

Clark and Lois -- When Worlds and Universes Collide -- Matchmaker Chronicle Volume 8

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Rated PG-13

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Summary: When representatives from New Krypton arrive looking for Kal-El — worlds collide. When the trial-by-combat starts to keep it from being too lopsided, universes collide when Herb brings in auxiliaries from other universes.

Clark and Lois — When Worlds and Universes Collide —
Matchmaker Chronicle Volume 8

Disclaimers: Some of the Lois and Clark characters in this story are property of DC, December 3rd Productions and Warner Bros. No copyright infringement is intended. I have just borrowed the characters for a short time. The rest are mine.

I really need to thank my courageous beta reader, Artemis. She has hung in there from the beginning.

Author's note:

This story takes place in my Matchmaker universe. If for some reason this is the first time you have read one of my stories I would strongly suggest that reading my works out of order can end up being confusing. The best example I can give is this. If you are familiar with the SciFi series Babylon 5 imagine jumping in in the middle of season 3. You would be totally lost. You would not know who Sherridan, Ivonova, Londo Molari, G'Kar, D'alén, Kosh, Garabaldi, Bester or any of the other members of the rather large ensemble cast were or why things were happening the way they were.

A more current example would be the widely popular Game of Thrones. You would need to start at the beginning to understand what is happening and why.

That being said, to have the greatest understanding of this, or any of my stories as is usually the case, it is best to start at the beginning. In the archives you will find my stories and they can be read in order by simply following the Volume designations. Take them in alpha numerical order and you will not be lost or disappointed. Many of them are very short comprising only a few chapters.

How we got to this point:

Volume 3 of the Matchmaker series, "Clark and Lois — The Lost Years" is part 1 of the Clark and Lois arc.

At the close of "Lois and Clarks" as Herb Wells was taking Alt Clark back to his universe, Herb offered to assist Alt Clark in

his quest to find the Lois Lane of his universe. Clark accepted the offer and Herb transported him back in time and to Brazzaville, Congo so that he could pick up her trail when she arrived to start her investigation of the illegal gun running. Clark managed to meet her and form an acquaintanceship. Through a series of circumstances she found out that he was investigating the same story; however, he led her to believe that he was a government agent. After a rough start they cooperated on the investigation and their relationship became more than a partnership. They were on the trail of the guns when the incident which had prevented her return occurred. Lois and Clark were captured by a rebel band and Clark was unable to prevent Lois from being shot. Clark was able to subdue her assailant without revealing his powers and got her to a hospital. At this point a new universe was created and the Lois in this new universe survived her injuries.

After returning to Metropolis, Luthor was attacked at the White Orchid Ball by the Newtrich sisters. The attack was directed at Luthor, but Clark was hit inadvertently. When he was hit, the laser beam interacted with the Star Sapphires of Lois' jewel set. The set had been a wedding gift to her from Clark. It was a never before seen variety of Star Sapphire with an eight-pointed star. The stone had been found by Clark while he was preparing for his mission, and turned into jewelry by a jeweler in Brazzaville. In actuality it was an extremely rare form of Kryptonite which, when associated with red Kryptonite, acted as a storage battery for Clark's super powers and could pass them on to anyone who was at least half Kryptonian. In the attack, Lois's physiology had been changed and she was now half Kryptonian. When they returned to their room they discovered that she now had powers.

Clark discovered that some things had changed and he was of the belief that they had simply changed history. After Lois recovered from her injury they were wed and returned to Metropolis to continue the investigation with Clark being hired by Perry White on Lois' recommendation. The investigation resulted in the ultimate downfall of Lex Luthor and his death at the hands of Bill Henderson in a gunfight.

Volume 4 of the Matchmaker series, "Clark and Lois — Despair to Hope" is part 2 of the Clark and Lois arc.

When Lois had been shot by the rebel, there had been two possible outcomes, 1) she lives, 2) she dies. When the new universe had been created it had been because she had lived as opposed to the recorded course of history of Alt 1 where she had died. In this story we return to the Alt canon universe where Lois had died. Due to the death of his soul mate Alt Clark had been plunged into the depths of despair which almost claimed his life. Some friends he had made in Brazzaville had nursed him back to health and a chance comment by one of them reminded him that there were many Lois Lanes in the multi-verse. Clinging to this hope he patiently awaited the return of Herb.

Clark told Herb the story of how Lois had died while Herb returned Clark to his proper time in Herb's time sled. When they arrived back in Clark's apartment an older version of Herb showed up, appearing through a time window, with an offer. After sending his younger self on another mission the older Herb proposed to Alt Clark a series of missions. While he and the resources of TTEMPO searched for a Lois without a Clark, he needed Alt Clark to visit a number of other universes where the presence of a second Superman was crucial to the survival of the Lois or Clark of the subject universe. This would be similar to the time that he had helped canon Lois (the Lois that had helped him create Superman.) and her Clark against Tempus. Thus Alt Clark began his own version of the twelve labors of Hercules.

Volume 5 of the Matchmaker series, Clark and Lois — Hope Realized is part 3 of the Clark and Lois arc.

Herb picked up Alt Clark after Clark successfully completed his twelfth mission, with a promise of one final mission. That mission was to unite Clark with a Lois whose Clark had been killed.

In that universe (called Alt 2), just prior to the White Orchid Ball, Miranda had sprayed Lex with Revenge; however, it had a delayed effect. It kicked in when Lex saw Lois at the ball and he became obsessed with having her. Finding out that Lois and Clark were engaged, Lex was determined to eliminate his competition and contracted a hit on Clark.

One day shortly after that there was a call about a baby in the Wishing Well in Centennial Park to which Superman responded. The Newtrich sisters were there with their laser to attack Superman; however, their laser didn't use red Kryptonite. It was a hybrid form of red and green. When Superman was hit with that beam it not only transferred his powers to Lois, it modified both of their physiologies making him Earth human and Lois Kryptonian human and this change was irreversible.

Lex's hit on Clark was successful but the arrival of Alt Clark was timed to coincide with it. His presence prevented Lois from falling into the same depths of depression he had suffered by the loss of his soul mate in his own universe. After some time and grieving on Lois' and the senior Kents' part, Alt Clark was able to assume local Clark's identity and form a bond with this Lois.

When Herb returned at their scheduled meeting time he found them together and married. This left a problem. Now there were two universes that needed superheroes and one pair that didn't want to separate. This problem was solved by Herb giving them a TaDT (Time and Dimensional Transport) device which was locked on to their two universes so that they could cross back and forth at will.

In Lois' universe (Alt 2) they proceeded with their investigation of Luthor. At this point there are two fully Kryptonian superheroes in this universe.

