>

Who knew that almost two years ago when she had been introduced to the naïve farm boy from Kansas she would be dealing with this dilemma? She cast a wayward look towards him. He looked so different out of his Superman persona, more relaxed, but she could still see the similarities. His well-defined profile, his eyes ... She eyed his body appreciatively. Even his business suits couldn't hide everything about his well-defined figure.

They had been dancing around one another for what seemed like an eternity, neither saying what the other was thinking. Mayson's death had taken a toll on both of them. She needed to talk to Clark about a lot of things. Superman, Mayson, and what was going to happen to them. It hurt. It really hurt. She had known him for almost two years. He had lied to her every day. She had confided in him her deepest secrets, turned to him in her hour of need, but he had continued to lie to her day in and day out. Understanding his reasoning for it was hard. How could he pursue a relationship with her when he withheld such a huge part of himself from her?

'Was, her mind reminded her. There was no sign of him pursuing any kind of relationship with her now. He hadn't spoken two words to her in the past week that hadn't been about work or the funeral. Today had been the first time he'd mentioned anything about what Mayson had said to him before she died.

“We're here,” Clark said as they got out.

“My apartment?”

“We need to talk and you always have at least SOME coffee,” he joked with her.

Lois glared at him but made her way up the stairs. He was right. They did need to talk. The question was whether she was ready to have that conversation with him.

Clark set the cup of coffee down in front of Lois, which she accepted gratefully. Neither one of them had said a word since they had entered the apartment.

“All right, what gives?” he asked.

“What?”

Clark sighed in exasperation. “Don't give me that, Lois. You've been avoiding me for the last few days. You hardly talk to me.”

“Clark ... “

“Look, I understand, you're scared, but we can't keep doing this. You take one step forward then two steps back.”



“Me??? You have a lot of nerve ... you know you haven’t exactly been forthcoming when it comes to conversation lately either, Clark.” She regretted the words immediately they left her mouth. Clark’s expression changed back to the solemn look he’d worn on the ride over to her apartment. “I’m sorry,” she hurriedly amended.

“No, you’re right. I’ve been ... distant lately ... “ Clark admitted. “I didn’t mean to push you away. It’s just ... “ He sighed, raking a hand through his hair. “I don’t know. I’m not really sure what to do. There’s not really a manual out there for dealing with someone dying in your arms like that ... “

Lois looked up at him through her eyelashes, unsure of what to say. “I know. I’m sorry.”

“But you’ve been kinda distant too,” Clark pointed out. “I mean, I feel like we keep going backward rather than forward. You slammed the door in my face last week, now we’re hardly speaking again. What gives?”

“Well, I do have a reason for my behavior ... “ Lois began slowly. “I know ever since we kissed I’ve been acting kinda strange.”

“Yeah,”

“I’m scared ... “ At his concerned look, she pressed on, “I don’t know what to think. I mean, Mayson dying in your arms like that. You’ve hardly been approachable since. I don’t know what to think. I mean, I know she was ... a friend, but after ... “

Clark hung his head in shame and sighed. Was this where he was going to tell her he’d been in love with Mayson? Was he going to tell her he only wanted to be friends? She prepared herself for the worst. It wasn’t like she’d been unprepared. She knew there had to be a reason why Mayson’s death was hitting him so hard. “Lois, Mayson was a friend; that’s all. I never lo- I never cared about her the way I care for you.”

What did he just say? He wasn’t in love with Mayson? She looked up at him, tears streaming down her face as relief washed over her. She hadn’t realized how scared she had been of the prospect of losing Clark to Mayson’s ghost. “Really? I, I thought ... “

Clark smiled and placed a hand over hers, looking at her reassuringly. “I know what you thought, Lois. I only saw Mayson as a friend.”

“Oh.” He cared about her? What did that mean? He was watching her curiously. “So, you weren’t ... you didn’t ... “

Her train of thought ceased when his lips came crashing down on hers. Her body began to respond immediately. His hand cupped her cheek lovingly as the kiss deepened. Where did he learn to kiss like that? What was she saying? Something about Mayson? Who cared? She whimpered when she felt him pull away from her.



She caught his gaze. He was struggling to catch his breath. Was that an act? Could Superman become breathless from just a kiss? What if he were...?

'Don't go there, girl,' she told herself.

“Lois, you are the only one I've cared about in that way. The ONLY one.”

Lois smiled up at him, blushing as she pushed a stray lock of hair out of her face. Why was it so hard to hear him say that to her? She'd known he'd cared about her for some time, as Superman and as Clark. How had she not seen it? “Lois, what's wrong? Please tell me.”

Dare she have this conversation now? She couldn't hide this from him for long. He knew her too well, but her emotions were too high right now to deal with it. “I-I — “ She was cut off by the ringing of their beepers in a simultaneous union. “I guess Perry figured out the funeral is over.”

“Lois ...”

She pulled away from his embrace and began cleaning up. “We should get going. Perry's gonna kill us.”

Clark sighed, brushing his hand through his hair in obvious frustration. She felt his eyes on her as she gathered her things and headed for the door. He knew there was something up; he wasn't stupid. He could always tell when something was bothering her. No one knew her as well as he did. It was one of the many things she loved about him. A week ago she would have said she knew him better than anyone else as well, but now she had been blindsided by the revelation that he wasn't who she thought he was.

“Let's go.”

He held open the door for her as they exited her apartment.

Perry looked up at the elevators as he saw Lois and Clark enter the newsroom. “What took you two so long? The funeral ended half an hour ago.”

“Sorry, Chief, but I was trying to stop these two grave diggers from burying a man alive,” Lois said before Clark could open his mouth to explain.

“Lois,” Clark warned.

“Don't 'Lois' me. I know what I saw,” Lois sniped.

“Burying a man alive? Are you sure about this, Lois?” Perry asked inquisitively.

“Positive. I saw him. He looked at me.”



“Lois, it’s not uncommon for a body to have involuntary movements,” Clark explained.

“Yeah, I heard they can even belch after death,” Perry added with a hearty laugh.

Lois looked back and forth from her boss to Clark and then shook her head in disgust. Clark knew that look only meant trouble. Disagreeing with her usually meant a typical Lane tornado in the newsroom sooner or later.

“Fine, it never happened.” She shrugged as she proceeded towards her desk.

“Lois,” Clark began but was cut off as Jimmy came barrelling towards them.

“Lois, I need a favor.”

“What is it, Jimmy?” Lois sighed. She turned towards their young friend, ignoring Clark and Perry. Not a good sign. Anytime she appeared happy to see Jimmy in the middle of their conversations usually meant trouble for him.

“Do you think I could borrow your Jeep tonight? I met this incredible girl this morning,”

“This morning? At Mayson’s funeral? Jimmy, that’s tacky,” Lois scolded.

“It didn’t start out that way. Honest.” Jimmy looked around him at the disapproving looks.

“What happened to Angela?” Clark inquired.

“Yeah, I thought she was the love of your life,” Lois added.

“Yesterday’s news,” Jimmy said nonchalantly.

“Well, that didn’t take long,” Lois sighed disapprovingly.

“Lois, I’m young, single. I have to keep my options open; anyway, she left me for a guy with a Ferrari. So, what do you say? Can I borrow the Jeep?” Jimmy asked.

Lois sighed. “Tell you what. I’ll lend you the Jeep if you find out who’s buried in plot 29B at Whispering Pines.”

“Lois,” Clark began. She just wasn’t letting this go.

Jimmy grabbed the paper from Lois. “You got it,” he said and hurried away from the argument he knew was brewing between them.

“Clark, please don’t,” Lois sighed, putting her hands up defensively. “I know what I saw.”



“So, Lois, Clark, how’s the story coming along?” Perry asked, placing a gentle hand on Clark’s shoulder. It was obvious he was trying to steer the conversation elsewhere.

“Slow,” Clark replied quietly. The ‘story’ Perry was referring to was the investigation into Mayson’s murder. He had argued with Perry about staying on it. He felt responsible for her death and wanted to do everything in his power to bring the responsible party to justice.

Lois glanced up at Clark, whose face flooded with guilt and remorse when Perry mentioned their story. She still had no idea why Clark insisted on working this story. He was obviously too close to it but remained adamant about finding Mayson’s murderer.

“We’re just trying to get a handle on it, Perry,” Lois said, trying to steer their editor’s attention away from Clark.

Perry took a deep breath, giving them both a reproving look. The lecture about being too close to the story was well on its way. “Well, son, there’s a reason why surgeons don’t operate on members of their own family. You and Mayson were pretty close. If you need some time off, let me know.” Perry patted Clark’s shoulder. “Oh, by the bye, there’s an agent from the DEA coming by later today who is looking into Mayson’s murder. Maybe he can shed some light on your investigation.”

“Why’s the DEA involved?” Lois asked.

“Don’t know. Could be they think it’s mob related? Mayson made quite a few enemies with Intergang.”

“Maybe if I can get into her office, maybe go through her files,” Clark thought aloud.

“The police have it cordoned off,” Perry said. “But then, when has a little police tape ever stopped you two before?” He walked off into his office as Lois and Clark shared a conspiratorial look.

Dressed as a cleaning crew, Lois and Clark began to sift through the paperwork on Mayson Drake’s desk.

“What exactly are we looking for?” Lois asked.

“Anything that has anything to do with Intergang or Resurrection. It would probably be something she would have been working on in the last few weeks,” Clark replied as he opened Mayson’s file cabinet.

“Here’s something she received the day before she died. It’s a file on someone named Stanley Gables.”



“Anything on Intergang or Resurrection?” Lois looked through the file some more and shook her head ‘no.’ “Keep looking.”

Lois lifted up a sandwich wrapped in tissue paper. “How’s this for new? It’s still warm.”

“What?” Clark took the sandwich from her and examined it. “A meatball sandwich?”

A mysterious man dropped from the ceiling dressed in the same cleaning uniform as they wore. He had long, black, curly hair and dark brown eyes. He also had a gun. “Molinaro’s, the best in the city. Go ahead, take a bite. They got veal and peppers that will knock your socks off.”