Volume 7 of the Matchmaker series, "Clark and Lois — Two Universes" is part 4 of the Clark and Lois arc.

In order to protect Lois' sister, Lucy, arrangements are made to move her from California and get her a job at the Planet. Unknown to them Lucy had previously had a relationship with Mr. Olsen. She had broken it off when she had lost her sister. Now that Lois had returned she was willing to renew the relationship.

Leslie Luckabee had arrived in town with an offer to purchase the Planet. Lois and Clark had overheard the name Leslie in association with a brothel and were suspicious of his motives. They urged Mr. Olsen to stall while they investigated, which he did.

In order to forestall Luckabee, Lois and Clark, through the Superman Foundation, made a counter offer for the Planet which Luckabee couldn't match.

Clark rescued a child from a fire and they become close to the family. They performed x-ray surgery on her to destroy a tumorous growth which threatened her life, curing her. After her parents were killed in an auto accident Clark and Lois adopted the child.

Lois happily discovers that she is pregnant.

Clark is captured and nearly dies at the hands of Lex Luthor Junior by way of the Quantum Disruptor.

In the closing chapter, Lois gives birth.

Volume 8 of the Matchmaker series, "Clark and Lois — When Worlds and Universes Collide" is part 5 of the Clark and Lois arc.

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 — Canon Lois and Clark universe also called — Prime

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124 — Alternate Prime —

Lori and Clark

Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 036 — Alt 1, Alt Clark and Kryptonian Lois — (Alt 1)

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt 2 Kryptonian Lois' home universe.

Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 040 — Alt 1 alternate (Alt 3) Alt Lois and Alt Clark

Chapter 01 — Superman and Superwoman to the Rescue October 1992

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 040 — Alt 1 alternate (Alt 3)

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A/N — The Alt 1 alternate universe was created when Alt Clark succeeded in saving Lois' life after she was shot by the rebel in the Congo. The details of that story are in Volume 3 of this series — "Clark and Lois — The Lost Years", Part One of the Clark and Lois arc.

The Luthor expose had been front page news for over a week. Word had filtered back that the story was being nominated for not only a Kerth Award but a Meriwether and was in the running for a Pulitzer.

The team of Lane and Kent were still doing follow-ups even after two weeks but it was beginning to look as though the end might be in sight. The collapse of the Luthor Empire had left the rackets in Metropolis and elsewhere in disarray. The smaller groups were squabbling and there were strong men trying to muscle in and take over at least pieces of what Luthor had previously controlled.

As a result of the investigation and the credit and notoriety brought to the department, Detective Lieutenant William Henderson was promoted to Inspector in a ceremony covered by the press. Prominent among the press corps were Lois Lane and Clark Kent who, after the ceremony, were among the few that Henderson greeted personally. "I don't know how to thank you guys. If it wasn't for you and the work you did on this investigation before you even brought it to me this wouldn't have happened."

"Bill, we came to you because we believed you to be an honest cop. We are well satisfied at the outcome. You deserve this promotion. We are just happy to have had a small hand in it."

"Thanks, Clark. You and Lois are actually the only reporters in this city that give the force an honest break. You report the news fairly and factually which is saying a lot. My door will always be open to you."

Lois said, "We appreciate that, Bill. We always strive to be accurate and fair. That's kinda our trademark. Oh, by the way, keep an eye on the Planet. Perry is talking about starting a new advertising campaign. He's going to be billing us as 'The Hottest Team in Town' because of this story."

After another round of handshakes they took their departure.

In the privacy of their home Clark and Lois were discussing the current state of affairs. "Lois, as you know in my 'old' reality, I had a public presence as Superman. We've been doing some of the things I did when we were breaking up those robberies. It felt good to get back to doing something positive. Even doing it in disguise like that. How do you feel about it?"

"I had never done anything like that before but I really felt good about what we were able to do and I'd kinda like to keep doing it. The only question is how. You said that before everyone knew that you were Superman. How was that as far as your privacy? Did the press hound you all the time?"

"You have no idea. Sometimes it was almost unbearable. I've told you a little about my friends, the other Lois and Clark. Clark uses a costume his mother made for him. Mine was patterned

after it. The idea was that as Clark he hides out in the open. He wears glasses, loose suits, his hair in a different style and he assumes a different attitude when in the Suit. As Clark he's relaxed but in the Suit he's very formal and almost stilted."

"Personally, I didn't see how he was able to pull it off, but Lois seemed convinced that it was effective. I was thinking I could try the same thing. Now that we've finished up on Luthor I think it's about time to move ahead on this."

"Can you draw something for me to look at?"

"Sure!" Going over to the desk he pulled out a sketch pad and pencils, some of them colored and started to draw. When he finished he had a full color rendition of himself in the suit. He turned the pad around so that Lois could see it.

"Wow! Doesn't leave much to the imagination, does it?"

"Well, that actually is another thing about it. The eye is drawn away from the face to look at 'other' parts of the body. It helps with the disguise."

"I'm sure it would! Wow, I can't wait to see you in it in living color. When can we start working on it? What do you think mine should look like?"

Clark sounded somewhat shocked as he asked "Are you sure you want to do this?"

"Why not? I have your powers, I've been helping stop crimes and I want to continue to help. What's stopping me?"

"Okay, how about this?" He started sketching again. When he finished he turned the pad around for her perusal.

She took it in hand and looked at it closely. He had drawn a suit similar to his covering her from shoulders to toes with a long cape. There was no way for him to know it, but what he had drawn was very similar to canon Lois's Ultra Woman costume.

"It's okay, but how about this?" She started modifying the sketch. When she finished she handed it back to him.

He looked at it and caught his breath. "Are you sure? I mean I'd love it, but wouldn't you feel uncomfortable?"

"The idea is to draw the eye away from the face, isn't it?"

"Yeah, but I don't know if I want my wife running around in public dressed like that."

"I think it would help to hide my identity, maybe if we add a mask?"

"It's not how much of your face that's showing that I'm having a problem with."

"Why? What's the problem?" A smirking smile quirked her lips as she continued, "You didn't act like this in the Congo when I had on the pink bikini. You seemed to like it, if I am remembering correctly."

He knew that she was teasing him, but that didn't keep him from blushing as she reminded him. "Yeah, but well, then it was just you and me, alone, together. Besides, you were doing that with malice aforethought. You were teasing me, testing me."

"Aren't you glad you passed the test?" She asked as she wrapped her arms around his neck and started kissing him while moving her torso from side to side, rubbing her breasts against his chest.

The drawing after Lois modified it looked like she would be wearing a blue Speedo swim suit with matching elbow length blue gloves, a pleated mini skirt that almost reached mid-thigh in red and a red cape somewhat shorter than his, reaching only to her waist, and red boots that came to mid calf. A yellow belt would complete the outfit. The Star Sapphires would be stored in pockets in her belt, gloves and boots. The boots were low heeled, like regular shoes emphasizing her petite stature. As Lois she normally wore heels and sometimes stilettos, making a distinct contrast with her super persona and so adding to the disguise. She would continue to wear the earrings but they would have disguising covers over them to hide their true appearance. The same 'S' shield as on Clark's uniform in a somewhat smaller size would grace her chest.

"I guess it'd be okay. I do think the idea of a mask is a good one. I always felt uncomfortable, afraid that someone would recognize me. How about this ..." He started drawing again. When finished he showed it to Lois. The mask would be like a ski mask that only came down as far as the nose with eye holes and made of the same stretchy material the suit was made from. Her hair would be pulled back in a kind of ponytail the way women do when they wear a ball cap. The ponytail would also serve to disguise the actual length of her hair. Both would wear the same style mask.

"I like it. Let's get started on them. I think we can go to a sporting goods store for the basics. A speed skating suit for you and a bathing suit for me."

"Okay, but what say we go to Colorado for the speed skating suit and Florida for the swim suit. I need a pair of Speedo trunks to complete mine anyhow."

"Sounds like a plan. Let's see, two hours difference between here and Colorado, shops should still be open. How about California for the swim suits instead of Florida? They should still be open while Florida's will be closed already."

"Okay, let's go."

They went out into the back yard and hand in hand took off for the ski slopes and shops of Colorado.

They spent the weekend preparing their costumes. Once finished they modeled for each other.

Staring at Lois, Clark got a rueful look on his face. He could see that there was a potential problem but was having trouble addressing it. "I'm not so sure about this. When we are out together in these outfits I'm going to embarrass myself just by looking at you."

"What about me? My nipples are getting hard just looking at you." They both laughed. "I guess they are effective at that." Lois shrugged. "Maybe we need to look at the perps and not at each other?"

"Well, okay, we can try it that way," Clark answered thoughtfully, "Now that we have the costumes, where do we begin? The problem now is, how do we announce ourselves?"

After a moment's thought, Clark answered his own question with the suggestion "I think that at the first major disaster or crime we hear about we'll make our debut."

"You'll have to help me. I don't think I'll be too nervous since we did those jobs on the robberies, but you never know."

"You'll do just fine. All we have to do now is to wait until the right event comes along."

Almost as soon as Clark had finished speaking there was an announcement of a multi-car pileup on the interstate. The announcement said that emergency crews were having a hard time getting to the scene because of the extent of road covered by the wrecks and there were concerns for injuries. Since they hadn't had time to remove their respective costumes Clark looked over at Lois and said "Looks like we have our chance. Ready?"

"Ready as I'll ever be. Let's go. Superman and Superwoman to the rescue!"

They stepped out their back door. Superman stretched out his hand to Superwoman. She clasped it in hers and with one last look at each other they nodded to each other and took off straight up at superspeed, heading for the interstate.

As they approached the scene Clark thought "Use your x-ray and telescopic vision to start checking the cars. I'll take the busses and trucks. If I finish with them before you finish with the cars, I'll start helping with them."

They both used their telescopic vision to assess the situation. The pileup covered a distance of several miles. The roadway had been slicked up by a leaking tanker truck. There were several busses in the mix along with many big rigs as well as a lot of cars. They hovered above the scene for a few seconds and

continued to evaluate the injuries.

Superman thought to Superwoman, "The first priority is the injured. Use your x-ray vision to scan the cars take the most severely injured first. Don't worry about damaging the vehicles, they are probably totaled anyway. We need to extricate any injured. If there are any non-life threatening injuries take them to the side, where the paramedics are setting up, immediately. If you feel your powers starting to wane, come join me to recharge."

She squeezed his hand and thought "Got it. Let's go to work, partner."

They separated. Superwoman went to the front of the accident scene and started checking the occupants of the cars. The very first one she checked was the one with the most damage. The car was crushed front and rear. There was a woman with a child in a child safety seat. The woman was unconscious as was the child. When she landed she saw that there was a small fire under the engine which had been started by sparks from the battery falling on some spilled oil. Superwoman used her superbreath to blow it out. Fortunately it hadn't spread to the oil slick that had been the cause of the accident. If it had it could have caused a flashover and involved the entire scene in flames.

As soon as she had done this she ripped the door off its hinges and released the child safety seat from its belts. She then released the woman from her belt. Superwoman reached in and picked her up and cradled her in her arms. She picked up the child, safety seat and all, and held it in one hand as she took off for the hospital. When she reached MetGen she landed, carried the victims inside and placed the woman on a gurney with the child next to her. She called a nurse over. "These are the first of the victims of the accident on the interstate. We'll try to distribute them among the hospitals, but, you need to be prepared for a lot of patients in a rather short time."

"Who are you?"

"A friend." Superwoman turned and took off.

As she took off she could hear the awed exclamation "Wow!" She looked back and waved and then increased her speed to get back to the accident scene.

It was only a couple of minutes later that Superman arrived at MetGen with the first of his victims. "This is the driver of one of the busses involved. I think he's had a heart attack!"

"Put him on this gurney. We'll take it from here. Who are you?"

"A friend."

"Okay friend. Thanks for the help."

"I'll be back with more as will my partner." "How are you doing?"

"Coming in with another one."

"My partner's on her way in with another. She'll be here in a few seconds."

"Thanks for the heads up!" The nurse called out, "Get ready, people."

The staff at the hospital, realizing that it was not going to take a long time to fill up the ER, called in additional staffing and allocated additional beds on the floors as overflow. It would have been less of a problem if they had had to wait for the paramedics to bring patients in since they would have arrived in dribs and drabs, but this rapid delivery of sick and injured was going to strain their resources. The doctor in charge of the ER realized it was a two edged sword. On one side their resources were going to be stressed but on the other the rapid delivery would ensure prompt treatment. This way was preferable. The doctor had been monitoring the med channels and knew that the medics had not even been able to get to the scene and here was his ER filling up with some seriously injured people that thanks to the prompt treatment would live to see another day. These two new superheroes were really doing a tremendous service.

This continued for several hours. They distributed the injured

between MetGen, St. Luke's, Methodist and Morningside hospitals. Lois noticed no reduction of her powers even after several hours of strenuous effort and was really feeling good about what she was doing. She was checking another car as she saw Superman lift off with yet another victim and smiled. She spoke to the occupant of the vehicle and determined that all she needed to do was remove the door so that the occupant could exit. She did that and moved to the next car. She had noticed that the number of seriously injured was diminishing and was grateful that things were slowing down. By this time the paramedics were on scene and some of the injured were being extricated by the fire service and turned over to them.