“Who are you?” Clark asked, narrowing his eyes. He was trying to figure out a way to place himself in front of Lois to protect her in case this guy decided to fire the gun he was holding. He watched Lois nervously, hoping she wouldn’t try anything stupid.

“The cleaning man. Who are you?”

“The cleaning woman. What a coincidence.” Lois laughed nervously, throwing her hands up in the air in an attempt at humor. “We’re all cleaning people. I guess the agency overbooked.” She moved towards the door but was stopped.

“Not so fast. You know I’m a very sensitive guy. I just hate it when people lie to me,” the man said as he pointed the gun a little higher.

“But you don’t mind lying yourself?” Lois countered.

“Ah, touché’, but I’m the one holding the gun. So my lie takes precedence.” Clark moved towards the door and the man pointed the gun right at Clark. “Unless you’re Superman I wouldn’t recommend it.” The mysterious man waved the gun for effect.

Lois narrowed her eyes in disgust. Clark took advantage of her distraction to discreetly shoot a beam of heat vision at the man’s right foot. He dropped the gun and yelped in pain.

“Come on, let’s go!” Clark ushered Lois out of the room. Files in tow, they rushed out of the office and headed towards Lois’ Jeep.

Lois sighed in relief as Clark closed the passenger door to Lois’ Jeep.

“That was close! What happened back there?” Lois asked.

“I ... I ... I don’t know. I guess he stumbled on something.”

“Hmmm.” Lois stared at him a moment then shook her head.



“What?” he asked. There was that look again. He couldn’t figure out what was going on with Lois but it was driving him crazy not knowing. He used to be able to read her so well. She used to tell him everything ... until now. Things were different now. They were beginning a relationship.

“Nothing.” Lois started the engine and they headed towards the Planet.

Lois punched the button for the newsroom in the elevator car repeatedly, obviously stressed about something. “Lois, stop it. You’re gonna — “

The lights in the elevator went out and the car stopped moving.

“ ...cause it to short out.” Clark finished.

“Great,” Lois said, exasperated. “Perfect. What else could go wrong today?”

Clark sighed, equally frustrated, but he knew getting upset about it wouldn’t help. “Just calm down, Lois,”

“Calm down? Why should I?! This whole day has been a nightmare, Clark.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Where do I begin? Dead bodies coming back to life; nobody wants to believe me on that one. I’m upset. I don’t know what I saw, right? Then we try to investigate and some Loony Toon clown decides to horn in on our investigation, and it’s just, it’s just...”

“It’s just what, Lois? I know you want to tell me something, but you keep holding back. What is it?”

“Clark, I’m not ready to talk about it, okay? There’s been too much going on lately. It’s just something I need to work out on my own, okay? I don’t want to say something I’ll regret later.”

“Lois, why do you do this? You bottle everything up inside and won’t let anyone get near you. Every time someone gets close you push them away.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’m talking about the fact that you refuse to let me in, Lois.”

“I do not **REFUSE** to let people in, Clark. I am just careful. And I **DID** let you in, Clark. You are the **ONLY** one I have **EVER** let in after my parents and Claude. But that’s what happens when you let people in. They hurt you or betray you.” The tears began to flow down her cheeks rapidly as she spoke.



“Lois ... “ Clark wasn’t sure what to say. She didn’t normally voice her trust issues so openly. He knew of them from the time he’d spent with her and what he’d picked up in between; things she had said over the last year and a half. She had been fearful of dying when she’d told him of Claude. Later he’d discovered no one else knew about what had occurred between her and Claude. As far as he was concerned no one would ever hear about it again.

He glanced hesitantly into her watery eyes. She was hurting. That much was clear, but he still didn’t know what had brought this on.

“I can’t.”

“Just tell me, please. I can’t stand to see you like this,” Clark pleaded, brushing a few stray tears from her eyes.

She appeared to be contemplating something in her mind. He stepped forward to comfort her, but she stopped him. “No. You don’t get off that easy. You don’t betray my trust like that and get off scot free.”

“What?” Clark was so confused. He had no idea what she was talking about.

“This.” She proceeded to open his dress shirt and reveal the ‘S’ emblem underneath. “Did you really think I wouldn’t figure it out?”

“What? How? When?”

“The night Mayson died your shirt was torn.” Lois sighed. “I guess I can understand part of why you lied to me, but it doesn’t excuse it, Clark.”

Clark’s face crumpled. “Lois, I’m so sorry. I never meant to hurt you. I ...”

Lois held her hands up. “The point is ... you did.”

The elevator began to hum with life again and Lois looked up at Clark through her tears. “You might want to button up your shirt.” Her voice cracked with anger. “Don’t want anyone else to accidentally find out.”

The doors to the elevator opened and she stormed out, headed straight for the restroom. Clark sighed as he exited the elevator. What was he going to do?

Lois glared at her reflection in the mirror, splashing cold water on her face. This was not how she’d planned to confront Clark. She’d known he was still dealing with Mayson’s death. She’d known now was not the right time. He kept lying to her. He kept pushing her. Now she had to face the music of the mess she and he had created.



“Two years,” she muttered under her breath in disgust. She pushed open the bathroom door and headed back into the newsroom.

Clark stared at his computer monitor in a trance. He had been blindsided by Lois’ revelation. Lois knew. She knew he was Superman. She knew he had been lying to her since the day Superman had arrived on the scene. He knew she would be upset when he told her the truth, but he hadn’t planned for this. He hadn’t planned on Lois figuring it out. Her figuring it out herself wasn’t going to bode well for him at all.

Clark looked up from his screen when Lois re-entered the newsroom. He watched her take her seat and get to work. She sorted through some papers and began typing up notes. She was professional and in control to the outside observer.

She was a wreck and he knew it.

Perry stuck his head outside of his office door and called, “Lois, Clark, in my office.”

They both exchanged looks. Clark looked down at his feet in shame immediately after meeting Lois’ glare. They both headed toward Perry’s office in silence.

Clark opened the door and entered Perry’s office behind Lois.
“What is it, Chief?” Lois asked as the door closed behind them.

“Lois, Clark, I’d like to introduce you to,” Perry began as he gestured to the guest in his office.

Lois and Clark immediately recognized the man as the mysterious visitor they had evaded earlier at Mayson Drake’s office. “You!” they accused in unison.

“— Agent Scardino,” Perry finished. “I assume you have already met?”

“Small world.” Agent Scardino grinned at the two of them.

“AGENT Scardino??” Lois inquired as she circled the man in question.

“Oh, please, call me Daniel,” he replied.

“Why didn’t you identify yourself at Mayson’s office?” Clark inquired.

“What and spoil all our fun? By the way, you have got to show me how you did that trick with burning my foot. I’ve never lost anyone I’ve had at gunpoint until today; what was that? A trick laser or something?” Scardino inquired, changing the subject.

“Sorry, can’t be giving out my secrets,” Clark replied with a smug grin.



“What’s the harm in sharing?” Scardino asked.

“Is there a problem here?” Perry butted in.

“There is if Agent Scardino is Washington’s idea of solving Mayson’s murder,” Clark accused.

“Washington had nothing to do with it. In fact, they sort of suggested I keep my distance. They have this crazy idea I’m some sort of loose cannon.” Agent Scardino shot Lois a dazzling smile. She shifted uncomfortably and rolled her eyes.

Clark caught the gesture but ignored it. He smiled inwardly at Lois’ reaction to the man’s obvious flirtation with her. “I wonder where they’d get a crazy idea like that.” Clark snapped his fingers for emphasis.

Lois cornered Scardino once more. “If you’re not here officially then why are you here?”

“Because, I know the man who designed the bomb that killed Mayson Drake, a con by the name of Sean McCarthy,” Scardino replied emotionally.

Perry interjected once more into the conversation, “The guy responsible for that series of drug-related bombings in ‘89?”

Scardino nodded. “The same. I lost someone very close to me in one of those bombings.”

Lois shot him a sympathetic look and then looked towards Clark. What would she ever do if she lost Clark?

Clark was still a bit skeptical. Agent Scardino just rubbed him the wrong way and he didn’t like the way he kept eying Lois. “I thought McCarthy died in prison three weeks ago?”

Scardino smiled. “So they say. The hit on the D.A. says otherwise. I know McCarthy’s M.O. like the back of my hand. I was the one who put him in prison. Somehow he’s out there again. And I’m gonna nail him.”

Clark replied, “So, your idea of solving Mayson’s murder is looking for a dead man?”

Glad that Clark had essentially caught on, Scardino shot Clark a 100-watt smile. “I guess you could say that. So if you come across any information that might help, I’d appreciate you letting me know. I’m staying at the Bristol.” He handed Clark a card and got up to leave the office.

Clark just shook his head in disbelief. There was no way he was going to share information with this clown. He was obviously a loose cannon.



Agent Scardino stopped and turned to Lois. “Please, don’t take this the wrong way. But are those eyelashes real?”

Lois shifted uncomfortably beneath his gaze. “Of course they’re real.”

“Boy, they’re pretty,” he replied.

Lois stared at him for a moment in disbelief. She wasn’t used to a man hitting on her so openly. She wasn’t sure if she should be flattered or offended. Getting a hold of herself she smiled and shot back, “Agent Scardino, those lines may have worked for you up in Washington, but this is Metropolis and they do NOT work here.” She then proceeded to exit the office.

Clark followed behind, laughing to himself as he left the office. Agent Scardino just stared on in interest while Perry wore an amused look on his face. Clark smiled to himself as his super hearing picked up the small talk between Perry and Scardino.

“Is she seeing anyone?”

“Son, you are *WAY* out of your league.”

Lois sat down heavily at her desk and stared at her monitor in disgust. She had no idea what to do about the story or Clark. She watched as Clark came up behind her and took the seat at his desk. He keyed in a few strokes and then picked up the phone. “What are you doing?” she asked.

“I’m trying to see if I can find Sean McCarthy’s obit.” At her confused look, he shrugged. “He’s the only lead we have right now.” He then turned his attention to the person on the other end of the phone line. After a brief conversation, he hung up then keyed in a few more strokes on his keyboard. “Ah-ha. Survived by his mother, Colleen McCarthy.”

Lois managed a weak smile. “I guess we owe her a visit.”

“Yeah.” He sadly looked at Lois then mentally shook himself. “You ready?”

She nodded, “Let’s go.”

Lois let out an exasperated groan as they entered the Jeep later that afternoon. Clark laughed at her antics as he closed the door behind him.



“Come on, Lois, it wasn’t that bad. At least we got the letters.”

“Yes, we got the letters after listening to how ‘adorable’ her Sean was for only God knows how many hours. No wonder the man turned to crime; the woman is a nut!”

“Lo-is“

“It’s true, and you know it.”

“Yeah. Now we have to figure out who tried to blow her house up. Someone obviously doesn’t want these letters to be found.”

“I don’t know. In that last letter, it sounded like he knew he was going to die.”

“Maybe ... “

Lois recognized the look he was giving her. He wasn’t thinking about the story right now.

“What?”

“Nothing. I was just thinking.”

“About?”

“It’s kinda nice getting back to our old routine,” he said softly.

“Arguing is our routine?” she countered, but then added lightly, “I’m still mad at you.”

“I know. I am sorry. I was planning on telling you. It’s just everything got so complicated.”

“Well, lying does that. It catches up with you.” Lois started the engine and they drove off.

Albie opened the door to a luxurious office where Stanley Gables was sitting reading the newspaper in disgust. He looked around nervously.

“Mr. Gables?”

“What is it, Albie?” Stanley Gables gestured to the article he was reading.

“Look at this, Albie. A scientist invents a new diet pill at STAR Labs. I guess they’ll give him a new office or a blue ribbon. All they ever gave me was a pink slip.”

“Uh, Mister...”

“You can’t make progress by following all the rules. They should know that. Instead of taking responsibility for the pain they caused me, they booted me out the door.”



“Sir?”

“Well, I tried the legal system, and it failed me. So now I will use my own methods of revenge on Metropolis. What is it, Albie?”

“Metropolis, sir? I thought you were just going after STAR Labs?”

“If I wanted to destroy STAR labs I would have burned it to the ground. Nobody cares about my pain, so I don’t care about theirs.”

“I ... I care, Mr. Gables.”

“Oh, yes, you do, Albie. What was it you wanted to tell me?”

“The letters weren’t destroyed as anticipated, Mr. Gables. Superman showed up at the last minute.”

“Albie, this isn’t good.” Stanley turned to his desk and hit a buzzer.

“I know, Mr. Gables. Please don’t stress about this. It’s not good for you. Maybe you should rethink this.”

“Albie, I don’t need to rethink my plan. I just need to revise it a bit.”

Sean McCarthy appeared in the doorway. “You needed something, Mr. Gables?”

“Yes, we need to proceed to phase two of our plan.”

Lois looked through the letters on the coffee table, sifting through them, one by one. Her gaze shifted from the letters to a picture of herself with Clark at the Kerth Awards earlier that year. She looked at it wistfully before slamming the picture face down on the coffee table.

“This is all your fault,” she muttered. She took another sip of her wine and continued to sulk when a knock came at the door. Lois got up to see who it was.

Clark stood hesitantly in her doorway. “Hi. Can I come in?”

“Uh, yeah.” She gestured for him to enter and closed the door behind him. “I...I’ve been going through those letters ... “

“Lois ... “



Maybe if she just kept things professional she wouldn't have to think about how much he'd hurt her. "... I haven't really found a whole lot yet, but just give me some time. Have you found anything?"

"I'm not here to talk about the case."

Lois crossed her arms in defiance. "Then why are you here?"

"Because we need to talk."

"Oh, now you want to talk?" Lois accused bitterly. Two years he'd had to talk and he hadn't told her the truth. "Clark, I don't know if I'm ready to for ..."

Her lips were silenced when his mouth came crashing down on hers. God, he was good at that. Her anger and resentment disappeared for a moment, as she lost herself in his arms. His arms encircled her waist, pulling her towards him as the kiss deepened. There was no way she would ask him to stop.

She whimpered in protest when he pulled away from her, stepping out of her embrace. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done that. I just..."

Lois looked up at him through her eyelashes. He was struggling to catch his breath. He was just as affected by their embrace as she was. She shifted her gaze up and down his body for a moment before launching herself into his arms. She was hurting, but right now all she wanted to do was lose herself in his arms.

She moaned in pleasure as she explored the feeling of his body against hers. Two years of fantasies fueled her exploration of his body. She gasped as she felt the living room wall against her back. "Oh, God..." He felt so much better than any fantasy.

His lips never left hers as she helped him shrug off his jacket. She tugged at the knot of his tie, attempting to loosen it. His hands rested at the hem of her blouse, unmoving as he concentrated on kissing her. She moaned in frustration at his Boy Scout behavior as she tossed his tie to the floor, moving her hands up and down his solid chest. His hands stayed unmoving, but his lips began an exploration of their own.

She hissed in delight as he nibbled at her earlobe, tugging at it with his teeth. She linked her arms around his neck for support as she felt her knees getting weak. She linked her right leg around him, steadying herself.

"Lois..." he moaned against her lips.

"Clark, please..." she whimpered, arching her back against him. She reached between their bodies and he pulled away.

Why was he stopping?



Too fast. This was too fast. What had just happened? He could still feel the heat of her body against as he held her in his arms. How had she gone from being angry with him to wanting to throw herself in his arms? Was she testing him? Trying to fulfill some kind of fantasy?

“Clark,” she whimpered against him when he withdrew the heat of his body from hers. It was his name she moaned. It was obvious what she wanted, but he wasn’t ready to give it to her. Not until they’d resolved their issues.

“We have to stop...” he managed half-heartedly as he stepped away.

Lois looked up at him incredulously.

He knew what she must be thinking. ‘Why?’

He watched as she readjusted her clothing, taking a seat on the other side of the couch, leaving plenty of space between them. “Clark....”

At the same time, Clark turned to her. “Lois....”

They both chuckled. They had this knack for being able to read one another’s thoughts. The closer they’d gotten over the past few months, the more often it occurred.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to let things get so...out of control,” he whispered.

“I wasn’t exactly trying to beat you off of me,” Lois said with a slow smile.

“I never meant to hurt you, Lois. I was going to tell you, but everything just kept getting so complicated.” He raked a hand through his hair.

Lois sighed and nodded in agreement. “I guess my swooning over Superman for a year didn’t help things.”

Clark shook his head. “I never should have gotten involved with you without telling you. That was the stupidest thing I could have done. I trust you more than anyone ... “

Lois brushed a few stray tears that had escaped from the corners of her eyes as he spoke. “Then why? Why didn’t you tell me? If you trusted me, then why the lies and the secrets?”

“Because I love you,” he whispered solemnly. “I didn’t want to lose you.”

Lois stared at him incredulously. Love? He loved her? Of course, he’d been lying that day in front of the Planet when Mr. Stern had announced they were back in business. He’d told her he



didn't love her. She had spent months trying to convince herself that she only cared about him as a friend. "You lied."

"Yeah, I've lied a lot, but only about where I was." He moved closer to her, holding one of her hands in his palm. "Lois, I never wanted to hurt you and I know that I did; I'm sorry for that."

Why did he insist on talking about this now? At least when she'd been in his arms she didn't have to think about how he'd hurt her, how she'd been so easily fooled. The world famous investigative reporter had been duped by a change of hairstyle and a pair of glasses.

"That's not what I was talking about," she retorted bitterly. "That day in front of the Planet after Mr. Stern announced the reopening ... you lied."

"Oh." Clark seemed to register what she was referring to. "I thought it would be easier on you not to deal with anything else ..."

"Who are you to decide what I can or can't deal with?" Lois snapped. "You decided I can't deal with you being in love with me, so you snatch that away. You also decided I couldn't deal with you being Superman ..."

"That's not true ..."

"Isn't it?" Lois challenged. "When were you planning on telling me?"

"I don't know. I needed to know that you loved me - Clark - not Superman or his powers ... just me."

"That is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard in my life," Lois snapped. "You *ARE* Superman. So why is it so hard for you to deal with someone liking *YOU*???"

"No, Superman is what I can do; Clark is who I am," Clark reasoned.

"Do you always talk about yourself in the third person?" she asked inquisitively.

"It helps me sort things out in my head," he explained with a wry smile.

"Oy," she sighed, rolling her eyes. He made no sense whatsoever. "So, let me get this straight, Clark is who you are, correct?"

"Yes."

"Then why do you get upset when Superman has to deal with Intergang coming after him?"

"Well, I ..."

"I heard you defend Superman countless times to Mayson. Why?"



“Because ... “

“Because she didn’t get that Superman was a part of you too.” Lois gave a light laugh. “I still can’t believe it took me so long to figure it out. You knew things about the other you shouldn’t have. Those lame excuses ... “ She wiped away a few tears on her cheek. “You know what really hurts the most is the fact that you *lied* to me, Clark. I mean, you’re the one person I thought I could trust and now that’s gone. Shattered.”

“Lois ... “

“I need some stability here. I need to know you won’t lie to me in some attempt to try and protect me again,” Lois began to ramble.

“I won’t,” Clark whispered. “I have hated keeping this from you. You know me better than anyone; it killed me having to keep so many things from you.”

“Like when Capone shot you?” Lois asked, recalling how much it had hurt when she’d thought he was dead.

“I was going to tell you,” Clark stammered. “Lois, I just reacted ... I didn’t know what else to do.”

“You made me think you were dead.” Lois stared back at him coldly.

“I know.” Clark hung his head shamefully.

“When were you going to tell me?”

“I was going to tell you everything after I got Capone put away. I was kinda afraid of telling you.”

“I’m not talking about Capone, Clark. I’m talking about now. If I hadn’t figured it out the other night, when were you going to tell me?”

“Oh.” Clark caught on by the expression on her face. “I figured once we started actually dating ... “

“We were.”

“I know. My timing hasn’t exactly been the best lately, but ... “

Lois noticed the forlorn look in his eyes and reached up to caress his cheek. “Clark, you can’t blame yourself.”

“I missed her by a few seconds, Lois.”