The fire service personnel, seeing what Superman and Superwoman were doing, started calling them over when they had an extremely difficult extrication asking them to pull off doors or remove roofs, since they were a lot faster than using the Porta-Power or the Hurst tool, the so-called 'jaws of life'. In these instances generally the victim was one of those needing to be air lifted to a hospital.

After a while Superwoman was between rescues and saw Superman as he was returning from the hospital and flew up to join him. When she was in the air she stopped and hovered until he joined her. "I'm seeing fewer and fewer people needing to be air lifted. How about you?"

"I'm seeing the same thing. How about this? There's the chief down there. Let's go introduce ourselves and let him tell us what he needs."

"Good idea. Let's go." Clark reached out and she took his hand and they flew down and landed near the fire chief.

As they landed the chief turned to them and said "I don't know where you people came from but you sure have been a godsend. I don't know how many of the people you took to the hospitals would have made it if they had had to wait for us to arrive. Who are you anyway?"

Superman took the role of spokesman, "We are friends and are here to help. We arrived recently and decided that we couldn't sit on the sidelines and allow people to die if it could be prevented by our intervention."

"Well your intervention today sure saved a lot of people. For the fire service and for the city of Metropolis thank you and welcome. Where do you come from?"

"We'll be holding a press conference in the near future to fill everyone in. I'd like to wait till then if you don't mind."

"After what you've done for us today, I don't care if I never find out. I'm just happy you're here now."

"What further assistance do you require from us today?"

"I think we can handle the rest of it from here. The rest are just glorified fender benders."

"In that case we'll be on our way. With as much of your resources as there are tied up here with this incident we may be needed in the city." Superman reached for Superwoman's hand. She placed hers in his and they took off.

The fire chief watched as they flew away and shouted "How do we get hold of you if we need you?"

The duo stopped and hovered and Superwoman replied "Oh, we'll be around when we're needed. Bye!"

They flew off and did a patrol of Metropolis. There were a number of robberies in process. Criminals, seeing that a lot of police resources were being sent to the accident scene, had thought that they had a good chance of not getting caught. Clark thought "Let's split up. There's a high speed chase and a bank robbery. Which one do you want?"

"I'll take the high speed chase."

"Be careful."

"I will." She flew down next to the getaway car. The perp pulled out a gun and fired point blank at her. The bullet bounced off her invulnerable chest. She grabbed the gun out of his hand

and crushed it. Then she reached in the window and turned the engine off. When the car slowed she opened the door and dragged the perp out, holding him a foot off the ground with one hand, grasping him by the shirt front, until the police drove up. One officer approached warily while the other covered the scene with his drawn gun.

"Here you go, officer. I don't think you'll have any further trouble with this one." She set him back on his feet but held him until the officer had the cuffs on him. She then handed the officer the crushed gun.

He said "Thanks uh, Ms ... ?"

"Just a friend. See you around." She lifted off and took up station high over center city. From this vantage point she scanned the city. She spotted Clark as he was handling the bank robbery and watched using her x-ray and telescopic vision.

Superman had interrupted a bank robbery already in progress. He used his superspeed to disarm the robbers and then used the velvet cables used in the queue lines to tie them up. The bank guard came over after having retrieved his weapon. Superman asked the guard, "Think you can keep them here till the police arrive?"

Lois thought to Clark "I see the getaway car. I'll get the driver."/

"Okay, I'll make sure that these stay put."/

"I'm sure of it. Thanks, Mr. Uh ..."

"I'm just a friend. We'll leave it at that for the time being. My partner will be here in a second with the driver of the getaway car."

Lois walked in holding the driver up by the shirt collar, forcing him to walk on tiptoe, and added him to the catch.

"Okay friend. I'll keep 'em here. Don't you worry none."

Superman and Superwoman took off and climbed into the air over center city and both looking around saw that everything was quiet so they headed home.

Chapter 02 — The Press Conference

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 040 — Alt 3

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When they got in their phone was ringing. Clark picked it up. "Kent residence."

"Clark, where have you been?"

Instantly recognizing Perry White's gruff voice, Clark played innocent. "It's our day off, we went out for breakfast."

"Have you been listening to the radio?"

"No, why?"

"It's all over the news stations. There are two superheroes that just showed up."

"What do you mean, superheroes?" He turned and smiled at Lois knowing that she was listening to both sides of the conversation.

"They have spent the morning helping clear up a major pileup on the interstate and just a short time ago one of them, a woman, stopped a high speed chase and the other one, a man, foiled a bank robbery. I know it's your day off but I want you and Lois to get on this story, right away."

"Okay chief. We'll get right on it." Clark hung up the phone. He turned back to Lois and the two of them broke out in laughter.

"Let me guess, he wants us to report on ourselves."

"Right the first time! How do you do it?"

"I know Perry. Well, I guess we need to get changed. Except for the mask, gloves and boots I could wear the costume under my clothes. Oh, I just had a thought. We still have some of the spandex material. Why don't we make something that looks like boots out of it? That way all we need do is roll them up and put

them in a pocket when they aren't needed."

"Good idea. Since we can float we don't have to be putting any pressure on them so they shouldn't wear out. It should only take a couple of minutes to do that and then we can go out and start interviewing people." It only took a couple of minutes to cut and sew up the new 'fake' boots and they were ready to go. The fire service was still busy at the accident scene so they went first to the bank and interviewed the customers and the employees, especially the guard.

Lois asked the guard "Can you describe this individual that you say stopped the robbery?"

"Yeah, I sure can. He was a little bigger than your partner here and better built. He had on a blue suit with red boots, trunks and cape. The cape reached almost all the way to the floor. There was a mask that covered most of his head and face. Now, the woman, wow what a babe! She was short, shorter than you. Her hair was almost the same color as yours, but pulled back in a ponytail, you know, like when a girl tries to wear a ball cap, that kind of thing. She wore this skin tight outfit with a really short skirt. What a rack! And those gams, wow! She could be an exotic dancer! I'd sure pay to see her act! Couldn't tell anything about her face though, she wore a mask too." He appeared to have an eye for the ladies and as he looked her up and down, Lois was exceedingly glad that she had chosen a pantsuit to wear. The jacket concealed her upper torso and the pants did their duty. Lois pointedly said, "My husband might have some questions," she turned and asked, "Do you have anything, Clark?"

Lois was starting to feel a little uncomfortable. She was afraid that she was going to start blushing. That coupled with the guard's lecherous scrutiny was getting her irritated.