“I know.” Lois looked into his eyes sadly. “I didn’t want to go off on you like that, Clark. I was waiting for you to tell me, but you kept lying to me, then in the elevator you kept pressing me ... so, I blew up. I know that was the last thing you needed right now. I’m sorry. I should have handled it better.”

“Hey, we both kinda screwed up, Lois.” Clark captured her mouth gingerly, conveying the love he felt for her. “Does this mean we’ve made up?”

At that moment there was a knock at the door.

“Great. That’s probably Jimmy. Perfect timing as always,” she muttered, lifting herself off the couch to answer the door.

Clark stood up to follow behind her, slightly ticked at the intrusion. If he didn’t know any better he could swear Lois was trying to avoid answering his question. “Agent Scardino? What are you doing here?” Lois asked, opening the door.

“Please. Call me, Daniel. May I come in?” Agent Scardino sauntered in without even waiting for Lois’ response. He examined her up and down a moment and winked at her. “Did I come at a bad time?”

Lois flushed at the remark’s implications. Clark interjected, “What are you doing here, Scardino?”

“Well, well,” Scardino grinned mischievously. “If it isn’t the man with the smoldering eyes.”

“What are you talking about?” Lois asked as she sat down on the couch next to Clark.

Scardino pulled out a small book from his jacket pocket and laid it on the table before them. “Mayson’s diary reads like an Emily Bronte novel.”

“You read Emily Bronte?” Lois’ head shot up at that comment.

“What can I say? I’m a hopeless romantic at heart.” Scardino shrugged then turned to Clark, “I thought you said Mayson was just a friend. She wrote some pretty steamy stuff in there, mainly about you. You holdin’ out on me, Kent?”

At Clark’s solemn look Lois interjected, “Agent Scardino, you have to understand Clark was probably the only one in Metropolis that didn’t know that Mayson was madly in love with him.”

Clark was quick to change the subject. “Who’s holding out on whom? You took the diary.”



“Ah, touché.” Scardino wagged his finger in Clark’s direction. “But, I am willing to work together on this. I figure it’ll be easier if we work together rather than apart. Share information, so to speak.”

Clark continued to glare at Scardino. He didn’t like the man one bit. Working with him was out of the question. He really didn’t like the way Scardino kept eyeing Lois either.

Lois caught the glare and decided it was time for her to interject. “Clark, can I see you in the kitchen? I think the ramaki is burning.”

“Ramaki? But you’re not — “ He immediately cut himself off at her glare. “Uh, right. Excuse us.” He followed her into the kitchen. “What is it?”

“I think he has a point,” Lois began.

“You have got to be kidding. The man is seriously unhinged. Inspector Gadget would be more help than him.”

“Clark, do you trust me?”

“Yes,” he sighed.

“Then trust my instincts.” She patted him reassuringly on the chest. “It’ll be easier if he’s working with us.”

“But, Lois — ” She cut him off by leaning up to kiss him. All protests died on his lips as he concentrated on her rather than their uninvited guest in the other room.

“Just trust me,” she whispered, pulling away from him. With that she walked out of the kitchen, not giving Clark a chance to respond. He sighed and raked his hand through his hair. This was not going to be easy. He could tell the only reason Agent Scardino wanted to work together was to get to Lois, and he was not about to let that happen.

Scardino smiled as he saw Lois enter the room again. His face fell slightly when Clark entered behind her. “So, do we have a deal?”

“Sure. What have you got?” Lois asked.

“Not so fast. I gave you the diary. Your turn.”

“Fine,” Lois conceded. “The last thing Mayson said was ‘Resurrection’.”



“The last entry in her diary was ‘Resurrection equals McCarthy’ with a question mark,” Scardino said.

Lois and Clark exchanged a look. They were definitely getting somewhere.

“I cannot believe you want to work with this guy,” Clark argued as he and Lois walked into the newsroom. The last few days had been hell. He and Lois had been arguing constantly over Scardino. She couldn’t see that Scardino was hitting on her and when he did point it out, she told him he was being insecure.

“Clark, we’ve been over this,” Lois argued. “It will be so much easier if we know what he’s up to rather than constantly butting heads with the guy.”

“You mean ME? I would be butting heads with the guy?” Clark caught the look she had given him at that last statement.

“I never said that.”

“But you’re thinking it.”

“Clark ... “ Lois was exasperated.

“Lois ... “ Clark bandied, equally exasperated.

Agent Scardino was getting on his last nerve. The man did not know how to take a hint. He still kept hitting on Lois. Scardino kept asking Lois out right in front of him and sending her gifts. Lois ignored the gestures but still didn’t correct his assumption that she was available. She wasn’t, was she? As far as he could tell, they were working on their relationship. Although, they hadn’t spoken two words about their relationship or what had happened the other night.

The feel of her body molded against him and the scent of her arousal was seared into his mind. He wanted nothing more than to pick things up where they’d left off, but they had a lot to work through before that was possible. Things had gotten out of control that night, way out of control. He didn’t know where he stood with her and the constant presence of Agent Scardino was not helping.

“Don’t start ... “ she warned. Lois walked away from him and took a seat at her desk. She was getting really frustrated. She had been trying to bury herself into her work to forget about what had happened the other night between her and Clark. Her ego was bruised and she was trying to prove to herself that she still was the best investigative reporter at the Daily Planet, even if she had been fooled by a pair of glasses for two years.



Whatever Mayson had been involved with regarding this ‘resurrection’ had to be big if the DEA was involved. What was the harm in creating a solid contact with Dan? He seemed nice enough. It wasn’t like she was dating him or anything.

Clark brought her a file and laid it on her desk. “What’s this?” she asked, looking up at him inquisitively.

“Background check.”

Lois opened up the folder and shot him an angry look. “You had Jimmy do a background check on Dan? Clark, you can’t be serious!”

“I’m sorry, now it’s ‘Dan’?” His tone was growing more and more agitated by the second. “The guy is a loose cannon. He’s been on probation more than any other DEA agent.”

Lois looked at the file and smirked. “He’s also the most decorated agent.”

Jimmy approached them with a file in his hands. “Hey, guys?”

“What is it, Jimmy?” Lois asked, grateful for the distraction.

“Uh, I just wanted to let you know research is kinda backed up so it’s gonna be a bit longer with the name of that corpse in plot 29B ... but I’m still borrowing the Jeep, right?”

Lois sighed, exhausted. “Yes. That’s fine, Jimmy.”

“Great. Thanks.”

“I thought he borrowed it last night, too?” Clark inquired.

“I feel charitable right now. I guess the date went well.” Lois flushed slightly, remembering how their first date had ended.

“Yeah,” Clark said. “Good for him.” He sighed and walked away from Lois’ desk.

Lois stared at her computer screen for a few moments then looked up in the direction Clark had left and found him gone. Things were not going well. She picked up one of McCarthy’s letters and read the last line of one of them. “A better place?” What did that mean?

Clark floated above the clouds, staring off into space. How did his life get so screwed up? He didn’t even know how to handle his emotions around Lois anymore. They were so raw. The guilt he felt over Mayson’s death was eating at him along with the guilt he felt for hurting Lois. He didn’t know what to do. She seemed to be just pushing him away, so maybe he should just do what she wanted. Stay away.



He let out a long breath, trying to regain control of his emotions. Sometimes he hated having to be Superman. Superman wasn't supposed to cry.

"Where've you been?" Lois asked as she saw Clark strolling into the newsroom a few hours later.

"Nowhere, I just needed to clear my head," he murmured.

"Oh?" Lois eyed him suspiciously. He was acting very stand-offish and she didn't know why. "Well, I think I have a lead."

"What?"

"I was reading over McCarthy's letters again and I got to thinking. What if he wasn't talking about the hereafter, but somewhere outside of prison? I thought maybe we could arrange a visit with his pen pal."

"Great." Clark was still very short with her. "Let's go." He grabbed the file and headed up the ramp. Lois followed behind him, eying him suspiciously. What was going on here?

Lois stood in the hallway of the Metropolis Men's Prison in a red halter top and a black leather mini skirt reapplying her lipstick and adjusting her hair. "How do I look?" Lois asked Clark. She glanced at him appreciatively. He wore a pair of rugged jeans, a wife beater, and a black leather jacket. His hair was greased up in an awkward angle that was unlike his Clark or Superman hair styles and he wore a pair of biker sunglasses. He looked good. Really good. 'Don't go there.' The memory of his body pressed against hers a few nights ago was seared into her mind. She could still feel his breath against her skin...

"Appropriately cheap," he remarked solemnly.

Neither of them had spoken of that night since. He still remained withdrawn from her. "Good." She walked up to the guard and took the role of the dumb bimbo. "Hi, we're here to see Big Buster Williams."

The guard eyed her appreciatively then hollered into the visitors' room. "Hey, Buster! You got another visitor!"

As they entered the room she turned to Clark and whispered, "Just let me do most of the talking."

"You usually do," he muttered under his breath.



She shot him a dirty look and then approached Big Buster Williams' visiting table. "Big Buster" turned out to be a dwarf. He looked to be in his thirties and eyed Lois appreciatively. "Hi, you must be Buster! I'm Angel. McCarthy's old lady. McCarthy was right. You're the best-looking guy in the joint," she gushed.

"Who's that?" Buster eyed Clark suspiciously.

"Oh, that's my brother, Spike," she said nonchalantly.

Buster eyed Lois up and down appreciatively. "That's some killer outfit."

Lois blushed and looked away in time to see Clark roll his eyes. She tried to keep up her dumb bimbo act. "Thanks."

"I didn't know McCarthy had a doll. I kinda thought he was a morals guy."

"Yeah, well, you know Sean. He was kinda tight-lipped," Lois responded.

"Are you kidding? Motor-mouth McCarthy? So did he send you to fill me in on the job?"

"The job?" Lois inquired. This was it. The break in the story they needed. What job? Who was involved? She tried to remain calm as she waited for Buster's response.

Buster began coughing heavily and wheezing sounds escaped as he continued struggling to breathe. Clark looked at him in concern. "Do you need some water?"

"No thanks, Spike. I'm okay," Buster squealed out, and then he proceeded to fall over in his chair.

Clark was at his side in a second. Checking his pulse, he announced, "He's dead. I guess that really is a *killer* outfit."

"Oh, my God!"

Lois stormed into the Daily Planet, aggravated at how the investigation had been going. Clark had remained completely professional, but the banter he usually participated in with her was gone. He remained aloof with her and showed zero emotion.

Not only that but they had gotten nowhere with the investigation. Buster Williams was pronounced dead via unknown causes and that was the end of it according to the coroner.

"Hey, Lois." Jimmy bounded up to her desk in his usual carefree, spirited way.

"What is it?"



“Check this out.” Jimmy showed her a photograph. “He was found sniffing around the police impound lot near Mayson Drake’s car.”

“Oh, my God! Clark!”

“What is it?” He came up behind her to look at the picture as well.

“That’s the man I told you was being buried alive.”

“It does look like him, I mean, according to how you described him,” Clark covered for himself when Jimmy shot him a funny look. “But how?”

“I don’t know, but if he’s interested in Mayson’s car, so am I.”

Lois and Clark crawled around the interior of what was left of Mayson Drake’s car. Lois looked in the back seat while Clark scanned the front.

“What exactly are we looking for?” Lois asked.

“I don’t know. Hopefully, we’ll know it when we see it.” He lowered his glasses and did a scan over the floor boards of the car. He spotted a silver tube on the driver’s side of the floor board. “Hey, Lois, hand me a nail file.”

Lois sighed in exasperation. “Why do men always assume women have nail files on them?”

Clark sighed, equally exasperated. “I ... I’m sorry. Do you have a nail file?”

Lois smiled. “As a matter of fact, I do. But only because it’s a part of my pocket knife.” She handed him a pocket knife.

Clark took the pocket knife from her and worked on opening up the floor board. He pulled out a silver tube and opened it up. A small blue pill fell out of it.

“What is that?” she asked.

“What we were looking for.” Clark grinned in triumph. “Come on. We need to get this over to Professor Hamilton.”

Jimmy bounded up to Lois’ desk and dropped a file on her desk. “I got the information you wanted on that stiff at the cemetery.”

“And?” Lois looked up at him expectantly.



“Diego Martinez. 20 years for bank robbery. He was an expert at getting past security systems.”

“Except when he was caught,” Lois remarked, bringing attention to the obvious. Lois opened the folder and began reading. “It says he was in good health. Cause of death unknown.”

“Because there is no autopsy. Budget cuts. The guy I spoke with at the Prison Infirmary said they take the bodies directly to the cemetery.”

“Hmmm.” Lois looked through the file some more and Jimmy headed towards his desk. She spotted Clark walking to his desk engrossed in a fax. “What’s that?”

“Hmmm?” Clark looked up from the fax he was reading and recognized she was speaking to him. “Oh, Professor Hamilton’s report on that pill.”

“And?” she looked at him expectantly. It usually didn’t take him this long to share information with her.

Clark handed her the report. “See for yourself. The pill puts your body into a temporary state of animated suspension.”

“Giving the appearance of someone being dead.”

“Exactly.”

“Hmmm ... “ Lois smiled at him. “That explains Buster Williams ... and that Martinez guy.”

“It would be the perfect way of breaking out of prison. I mean, who would be looking for you if you were dead?”

“Well, if that is the case then the cemetery would have to be in on it.”

“True. What’s our next move?”

“I have a sudden urge to plan a funeral.”

At that moment a courier walked up to Lois’ desk with a rectangular box in tow. “Lois Lane?”

“Yes?” She looked up from her desk expectantly.

“Sign here.”

Lois signed the invoice and the man handed her the box. She opened the box to reveal a bouquet of long-stemmed roses. Lois looked up at Clark, gushing, “Clark, you shouldn’t have.”

“I didn’t,” Clark muttered bitterly. The bite in his tone spoke volumes.



Lois looked at him confused. “Then who?”

“They’re from an Agent Scardino,” the courier supplied helpfully.

The look on Clark’s face spoke volumes. He rolled his eyes as he walked away, muttering under his breath, “Oh, please, call him ‘Daniel’.”

Lois and Clark walked out of the funeral home in disgust. “What is that guy smoking? Nobody is THAT happy all the time ... especially in this profession.”

“Well, while you were distracting him I found an invoice. All of the burials for the prisoners buried here were paid for a guy named Albie Swinson,” Clark said as they walked down the steps.

“Why don’t you get Jimmy to find out what he can on Swinson and meet me at plot 29B?”

Clark chuckled lightly. “I don’t think so. Knowing your luck someone will try to bury you alive in the five minutes it takes for me to call Jimmy. I’ll walk with you. We’ll call Jimmy when we’re done.”

Lois gave him an exasperated glare. “Clark, I don’t need you to babysit me.”

“I’m not babysitting. I’m making my job just a little bit easier. You do have a knack for trouble, Lois.”

Lois conceded defeat and continued to walk with Clark over to the cemetery. He did have a point. It was a good sign; wasn’t it? He was teasing her again.

Neither of them noticed they were being watched by the grave diggers they had encountered a few days before at Mayson’s funeral.

“Do you see anything?” Lois asked as Clark scanned the ground around the plot.

Clark shook his head. “This whole area has lead lining covering most of the caskets, so, it’s hard for me to see anything.”

“Great. Now, what?”

Clark was about to respond when he noticed a tractor headed their way. “I think we need to get out of here now.”



“Wha — ?” Lois was cut off by Clark scooping her into his arms at super speed and flying them back to Lois’ apartment.

Back at the cemetery, the grave diggers looked around in disgust. They saw no sign of either reporter.

“Okay. This is too weird. Why are tractors chasing us down in cemeteries?”

Clark sighed. “I don’t know.” He was sitting on Lois’ couch his head in his hands.

“Are you okay?”

“I’m fine.”

“O-kay. You want some coffee?”

“Hmmm, sure.”

“Clark, what is going on?”

“Nothing.”

“No. It’s not ‘nothing’. Clark, you have been distancing yourself from me for the last few days ... what is going on?”

“Oh, I don’t know, Lois. Maybe I’m getting tired of the games,” he shot back at her in frustration.

“Games? What games?”

“This. Scardino. You. Everything,” he muttered, exasperated. “Look, I don’t like Scardino. I can’t stand the guy. I think he’s trouble.”

“I didn’t like Mayson, but I trusted your instincts about her and you were right. She was a good person.”

“Lois, you never trusted my instincts about Mayson until you had proof. I still have yet to see the good side about this guy.”

“Why do you let him get to you like this, Clark? What? Are you jealous?”

“Do I have a reason to be?”

“What is that supposed to mean?”



“However you want to take it, Lois. You tell me.”

“Don’t you dare try to put this back on me, Clark Kent! You are the one that lied to me every day for two years!”

“Right, like you never lied to me. You’re not the only one that’s been hurt or betrayed. I do have feelings too, Lois.”

“Clark ... “

“Look, I don’t know how much longer I can do this. I’m not going to compete for you. I have too much going on to deal with this too. You need to make a decision about what it is you want. I’ll respect your decision either way.” He got up to leave.

“Clark!” she begged him.

He opened her door to leave and found Agent Scardino standing at the doorway, arm raised, ready to knock on the door. “Great.” Clark pushed his way past Scardino and left.

“Whoa! What did I miss?” Scardino watched Clark leave then turned to Lois. “You okay?”

“No.” She shook her head. “You need to go.” She closed the door on Agent Scardino and slumped down to the floor and cried. She had been so worried about her own feelings she hadn’t even thought about Clark’s feelings in all of this.

Lois closed the door to her apartment behind her and looked around the hallway, suspiciously. After making sure neither Clark nor Scardino were lurking around, she made her exit. The cold air hit her face with force as she began running. She had no direction and no destination.

The tears came from nowhere but once they formed she was unable to stop them from flowing. She came around the corner and found herself at Whispering Pines Cemetery. She wiped the tears from her eyes in anguish. She really didn’t want to even think about her and Clark’s investigation right now. Thinking about the investigation just brought back the memories of Mayson’s death and her own feelings of guilt.

The night of her and Clark’s first kiss had become bittersweet due to Mayson’s death. Clark hadn’t been able to get to Mayson in time because he had been preoccupied with their kiss. Their kiss had been ... amazing. The memory of it was seared into her mind along with every other kiss and caress they had shared these past few months.

The truth was she didn’t know what it was that she wanted. She knew she had loved both Clark and Superman as separate beings, but she was unaccustomed to merging the two together. Things Clark had said or done were things Superman had done as well. Clark had faked his death.



Superman had made her think he was dead. Clark had been the one to turn her down all those times she had thrown herself at Superman. Superman had sent her on a wild goose chase and scooped her. Did she want to try and figure out how to fix her relationship with Clark or did she just want to go back to being friends? He had said he would support her no matter what she decided.

What was that comment about Dan earlier? Was he jealous? There was nothing between her and Dan. Sure, she found him somewhat attractive but he was nowhere near as attractive as Clark. He was nothing compared to Clark ...

Lois sighed in self-pity. “This is your fault, Mayson. I would never have let him know how I felt if you hadn’t come along,” she muttered under her breath.

She gasped as she turned the corner in the cemetery. There was Superman standing over Mayson Drake’s grave with a solemn look on his face and tears in his eyes. She held her breath as she inched forward slowly, trying to get a better view.

“I am so sorry,” she heard him say. “You never deserved this.” Lois’ breath caught as she heard the catch in his voice. She had never seen Clark or Superman like this, ever. He was vulnerable. He was emotional. He was crying. Feeling like an intruder she backed away and headed toward the exit of the cemetery.

Lois opened the door to her apartment and locked the many locks behind her. What was she going to do? She owed Clark an apology. That was for sure. While trying to mend her broken heart and heal her wounded pride, she had lost sight of the most important thing: Clark. She hadn’t thought of his feelings at all. She had been too busy trying to prove she hadn’t lost her edge; she had just pushed him aside and ignored him completely.

She hadn’t done that since her engagement to Lex. Clark had warned her of Lex’s criminal activities, but she hadn’t listened. She had ignored his pleas for her to stay away from Lex and had ended up almost marrying the man. When the truth of all of Lex’s dealings in the criminal underworld came to light, Clark had been her rock. He had not once said ‘I told you so’. He had been supportive. He had been her friend.