Clark asked, "Did the mask make you uneasy? Most law abiding people don't wear a mask."

"Nah, not for a minute. I used to read comic books as a kid. Plenty of them superheroes wore masks. They needed to protect their 'secret' identity. I got no problem with it. I could tell right off that he was one of the good guys. I hope they stick around a while. We could use more people like them around here really bad."

"What else can you tell me about them? Did they give you their names?"

"No, they didn't. They just said they were friends. I, for one, am glad they are. I'd sure hate to have them as enemies, I'll tell you that. The way they rounded up those crooks, there ain't no way I'd want them after me."

"Thank you for your time. What is your name and can I quote you?"

"Sure you can quote me all you like. The name's Mike, Mike Powers."

"Thank you for your time, Mike. The article will be in the Daily Planet."

The next stop was the Twelfth Precinct and Bill Henderson's office.

Clark asked the first question. "Bill, what can you give us on the bank collar and that high speed chase this afternoon?"

"I almost didn't believe the report about the chase but then another report came in about a bank robbery being foiled. The officer reported that a high speed chase was in progress. Suddenly a woman in a bathing suit with a cape flew down, disarmed the perp and reached in and turned off the key on the perp's car. When the car was stopped she opened the door and dragged him out and held him up in the air until the uniform had the cuffs on him." said Bill.

"Can we talk to the officer? We'd like to get a better description than a woman in a bathing suit." Lois asked.

"Don't forget about the cape." Bill said.

With a sarcastic tone in her voice Lois said "Oh yeah, a bathing suit *with* a cape."

“Okay, the officer is Jeffers over in Broadway, precinct thirteen. Just ask for Detective Danny Clover, tell him I sent you over. He’ll set up the meet with Jeffers.”

“Thanks Bill. We’ll head over there right away.”

Lois was glad that after they had moved back to Metropolis they had purchased a car. They had used it more before the White Orchid Ball but it still came in handy now that they needed to cover up their abilities.

They drove over to the Thirteenth Precinct and after meeting Danny Clover they interviewed Jeffers. He, of course, gave a thorough description of the woman that had stopped the chase.

“Yeah, she was some babe. Really stacked with beautiful legs. Blue bathing suit with a red mini skirt and a cape. She had this stylized ‘S’ symbol on her chest. I don’t know what it stands for. It must have some meaning though.”

“What about her face?”

“Face? I think it was covered.”

After they were back in the car they both broke out in laughter. “Well, I guess we don’t have to worry about you being recognized. I don’t think he even glanced anywhere above your bustline.”

Sarcastically she said, “I feel a lot safer!”

Lois put her Jeep into gear and they headed for the hospital. While there they interviewed staff and some of the injured that had been airlifted in.

Once they had finished up at the hospital, Clark said, “Let’s get in to the office and write up what we have.” She started the jeep and they headed for the Planet offices.

The next edition of the Daily Planet led with:

NEW SUPERHEROES IN TOWN — CALL THEMSELVES FRIENDS

By Lois Lane and Clark Kent

“Calling themselves friends, two superheroes suddenly appeared yesterday. They stopped a high speed car chase broke up a bank robbery and helped with the multi car pileup ...”

At home Lois and Clark discussed how to present themselves to the community.

“I don’t think that we can give the Planet an exclusive. That would only put a spotlight on the paper.” Clark proposed.

Nodding her head in agreement Lois said, “You’re right. We can’t afford to have too great an association with the Planet. How should we go about it?”

“I think we need to contact the mayor’s office and ask for a press conference.”

“What if Perry assigns us to cover it?” Lois asked.

“We may have to take turns. One of us in the audience while the other speaks.” Clark suggested.

“How about this. You go as the spokesperson and I’ll be in the audience. Clark can be home sick. After I ask a few questions I can duck out and join you at the mic.”

“That sounds good. How do you think we should handle it?”

“We can work on the questions I’ll ask and then you can field any others that are asked.”

“I think that we need to let everyone know that we are married. Otherwise we may have a situation where men are throwing themselves at you and women at me.”

“I agree wholeheartedly on that one. I don’t want strange women throwing themselves at my husband!”

“And I don’t want men making passes at my wife.” They both had a laugh over these possibilities.

Clark used his prepaid cell phone to call the mayor’s office. After identifying himself as the person that helped at the crash site and broke up the bank robbery he was put through. “Mr. Mayor, I would like to thank you for taking my call.”

“Don’t mention it. What can I do for you?”

“Mr. Mayor, I would appreciate it if you would arrange with

the various media outlets to hold a press conference. I would like to give an explanation for our presence and introduce us. Could you do that for me?”

“I’d be more than happy to. When?”

“How about noon tomorrow?”

“I’ll set it up. How about in front of City Hall?”

“That would be fine, Your Honor. Tomorrow at noon in front of City Hall. Thank you.”

The next day a platform with a podium had been set up in front of City Hall and the members of the press corps were crowded together in front of it. Several noted local dignitaries were on the platform with some of them scanning the skies looking for their new superheroes.

As the clock in the tower began to strike twelve one of the officials shouted, “I think I see one of them! It’s the guy, but he looks to be by himself.”

Just as the clock finished striking its twelfth note Superman landed on the platform. The mayor stepped forward and stuck out his hand. Superman took it and shook it. The mayor beckoned him to the podium and then started speaking, “Ladies and gentlemen of the press, it is my pleasure to have arranged this press conference. I would like to introduce our guest.” In an aside to Superman he asked “What do I call you?”

“Superman.”

Turning back to the mics the mayor said, “I would like to introduce our guest, Superman! He is going to give us some background information. Superman, if you please.”

Superman stepped up to the mics and began his statement, “Thank you, Mr. Mayor, and ladies and gentlemen of the press. My companion has been delayed by another commitment, however I do expect her to be here shortly. I would like to make a brief statement and then I’ll open the floor to questions.”

“We have been here among you for a brief period attempting to assist your constabulary in secret. If you recall some weeks ago there were reports in your newspapers about the ‘Karate Kids’, I must confess that those individuals were myself and Superwoman in disguise. We were not ready at that time to reveal our presence so we adopted that means of being able to assist. It recently became necessary to act, out in the open. In the recent multi-vehicle accident on the interstate many lives were at stake and we wanted to prevent as many fatalities as we could. We determined that the best way to do this was by assisting the fire service and your police in their efforts in that incident. We have come here as friends and only desire to help in any way we can to assist in preserving life and preventing crime. At this time I’ll open it up to questions from the press.”

Since Clark had called in sick, Perry had teamed Lois with Ralph Pinedo so they were both in the press area. Spotting Lois with her hand up, Clark pointed to her and said “The young lady in the front row.”