It couldn’t have been easy for him to listen to her declare her love for Superman when she had just told him earlier that she didn’t have those feelings for him.

“I’ve been such an idiot,” she muttered to herself.

“Lois?”

She jumped up with a start when she saw Clark floating outside her bedroom window.

“Clark! You — you scared me.”



“I — I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to startle you.”

“No, it’s okay.” She began to straighten up her living room out of nervous habit. “Come on in.”

He stepped into her apartment and spun back into the business suit he had been wearing earlier that day. She looked on in awe. “Wow. Where do you keep the suit?”

“I can’t tell you all my secrets. Where would the fun in that be?” He winked at her and then took a seat on the couch next to her. “I’m really sorry about the way that I left things. I had no right to blow up at you like that.”

“No, actually, you did,” Lois conceded thoughtfully. “Ever since I confronted you about Superman I haven’t been clear with you about what I want. You’re right. It’s not fair to me or you. I shouldn’t have forced Dan on you like that. You may be Superman, but you’re also my partner and we’re supposed to be a team.”

Clark smiled. She still thought of them as a team. This was a good sign. “Always,” he said wistfully. “Look, I saw you at the cemetery earlier.”

“Oh.” Lois grew quiet. “I wasn’t trying to eavesdrop. I swear. I just went for a run.”

“No, it’s okay. I know you weren’t eavesdropping or purposefully trying to spy.”

“I’m sorry if I invaded your space, Clark, but I’m not sorry I was there. I never realized how much you were hurting. I’m so sorry.” Lois began to cry all over again. “I am a horrible friend. Someone just died in your arms a few days ago and I’m over here creating more drama ...” She stopped a moment, realizing Clark was watching her with a smirk on his face.

“What?”

“Nothing. It’s just kind of funny when you go off on your tangents.”

Lois stared at him in awe. He was the most powerful being on the planet yet he was captivated by her. What was so special about her that drew him to her so strongly?

“Why were you glad you were there?”

“Because, being there, watching you, it made me realize how vulnerable you really are. I mean, you put on a façade for the rest of the world. The invincible hero, but you are still vulnerable, especially here.” She patted his chest.

“Lois ...” “The emotion in his voice was threatening to overwhelm him.

“Clark, I’m an idiot. I claimed to love you when I really didn’t even know you. I threw myself at you shamelessly and meanwhile I treated you — the real you, my best friend — so shabbily ... how can you even stand to be around me?”



“Simple. I love you. No matter how irritating you can be I still love you, Lois.”

“Oh, Clark.” She stroked his cheek with her thumb. “I do love you, too. It just scares me.”

“Why?”

“Because you’re the one person that I thought I couldn’t have. You were safe. Now being in a relationship with you just seems surreal to me.”

“What do you want, Lois?”

“I want to be happy.”

“Then give us a chance,” he said solemnly. “Give me a chance. We have been doing this dance since I first asked you out, a month ago. Everything in the world seems to be getting in our way. I love you, Lois, and I want to be with you. The question is, do you want to be with me?”

Across town, Albie Swinson was pacing around the quarters of Stanley Gables’ estate. What to do? He wanted to go after all of Metropolis? The man was mad. Now, going after STAR Labs, he understood. He understood Gables’ feelings of resentment towards STAR Labs, but now he wanted to attack ALL of Metropolis. What was he going to do? He couldn’t allow this to continue.

Lois was taken aback by Clark’s question. She had never heard him be so direct when it came to their relationship. He had always taken a back seat and given her the control of setting the pace. The decision was hers. Did she want to take a chance on her and Clark and possibly lose the friendship they had been developing over the last few years or did she want to go back to just being his friend?

One look at him and she knew that would never be possible. Every kiss they had shared had ignited something within her she didn’t even know existed before. The night before things had gotten out of control, but she’d discovered the passion she felt for him was not one-sided. She had never felt this way about any other man. He was gorgeous, strong, gentle, caring, and the best person she knew and he wanted her.

Immediately, she knew her answer. “Yes.”

A megawatt smile spread across his face. He leaned in and kissed her, gently at first, but then, when he sensed she was craving more, he deepened the kiss. “I love you,” he whispered in her ear, then captured her mouth once more.



Lois moaned against his mouth. Her hands roamed up and down his chest, feeling the hard, taut muscles beneath his cotton dress shirt. Her arms circled around his neck, pulling him closer. The anxiety she had felt over their budding relationship was long gone.

He released her mouth, resting his forehead against hers. It amazed her to see Clark so vulnerable in her arms. “You okay?” she asked.

“Yeah,” he finally managed.

“Good.” She captured his mouth once more and smiled as he moaned in pleasure against her lips. The light rumble of his voice tickled her lips. She laughed in spite of herself as she leaned back into the couch, pulling Clark on top of her.

“God, you are so beautiful,” he murmured as he planted a trail of butterfly kisses along her neck. She laughed when he found one of her more sensitive spots. “I love everything about you.” He planted another kiss on her neck.

“Even my temper?” she asked joking with him.

“Mmm hmm,” He planted a kiss on her collarbone.

“Mmm,” Lois moaned as she felt his hardness press up against her. She tightened her grip around him. “Oh, Clark,”

He looked up at her and smiled, “You like that?”

“Oh, God,” she gasped out as she nodded her head in agreement.

He smiled and captured her mouth once more. He boldly slid his hands up the back of her tank top, caressing her backside. She arched her back slightly, encouraging the exploration of her body. She frantically rubbed her palms up and down his chest, tugging his dress shirt out of his pants. He murmured his agreement as he felt her warm hands begin to caress his perfect six pack. The memory of how he had felt pressed up against her a few nights ago had been seared into her mind. If Clark hadn’t stopped she wouldn’t have put an end to their activities. But he had stopped. He had known they weren’t ready to take that next step yet. Were they ready now?

The feeling of his body pressed up against hers felt so right. Was she ready for this? She wrapped her arms more securely around him, pulling him close. She sought out his touch, whimpering against him as she reached for the buttons to his shirt.

He pulled away from her, understanding the predicament, and rolled them over so that she was straddling him. Lois smiled at her newfound position. “You always said you like to be on top.” He winked at her conspiratorially.

She leaned in to kiss him and proceeded to unbutton his dress shirt with one hand while her other hand moved lower, causing him to gasp in surprise.



“Are...are...are you sure we’re not going too fast?” He broke off the kiss lightly.

Lois looked down at him incredulously. “I told you I wanted to know you. I want to know all of you, Clark.”

“I know. But we don’t have to take this step right away...”

He was cut off by Lois capturing his mouth once more. “Enough talking,” she said simply. Clark didn’t put up a fight anymore. Once the last button had been released from its hole Lois shed him of his shirt and threw it across the room. When she returned her attention to Clark he had pulled away, slightly.

“What’s wrong?”

“Lois, I love you more than anything, but I really don’t want to rush into anything....I-”

“What?”

“Well, I-I’m different,”

“Yeah, so?”

“So, I –I’m really not sure what we’re doing here...”

She smiled impishly at him, “You didn’t have any problems figuring it out before....” she purred seductively running her fingers down his chest, resting at the waistband of his slacks.

“But I stopped,” he pointed out.

“But what if I don’t want you to stop now?” Lois noticed the apprehension in his eyes and pulled away, “What’s wrong?”

“Lois, I know this is a bit hard to believe, but I’ve never...”

“You’ve never what?” She asked.

“This...the other night-” he gestured to her body and their position, “...is about as far as I’ve ever gotten.”

Realization dawned on her, “Oh, Clark,” Lois kissed him soundly. “I didn’t mean to pressure you,”

Clark chuckled, “You’re not pressuring me into anything, Lois.”



“Good.” She was tired of talking. She captured his mouth once more intent on pursuing their earlier activities.

Outside Lois’ apartment, a man stood on the fire escape, peeping into the apartment. The shadowy figure knocked on the window. There was no response. He knocked again. Still no response. He’d have to make an entrance. CRASH!!! The glass shattered all over the living room.

Lois and Clark’s heads shot up, breaking them from their reverie. “Oh, my.”

“What the — ?” Clark got up from the couch to investigate, ignoring his own state of undress. Lois slipped Clark’s dress shirt on, following him over to the window.

Lois approached Clark and found him holding Agent Scardino by the collar, up against the wall. “*Dan?* What are you doing here?”

“I was worried about you.”

“You’re worried about her, so you break in?” Clark angrily inquired.

“Don’t you know how to use a *door?*” Lois snapped.

“I wasn’t sure if you would answer.”

“Yeah, that’s breaking and entering,” Clark said.

“Would you mind letting go of my neck, Kent? I’m having trouble breathing,” Scardino wheezed out.

Clark looked at Scardino for a moment, then seemed to register the fact that he still had Scardino in his grip. He roughly threw Scardino to the ground.

“Thanks.” Scardino brushed himself off and stood up. He took in the state of undress Lois and Clark were in and had the decency to look embarrassed. “Whoa! I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to intrude.”

“Agent Scardino, you need to leave,” Lois said firmly.

“Hey, I was just worried about you.”

“Do the words ‘*I Don’t Need You To Protect Me*’ mean anything to you? You are not welcome here at all. Do you have any idea how invasive and ... UGH! You broke my window!” Lois



noticed the broken glass scattered around the carpet and a hole in the window that opened up to the fire escape of her apartment.

“I’ll pay for it.”

“Do boundaries mean anything to you, Scardino?” Clark asked.

“Okay, obviously everyone is very upset because of my intrusion on your ... uh, extracurricular activities. For that I apologize, but I’m not going to apologize for trying to look out for you.”

“She doesn’t need *your* protection, Scardino. Were you not listening two seconds ago?”

“I already lost someone to McCarthy before. I didn’t want to see the same thing happen to you too.”

“Who was she?” Lois asked, noticing the tone Dan had assumed.

“Jenna, my partner. A little mouthy, but I’m not exactly a monk.”

“I’m sorry. We didn’t know,” Clark said quietly.