“Superman, where exactly did you come from?”

“I am a space traveler. I was born on a planet called Krypton in a far distant system. Krypton was a very massive world under a red sun. In the lower gravity of Earth we have tremendous strength and agility. My home planet Krypton was destroyed by a core instability which caused it to blow up. The survivors relocated to a planet now called New Krypton.”

“A follow-up if you will. How long will you be staying?”

“We have now made the Earth our home. We’ll be staying as long as we are needed. As long as we can help, we will.”

“Thank you.”

“Next question please.”

Superman selected Ralph Pinedo. “Who is that babe that you were with? Is she your sister or something? Is she available?”

Making it look like she was going off to call her story in, Lois had quietly been moving away from the crowd as she heard

this set of questions. She started to do a slow boil. If she had been up on the platform she might have been tempted to fry Ralph with her heat vision.

"When she arrives I'll allow her to explain our relationship. I think it's best if you hear it from her. Next question, please." Superman pointed to Linda King from LNN.

"You alluded to additional powers. We have all seen you fly. We know from the reports that you can rip doors and roofs off of vehicles with your bare hands. When you do these things aren't you taking a chance on injury?"

"I think I can answer that without revealing too much. Our skin is a lot tougher than that of an Earth human. A Kryptonian human under Earth's yellow sun has virtually impenetrable skin."

Lois had managed to extricate herself from the crowd and found a secluded area to spin into her uniform. She took off faster than the eye could follow until she was at altitude. She sent Clark a message /"I'm at altitude. Coming in."/

Without looking up Superman said, "Superwoman is approaching. She should be here in about ten seconds."

Exactly on time Superwoman landed at Superman's side. While Superman had landed like a guy jumping down off of a table, Superwoman landed more gently, on a single foot, placing the other down almost delicately beside the first. Since she was coming in feet first the breeze of her passage flared the skirt of her uniform, blowing it up revealing her under suit which revealed a bit more of her shapely legs. There was a not so hushed exclamation from the crowd at her appearance, mostly from the males in the crowd.

"Now that's what I'm talking about! Hey, babe, are you available?" This was from Ralph.

Superwoman looked straight at Ralph and said, "I don't think you would want to have to deal with my powers. I'd be too much woman for you, besides my husband, Superman, might just object. Wouldn't you, honey?"

"Yes, I would. I don't think any husband would want strange men making passes at their wives."

"Just as I would not want strange women making passes at my husband. It would make me very upset."

Ralph metaphorically placed his tail between his legs and tried to exit before the jeers that he was getting from his colleagues got too bad.

Superwoman continued, "Yes, Superman and I are husband and wife not only by the laws of Krypton but also of Earth."

"As to involvement in day to day rescue and crime fighting activities, my husband will be the one primarily responsible for assisting the first responders and police. It will only be when he is unavailable or in circumstances such as we had the other day where more than one pair of hands were needed that I will become involved. I want to stress again, we are friends to the people of the Earth and we are here to help in any way that we can."

Superman said "We have time for two more questions. The gentleman in the blue suit."

"Why the masks?"

"The masks are to preserve our anonymity. We are humans just as you are and we are living among you as humans. We, as you, cherish our privacy. We have a life and hope to have children here. If we lost our privacy what kind of life would we have? We have been here long enough to have formed some friendships. If not for our privacy anyone known to associate with us would be subject to kidnap as an attempt to control us. To give a theoretical example, if it were known that we were friends with His Honor the mayor, His Honor could be subject to kidnap and by that we could be subject to blackmail to do things which we would not normally do. I guess you could say that the masks protect our private identities and anyone that we know in our private lives. We have studied some of your old radio and

television programs. I think of 'The Lone Ranger' when I think about the mask. He wore the mask to protect his identity from the criminals he fought because he still had relatives who could be vulnerable if his identity were to be known. He also wore it as a symbol of justice. He had two things that were his symbols the mask and his silver bullets. We hope that our masks will serve the same purpose. They are to be symbols for justice and safety."

"Last question." Superwoman pointed to a reporter from the Star.

"What does the symbol on your chest stand for?"

"It actually has a dual meaning. It is a symbol in my native language for the name of my house, the house of El. My wife wears the same symbol because by marriage she is now also of the house of El. The other meaning is derived from its similarity to your English letter 'S'. It stands for Superman and Superwoman, the names we go by when we help."

"That is all the time we have for questions. My wife and I wish to thank you for your time. We have other commitments that we need to attend to." He took Superwoman's hand in his and with a wave of his free hand they took to the skies.

They flew straight up until they were out of sight and then headed for 348 Hyperion Ave. They landed quickly and went inside. They spun out of the uniforms and into their civilian attire.

Clark winked at Lois and said, "I think I'm feeling better. My headache has left and I can accompany you back to work. What do you think?"

"I think I would love to have my husband with me. I'm glad the headache lifted."

"Wonderful stuff, that aspirin."

They both started laughing. Lois said "I guess we need to get in and write up this story. We don't want the Star to scoop us after all."

Chapter 03 — Another Revelation Or Is It?

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 040 — Alt 3

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Later that night the telephone at 348 Hyperion Ave. rang. The caller ID showed Ross, P. /"It's Lana or Pete. Lana knows my secret. After the press conference today I bet she knows yours. Shall we fill Pete in on the secret? I believe that we can trust him."/

"Kent residence."

Lois thought back, /"Your call."/

"Clark, Lana! Since when is Lois able to do you know what?"

"Hi, Lana. Are you and Pete free this evening? We'd like you guys to come over for dinner."

"Okay, what time?"

"Seven thirty sound good to you?"

"We'll be there." The line went dead.

Turning to Lois, Clark said, "Now that you have powers we don't need to worry so much, but it isn't fair to Lana to have her know and not Pete. I've known him all my life and I trust him. Actually I've meant to tell him for a long time now. Besides, sooner or later we might be in the market for babysitters and who better than Pete and Lana?"

"I trust your judgment and besides they are our closest friends." Lois said. Slowly she started to smile as she continued, "At first I wasn't so sure how things would work out with Lana but next to you, she's become my best friend. She's my best girlfriend*."

That evening

Clark had made a shrimp stir fry for dinner. Lois had called for egg rolls and fortune cookies. As they were finishing up Clark started the conversation. “Pete, we’ve known each other a long time. I think it’s about time I told you some things about myself ... “

Pete interrupted. He had a very concerned look on his face as he glanced at Lana and said “Clark, could I see you for a second, in the kitchen?”

With a somewhat mystified air Clark replied, “Sure, if you need to.”

They got up and moved to the kitchen. Lois and Lana both had questioning expressions on their faces at this turn of events. Lois said, “Well, while they’re out of the room, I guess we could start talking about the wedding.”

Lana asked, “I want to talk about you having Clark’s powers. How’d it happen? Can it happen to just anyone?”

“We don’t know, but we don’t think so. We think it has something to do with a laser beam Clark was hit with. It somehow changed me and did something else to my jewelry.”

“Do you have *all* of his powers?”

“From all that we’ve been able to determine, yes, I’ve got them all.”

“I don’t know if I should congratulate you or say I’m sorry for you. How do you feel about it?”

“We’re happy. Now I won’t have to worry about being made a pawn to force Superman to do something he doesn’t want to do. We can do *everything* together, not just the ‘normal’ stuff. Lana, you have no conception what it feels like to fly, under your own power, no wings, no engines, just you and the sky. It’s wonderful. I wish you could experience it. Maybe I could take you up for a flight sometime. I think you’d like it.”

Meanwhile, in the kitchen.

“Okay Pete, why did we need to come out here?”

“How much does Lana know about you?”

“Huh?”

“How much does Lana know about what you can do? Are you sure you want to talk about it in front of her?”

“What do you mean? How much do you know?”

“Clark, we’ve been best friends for how many years? A lot of years. Do you think that it’s possible to hide something like that from someone so close for all that time? Buddy, I’ve known about you for years. I’m glad that you finally found a way to do it out in the open.”

“Let’s go back in the dining room. The girls need to hear about this.”

When they had returned to their seats Clark said, “Lois, it appears as though we have been scooped! Pete has known my secret for a while now.”

There was a gasp from Lana, “I didn’t say a thing!”

Laughing, Clark replied, “I know that, Lana. Pete tells me that he’s known for years about me and has kept my secret; apparently even from you since neither of you knew that the other knew. When did you find out, Pete?”

“Remember that camping trip we took up to Reeves’ Overlook? That night in the tent I woke up in the middle of the night and I saw you floating three feet above your sleeping bag. Your nose was practically brushing the tent ceiling. After that I started watching for unusual things. Remember when Billy was trapped under that tree and you lifted it enough to get him out? None of us thought much of it at the time. We thought that the tree was rotten or something, but I went back and tried to lift it. I couldn’t budge it an inch. When we were on that hiking trip and we got caught in the rain, you managed to start a fire using wood that was so wet it was like it had been pulled out of a stream. There were other things. I realized that you were something

special. I didn’t know just how special you were but, you were my best friend and there was no way I would reveal your secret. I’ve kept it to myself all these years. Like I said out in the kitchen, I’m glad you have finally found a way to work out in the open. I guess that somehow Lois now has your powers too. I couldn’t see you acting the way you did at that press conference with anyone but Lois. How’d it happen?”

“Pete, I need to say that you’re the best friend I’ve ever had, except for Lois. You discovered my secret on your own and kept it and me safe all these years. Lana has known for some time. I told her about myself when we were getting serious. She has kept my secret all these years also. Thank you, both of you.”

“About Lois’ powers, that’s something we want to look into and you’re just the guy to do that for us.” Clark got up and went to a side table from which he retrieved a small packet. “Here is some of the residue from the Star Sapphires I gave Lois for our wedding. Those are the source of her powers. We need to have these pieces analyzed. Since you’re the head of the Geology and Metallurgy lab at S. T. A. R. Labs, I figured you would have the facilities to do just that. The jeweler that cut and polished the gems said that they were a never before seen variety. You’ve seen them; in fact Lois has the earrings and ring on now. See, they have a double star. We need to know what this stone is and where it came from.”

“I’ll get on it right away.”

“There’s another thing.” Clark got up and went to the secret compartment. He picked up the laser and opened the case. “Here is what caused Lois to acquire my powers. This is actually a laser, not a video cam. Watch this.” Clark went over and doused the lights. When he did the red crystal in the laser chamber began to glow. At the same time Lois’ earrings and ring began to glow brighter and brighter. “Wow, we hadn’t noticed that before! Lois, look at your ring!”

“Wow, I can feel my strength increasing! I don’t have the full set on and I don’t usually feel this strong with just these pieces. What’s happening?”

“It’s like the Sapphires are reacting to the red crystal!”

“We’re going to need to test this out. If your smaller gems can be supercharged by the red crystal you may not have to carry around the whole set all the time. You might be able to get away with just a few and the red crystal. Pete, we need this checked out. Can you do it for us?”

“You can count on me. I’ll start tomorrow. Can I have one of the smaller ‘energized’ jewels as well as the residue and the red crystal?”

“Sure, here you go.” Lois handed him one of the smaller gems from a concealed pocket.

“Here’s what happened, we were at the White Orchid Ball ...” Clark went on to tell the entire story.

“Wow, that’s some story. From what you’re saying it looks like you could be right. It looks like the gems are acting like a storage battery for your powers and imparting them to Lois. I’d like to try something. Could you put the jewelry on Lana and see if she gets powers?”

Lois said, “Sure! Lana, let’s get you decked out. Come on up to our room.”

Lana and Lois disappeared upstairs.

“You know Pete; if this works there may be no keeping her down. She may want a set for herself!”

“You think?”

They both started laughing.

A few minutes later the girls came downstairs.

Lois turned to Lana and said, “Okay Lana, let’s see what you can do. Let’s try something simple. Try picking up that living room chair.”

Lana moved over behind the indicated chair and bending down tried to lift it, without any success.

Clark offered, “How about this. The first power Lois had was superhearing. See if you can hear my heartbeat.”

Lana got a look of extreme concentration on her face and held it for several minutes. Finally she relaxed and said, “Nope, nothing.”

Lois said, “Here let me touch the gems.” She did and immediately she had her full powers back. “I hear your heartbeat as well as everyone else’s. I guess that means that I’m the only one the jewels will work with.”

Lana said, “It’s just as well. I don’t think I would want the responsibility that goes along with having those powers anyhow. Clark, I was a fool. All that time I tried to make you deny your powers, I was trying to deny what you were. Now that you have come out into the open with it and I can see how much good you’re doing and can do in the future, I want to just kick myself. What I was doing was almost criminal. I’m glad you found Lois and I’m glad you opened my eyes, not just to that but to Pete as well. Thanks.”

While she had been speaking Lana had been divesting herself of the jewels and giving them back to Lois.

“Lana, I’m just happy that things have worked out.”

Lois said, “Lana, you want to go for that ride I promised you? “I’d love to.”

Lois spun into her uniform which elicited a ‘Wow’ from both Lana and Pete. She held out her hand to Lana and grasping it led her to the back door.