“It’s fine.”

“I understand *WHY* you’re being so – overprotective — but understand this. I don’t need your help and you need to leave me and Clark *alone*.”

“I get it. I get it. Three’s a crowd, huh?” He got up to leave. “I’ll be around.”

Lois shut the door behind him. “Can you believe that guy?”

Clark shook his head in disbelief. “He doesn’t know when to stop.”

“Hmmm. Well, enough about Scardino ... “ Lois flung her arms around Clark’s neck and pulled him towards her in a passionate kiss.

“Mmm ... “ he moaned.

Albie Swinson paced the floors of the Gables estate, agonizing over his plight. How could he save Metropolis from its fate? Stanley Gables was obviously mad. What to do? Wait a minute, those reporters that the grave digger had chased off the property ... maybe they could help. He only hoped it wasn’t too late.



Clark wore a lazy smile as he looked up at Lois, brushing the stray strands of hair out of her face. They'd moved into the bedroom after Scardino had left and quickly lost themselves in one another. She still clung to him in the aftermath of their lovemaking, panting heavily. Her heart rate was racing, her face was flushed. He had dreamed of this so many nights for the last few years. It had seemed like a pipe dream for so long. Recently he had seen hope. Now he was living the reality of being with Lois Lane and making love with her.

Lois smiled up at him, lazily tracing patterns on his chest. "Do you have any idea how many times I dreamed about this?"

"Probably no more than I dreamed about it as well," he murmured against her ear.

"First it was Superman, and then it was Clark..." she said, seductively teasing his pectorals.

"You fantasized about Clark?" he asked in disbelief. He knew she had had her fantasies about Superman but Clark...

"I suppressed so much, trying to hide," she whispered.

He leaned down to kiss her. "We were both trying to hide."

She smiled up at him. "I don't know why. Oh, Clark..." She wrapped her arms around him more securely. He rolled them over so they were on their sides, and then pulled her to him.

Clark moved to face her, cupping her cheek gently as he turned to speak to her. "I love you, Lois Lane," he whispered.

"I love you, Clark Kent," she whispered, turning to recapture his mouth.

The next morning, Lois Lane woke to the sound of a ringing telephone by her bed. She took a moment to assess her surroundings. Clark lay next to her, his arms wrapped protectively around her slim body. She smiled at his sleeping figure and sat up to answer the phone.

"Hello?" she said groggily.

"Lois Lane? This is Albie Swinson. You've got to help me," the man said hurriedly over the phone.

Lois was still tired from last night's activities. "Albie Swinson?"

"Please, the toxins in his body are poisoning his mind. He's going to kill innocent people," Albie pleaded with her.

That got Lois' attention. "Who?"



Albie was speaking in a hushed whisper now, “Gables. I can’t say any more on the phone. Meet me at Whispering Pines, plot 29B in half an hour.”

Lois hung up the phone and looked over at Clark with an amused look.

“Well, back to work,” she muttered, grudgingly.

“Who was that?” Clark asked sleepily as he began to wake up.

“Albie Swinson. He has information for us about Stanley Gables.”

“Albie? Isn’t that the same guy we had Jimmy do a background check on?”

“The same.”

“Well, let’s go. See what he has to say.”

Lois and Clark stood at plot 29B of Whispering Pines Cemetery awaiting Albie Swinson’s arrival.

Clark looked around, x-raying the cemetery critically. “I don’t know, Lois. Something isn’t right.”

“Clark, he said he’d be here in half an hour. You didn’t hear him on the phone. He was scared.”

“Well, maybe he had a reason to be.” Clark sensed something was not right. The chill in the air smelled of trouble.

Clark’s cell phone went off and he looked down at it. “It’s Jimmy. There’s no signal over here. Will you be all right for just a minute?”

“I’ll be fine. If anything happens, I’ll just yell.”

“All right.” Clark walked off, trying to find a signal.

Lois looked around nervously. Something wasn’t right. They had been standing here for over an hour and still no sign of Albie. Just then one of the grave diggers she had seen a few days ago approached her.

“Albie?”

“Albie couldn’t make it,” he returned with a smile. He pulled out a gun and headed towards her.



Lois' eyes widened in fear and she ran across the cemetery, looking for Clark. She couldn't very well call for help when she was out of breath. If she screamed, he would know where she was and could Clark get to her before a bullet could? All these questions raced through her mind.

She spotted what looked like an empty coffin by one of the plots and climbed in, whispering, "I'm sorry," once she realized it had a body inside. She just had to wait it out until the gravedigger gave up.

Machinery could be heard from outside the coffin and she felt the coffin being lifted from the ground. She began to cry as she realized she was about to be buried alive. The body she was lying on top of stirred and she looked down at it in shock. It was Buster Williams.

He smiled up at her. "I must have really died, Angel, because this is heaven."

Lois screamed in fear.

Clark's head shot up when he heard Lois' cry. "Uh, Jimmy thanks for the information. I've got to go. I think Lois is in trouble." He hung up the phone and quickly changed into the Superman suit as he shot up into the sky. He searched the ground of the cemetery and saw nothing. Gravediggers were burying a coffin, but that was it; nothing out of the ordinary. Could she be at the Planet?

"Lo-is, why do you do this to me?" he muttered under his breath. He headed in the direction of the Planet to look for her.

Perry walked up to Clark as he saw him looking around Lois' desk. "Clark? I thought I was the only one that liked to come in early around here." A yawn escaped from Clark as he strode up to his desk. Perry noticed the lines of worry on the young man's forehead. "Did you pull an all-nighter?"

"I'm looking for Lois. She and I got a call this morning to meet Albie Swinson. He said he had some information for us on Stanley Gables. Lois and I think he might be tied into Mayson's murder."

"Gables. I know that name. Didn't he used to work for STAR Labs?" Perry asked. He glanced at a couple of the articles on Clark's desk reading,

"Freak Accident Kills Four — Chemist Blamed". Another article read: "Gables Claims STAR Labs to Blame".

"Jimmy pulled an all-nighter getting this research on Gables for me. Gables was one of their top chemists. He invented something called the Omega Virus."



Perry nodded in agreement, recalling the information. “Right. I remember now. The guy had an accident in his lab and the virus killed four people.”

“According to these articles, they fired him and he sued. He blamed STAR Labs for the accident.”

“But the jury didn’t buy it. We ran an editorial praising the verdict. The guy just wouldn’t take responsibility for his own mistake.”

Agent Scardino walked up to the two of them with a happy grin on his face. “Hey, guys, where’s Lois?”

“I don’t know,” Clark replied. “Have you seen her?”

“Are you kidding? What, did you two have a lovers’ quarrel after I left?” Agent Scardino winked at him.

Perry caught the implication of what Scardino was saying. Apparently, Clark had been with Lois last night. He didn’t say anything, though. He hoped everything would work out for the best between Lois and Clark. He really felt Clark was what Lois needed; a strong supportive partner who was there for her no matter what.

“No, trust me, when I’m kidding I’m a lot funnier,” Clark shot back.

“Where would she go?”

Perry began to think. “Well, if you two were investigating Gables ... “

“What? You think Lois went over to Gables house by herself?” Scardino asked. Clark grabbed his coat and headed for the door.

Perry just smiled. “Agent Scardino, if there’s one thing you must learn about Lois it’s that she’s ... “

“Bold? Headstrong? Unpredictable?” Scardino asked.

“To say the least,” Clark said as he called the elevator down.

“A woman after my own heart.” Scardino smiled. “Hey, wait. I’m coming, too.”

Stanley Gable sat at a desk looking at a large computer screen. Sean McCarthy looked at the screen and asked Gables, “Hey, Mr. Gables, when’s Buster going to be here?”



Gables looked at the screen and watched a picture of a coffin float from one end of a maze to another. “Any second now...”

Diego and McCarthy walked over to Gables’ fireplace and watched as the head of a coffin appeared in the opening. The men pulled the coffin into the room and Diego grunted as he lifted it up. “Man, this is heavy. I thought you said Buster was a little guy!”

McCarthy grunted as well and dropped the coffin. He then pried open the lid and discovered Lois lying on top of Buster. “What are you doing in there?”

Lois stood up and looked around at the handful of convicts in the room, with a shaky breath and then asked, “Would you honestly believe anything I said?”

Gables shook his head no and McCarthy commented, “Looks like we got us a stowaway, Mr. Gables.”

“Ms. Lane, I presume.” Mr. Gables sighed. “My man at the cemetery was baffled by your disappearance. A unique escape plan; I’ll give you that.”

“I could return the compliment,” Lois replied dryly. She spotted a man, tied up and gagged, sitting on the love seat.

Gables noticed her line of vision then smiled. “Albie looks lonely. Aren’t love seats made for two?”

STAR Labs’ front entrance was guarded by several security guards. McCarthy tapped on the glass doors, holding up bug spray equipment, dressed as an exterminator.

The guard at the front desk nodded and allowed entry for McCarthy. McCarthy smiled as he walked up to the guard. “Hate to tell you, but you’ve got bugs. I’ve got to spray.” He then sprayed the toxin into the air and leaned over the counter to open the door for the rest of the crew to enter as well.

The guards lay helpless on the floor as their bodies absorbed the lethal toxins.

“Let’s go,” Gables ordered as they made their way through STAR Labs.

Outside of Stanley Gables’ estate, Clark was getting annoyed with Scardino’s insistence on following him. He needed to find Lois and he couldn’t do that with Scardino on his tail.

“I don’t know, Kent. Are you sure about this? It looks kinda quiet to me.”



Clark x-rayed the house and smiled when he spotted Lois sitting on the love seat with who he assumed was Albie. She was halfway done trying to untie herself from her bonds. “Uh, why don’t you just head back? If you don’t think they’re here. There’s no sense in both of us wasting our time.”

“Nah, I’ll stick around.” Scardino looked around the property critically.

“Okay. Why don’t you try around back? See if there’s an open window?”

Scardino broke the window to the front door. “This one’s open.” He then gestured towards the door. “After you.”

Clark stared at him in disbelief as Scardino opened the door. “Does destruction of property mean anything to you, Scardino?”

“Hey, you’re the one that suggested breaking and entering,” Scardino shot back as they headed upstairs to the office.

McCarthy and Diego stood below an air vent in the lobby of STAR Labs as they lifted Buster into the vent. Diego then moved to the security panel on a nearby security door leading to the most secured part of STAR labs.

Diego pulled out a cobra pick and inserted it into the security door. After a few moments, the door clicked open. He then moved to the security panel and opened it in the same manner. Once the security panel was opened he removed a disk from the computer before him and replaced it with a disk of his own. After a few keystrokes, he turned to Gables.

“Done. The security system is down.”

“Excellent,” Gables replied with a smile.

McCarthy looked on with a smile. “Hope everyone’s ready for some fireworks.”

Scardino rushed in front of Clark, trying to play the hero, and opened the door to Gables’ office. Inside they found Lois untied and working on untying Albie Swinson.

“Lois?”

“Clark!” Lois ran up to him and threw her arms around him, kissing him soundly.

“What happened?”



“Well, that grave digger came after me while you were on the phone with Jimmy and I couldn’t very well scream for help while I was trying to avoid him so I jumped into what I thought was an empty coffin and ended up getting buried alive and now I’m here.”

“Are you all right?”

“Yeah. I’m fine. This is Albie Swinson by the way. He says Gables is insane. He wants to kill all of Metropolis with — “

“The Omega Virus?”

“How did you — ?”

“That’s what Jimmy had called to tell me this morning — research on Gables.”

Scardino, tired of being ignored, jumped in. “Uh, hi, sorry to interrupt. Remember me? DEA agent? Here to work on the investigation? Mind filling me in?”

Lois rolled her eyes. “We can fill you in on the way to STAR Labs.”

“What’s at STAR Labs?” Scardino asked.

“The Omega Virus,” Lois and Clark replied in unison.

“Do you two always do that?”

“Not always,” Lois replied warmly.

Clark smiled back at her. Things were definitely different between them now. “I’m going to call the police. Make sure Superman knows what’s going on.”

Lois nodded, catching onto what Clark was saying. “Right.”

Clark left and Scardino watched him, shaking his head, trying to figure out what Lois saw in him. “So, are you coming?”

“Coming?”

“To STAR Labs? We’ve got to stop this thing!”

“I think Superman has got this under control, Dan.”

“Suit yourself.” Scardino turned and left.

Lois watched him leave then counted to ten. She couldn’t let Scardino go over there by himself. He could risk hurting himself or someone else. He had a grudge against McCarthy. “Damn it,”



she muttered under her breath and headed out the door. “The one time I try to be rational and level-headed.”

Clark flew through the sky and landed on the roof of STAR Labs, where he found a balding man standing there with a vial in his hand. That had to be Stanley Gables.

“Everyone loves a good Steven King novel. Now, this city is going to live one.” Gables lifted the vial to break it as Diego, Buster, and McCarthy lifted their masks to protect themselves against the virus.

Clark landed on the roof in one swift motion; he narrowed his eyes at the criminals, giving them a stern look. “I wondered if the prison had a lost and found department.”

Realizing Superman was referring to their daring escape, Diego, McCarthy, and Buster ran in the opposite direction, leaving Superman to deal with Gables alone.

“Don’t go far,” Clark called after them. He turned to Gables and took a step forward but stopped as Gables broke the seal on the vial. Gable held his thumb over the covering in place over the vial. “Give me the vial, Gables.”

Gables smiled sardonically at Clark. “I don’t think so, Superman. There’s nothing you can do to me that STAR Labs hasn’t already done. I am a victim. Justice will be served.”

“It’s not justice when innocent people are made to suffer for your mistakes.”

“Oh, yes, it is.” Gables smashed the vial to the ground before Clark could react and the contents began to spread before them.

Clark, at a loss for what to do, panicked for a split second and then found a solution. He used his super breath to freeze the virus in place then threw it into the sky.

“NO!!” Gables cried out in agony.

Scardino jumped out of his cab in front of STAR Labs. Immediately recognizing McCarthy, he began to chase him down. Diego and Buster ran in opposite directions. Albie tackled Diego to the ground and Lois took Buster Williams down with a swift kick.

Scardino continued to chase McCarthy down. McCarthy tried to jump a chain link fence but found it too high, lost his balance, and plummeted to the ground. Scardino took advantage of the situation and drew out his gun. “Get your hands where I can see them!”



McCarthy raised his hands to show surrender. Scardino reached down to remove the mask from McCarthy's face. McCarthy smiled. Taking advantage of the weak moment, he grabbed Scardino's leg and tripped him. Scardino's gun flew across the concrete as they continued to wrestle for control over one another. McCarthy finally gaining the upper hand, wrapped his hands around Scardino's neck as he taunted him, "You should have died with your partner, Scardino."

"He likes to be called Daniel." Clark dressed in his suit and glasses once more, grabbed McCarthy and threw him across the concrete.

McCarthy struggled to stand up once more but was facing the barrel of Scardino's gun, being held by Lois. "Don't even bother. You think you're hurting now, you'll be in even more pain if you try anything else."

McCarthy eyed Lois for a moment then gave into unconsciousness. She leaned down to check that he was still breathing then headed towards Clark and Agent Scardino.

Scardino stared in awe as the seemingly mild-mannered reporter helped him to his feet. "Kent?"

"The police are on their way. Thanks for waiting for me by the way."

"How did you ... ?"

"It's not important." Lois handed the gun to Scardino. "I don't think he'll be giving you any more problems. Clark gave him a good knock on the head when he threw him off of you. Gables is already in custody and Diego and Buster are out cold. Anything else we can do for you, Agent Scardino?"

Agent Scardino stared in awe at the duo. He now understood exactly what Lois saw in Clark. There was nothing ordinary about Kent at all.

Perry stood behind Lois and Clark as they read the headline for the mock up of the Planet's next edition. "DEATH PILL EXPOSED. SCIENTIST LINKED TO D.A.'S MURDER."

"Quite a story, kids. I'd give my set of gold-plated Elvis spoons to know what makes a guy like Gables tick."

Lois grimaced. "That's the way it is today. Everybody sees themselves as a victim."

Clark nodded in agreement. "It's like no one wants to take responsibility for their actions anymore."



Perry smiled. “Well, boys and girls, I, for one, take my responsibility very seriously. And right now I’ve got a paper to put to bed, so I can go home and have a little dinner with Alice. See you tomorrow.”

Perry walked away, leaving the couple alone for the first time since that morning. “Good night, Perry,” Lois called after him. He waved in recognition and headed for the elevator.

“So, how you doing?” Clark asked, nuzzling her neck seductively.

“I’m basking in the glory of my accomplishments,” she replied with a twinkle in her eye.

“Accomplishments?” Clark was baffled at her choice of words.

“Well, in the last 24 hours I have proven that I can take care of myself on my own ... “

“Yes, but you still need to work on NOT getting into so much trouble, Lois.”

“Hey, I called you once I got to STAR Labs. I didn’t go in by myself.”

“Yeah, after you threw Buster Williams a roundhouse kick and knocked him out cold.”

“He was trying to get away.”

“Lo-is.”

“Okay, fine. But I still proved I didn’t need anyone’s help to get me out of Gables’ estate. I was already untied by the time you and Dan got there.”

He laughed at her pride in herself. “Okay. I’ll give you that. It was kinda funny to see Scardino’s face when he opened the door and you were already untied.”

“So, what have we got going on tonight?”

“Movie?” he offered.

“Sure. Your place or mine? I must warn you. I have no food,” she offered.

He laughed. “I think I’ll live. But I CAN cook you know.”

“Wow, he can cook and he can fly?” She winked at him. “This just might work out.”

Clark laughed at the inside joke.

Dan Scardino approached them apprehensively and cleared his throat. “Hey.”

“Hi, Dan. How’s your head?” Lois asked.



“It’s good,” he replied. “Thanks to you and Kent, I still have one. I wanted to come by and thank you for what you did for me. I’ve always had the attitude that no one could touch me. I never look before I leap type thing. I got my pride wounded. I deserved it.”

“It happens,” Clark remarked. He remembered a time a few months back when he had foolishly thought himself invincible and had approached Luthor without looking first and had found himself in a Kryptonite cage. It had been a humbling experience.

“Maybe, but, I owe you both an apology. I should never have tried to come in between you two. Perry had warned me you were out of my league and I didn’t listen. I still tried to pursue you and I’m sorry for that. I now know what you see in Kent here. I wish the best for you both and I hope we can all be friends.”

“Sure,” Lois replied. “Just save the cheesy pickup lines for someone else?” Lois smiled up at Clark. “They’re wasted on me.”

“Right. I’ll see you guys around.” Dan shook Clark’s hand firmly. An offer of friendship.

“Sure,” Clark replied. He took the man’s hand in friendship. “Dan?”

“Yeah?”

“I hope you find what it is you’re looking for,” Clark supplied.

“Me too,” he replied sadly. He walked away and headed towards the elevator. He had seen the way Lois looked at Clark. He remembered when a woman had looked at him that way. It had been Jenna. She had been the love of his life. Lois reminded him a lot of her. Would he ever meet anyone to fill the hole in his heart that her death had brought on?

He watched as Clark leaned in to kiss Lois. She laughed and pulled him closer, teasing him — full of life. No, he never would meet anyone like Jenna. Lois belonged with Kent. That was certain.

Lois watched Dan leave and smiled sadly. “It’s sad. What happened to his partner.”

“Yeah,” Clark replied sadly. “Like I said, I hope he does find what he’s looking for.”

“Me too. He’s not really such a bad guy, just misguided. Needs to learn to back off when someone is obviously madly in love with their best friend and struggling to deal with all those emotions.”

“I love you, too.” He captured her mouth soundly and she laughed against his mouth as he scooped her in his arms and carried her towards the storage closet.

“Clark, where are we going?”



“Exploring?” he replied as she smacked him lightly. He laughed. Things were definitely looking up. He and Lois were together. They were working towards a solid relationship. She knew he was Superman and still loved him. He couldn’t ask for a better beginning to their relationship.

~The End. Or The Beginning? You decide.