When they returned Lana was flushed with excitement. “I’ve never in my life imagined it could be like that. Clark, all those times you offered to take me flying and I turned you down! *What* was I *thinking*!?!? It was wonderful!”

Lois said, “Lana, there will be times that we go out to Smallville. Maybe you and Pete would like to come with us occasionally.”

“Could we? That would be wonderful!”

“You guys could stay in the guestroom at the farm.”

Pete answered for the both of them “We’d love to, thanks.”

Lois spun back into her casual clothes, grabbed Lana and led her back into the dining room. Lana stood, watching in amazement, as Lois and Clark cleared the table at superspeed so that the girls could have it for paperwork while they planned the wedding. Pete and Clark went into the living room to catch what was left of the Metropolis Metros / Philadelphia Phillies game.

Chapter 04 — Herb Shows Up

February 28, 1993

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 040 — Alt 3

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Clark and Lois had flown to the Congo and were waiting for Herb. Clark was sure that he was at the agreed upon spot and that he just had to wait patiently.

They were both dressed similarly in shorts and short sleeve shirts. They had on knee socks and short hiking boots. Lois’ had the top three buttons of her shirt unbuttoned revealing a hint of her cleavage.

With a little bit of frustration in his voice, Clark said to Lois “Herb said he would be here between 12:00 noon and 3:00 PM local time.”

Lois suggested, “Maybe he’s been delayed.”

“Lois, he’s a time traveler. There’s no such thing as being delayed.”

“Then maybe he’s not coming.”

“He seemed so sure. Something must have happened.”

Suddenly what looked like a doorway opened in front of them and Herb stepped through. The doorway automatically

closed behind him.

When Clark recovered from his surprise and got a good look at Herb he noticed that he was somewhat older than he had been when he had dropped him off. The Herb that had dropped him off had in fact been the 1912 incarnation whereas this was the 1917 version. “Herb, I was getting worried that you wouldn’t be here. What happened to your Time Sled?”

“Oh, the Time Sled, yes, so sorry, my boy. It’s a long story. We’ve made some changes since I saw you last, yes, some changes.” Catching sight of Lois he started to smile and said, “Ah, I see that Lois is with you! You look lovely my dear. You look absolutely radiant.”

“Lois, please allow me to introduce Herbert George Wells. Herb, Lois Lane-Kent. *My* Lois and my wife.” Herb could hear the obvious love and pride in his voice as Clark spoke these words.

Lois stuck out her hand. Herb took it in both hands and shook it. Lois said, “I take it that I have you to thank for bringing Clark back in time so that he could save me.”

Very humbly Herb replied, “Yes, my dear. I was in some small way able to assist Clark in his quest. He had tried and tried to find you to no avail. I was able to facilitate his efforts in a way that was not possible for him.”

“Then in a very real sense I owe my life to you.” Lois threw her arms around his neck and gave Herb a big kiss on the cheek.

Herb was more than a little flustered by all this attention and blushed. He cleared his throat and stammered, “I, uh, I can ... cannot tell you how hap ... happy I am to have been able to assist in this matter. As I explained to Clark when I first proposed to help him, my main goal in this life is now to see to it that as many universes within the greater multiverse move to utopia as possible. If my small efforts have facilitated this, then I am amply repaid.”

“Now that we are together,” Lois looked over at Clark the love obvious in her eyes, “there is nothing that’s going to separate us.”

“Jolly good show! Then the mission was successful! Actually I knew it had been. That’s what delayed me, so to speak. You see, you weren’t supposed to be here, well, we didn’t know there was a here and it took a while to find you.” Enigmatically he continued, “We are starting to understand the creation of alternate universes more all the time.”

Noting the confused expressions on Lois and Clark, he tried again, “Let me explain it to you this way; when a critical event occurs a new universe is created. You actually passed a critical point and created a new universe. It took a while to realize that that was what had happened. Well, are you ready to move to 1997?”

“No Herb, we can’t do that. We’re established in the here and now. To move ahead would create a discontinuity.”

“Ah, I see, you have actually deduced the facts and correctly I might add. You have found out that you’re the only Clark Kent here.”

“Yes Herb, we discovered that some time ago. We also found that that wasn’t the only change that occurred. We are very happy with the way things have turned out. We’ve now built a life for ourselves together. Lois has acquired a copy of my powers and has joined me in fighting crime as well as in life. She’s going to be taking some time off here pretty soon though.”

With a very broad smile Lois announced “I’m pregnant. We’re going to be parents in about seven months.”

“Well, congratulations to the both of you. I’m happy for you.”

“Herb we realized early on that we had changed history and decided to make the best of it. We’ve been married for close to a year now.” Clark nodded to Lois and they both started to spin, becoming blurs of bright primary colors and when they stopped

Superman and Superwoman stood in their places.

"I see that you have adopted a somewhat different uniform. Very becoming and yours, Lois, is spectacular. I can see why you will be taking some time off. Your condition would be very obvious in that uniform. How are you going to explain her absence?"

"When we announced our presence we said we were visitors from New Krypton. My wife has to go back to visit some ailing relatives. She'll return some time after the baby is delivered. Not too soon after, we don't want to give too much away."

"That should do splendidly. Now that I know where you are, do you mind if I drop in occasionally?"

"That would be fine Herb. I do have some questions though. How are the other Lois and Clark? Are they still having trouble conceiving?"

"Well, let's see, right now it's also 1993 in their universe and they haven't even met as yet. I actually don't think that I'd be giving too much away at this point if I were to tell you that they will be having their first child in 2000. The first of many I might add."

"How many?"

"I might be giving too much away if I were to answer that particular question. Let's leave it at this; they will have a long and happy life together as will you. I've been to your future and because of your union your universe will achieve utopia in the future. Congratulations my boy and to you my dear. May you live a long and happy life and may your married life be all that you hoped it could be."

"Are we going to have to deal with Tempus?" Clark asked with some trepidation.

"No, you will not. You will have some major problems to deal with as you have already dealt with Lex Luthor but it will not be anything that you cannot handle on your own. If you see me again it will most likely be a social visit, just checking in as it were or I may be here to recruit your assistance with a problem elsewhere."

"That will be fine, Herb. We'll look forward to seeing you in the future. Actually, I'm going to request that you give us a visit in a year. Oh, by the way, we live at 348 Hyperion. I liked their house so much we bought it here. The reason for the visit is Lois' powers. We have been doing some research on them ... how Lois acquired them, how they are renewed and especially, if they can be passed on. We are near a resolution of all of our questions. The answers look very promising. At this point I am making the assumption that all of our answers will be what I expect them to be. We've discussed it and we would like to enable the other Lois to have the same powers her Clark has. Lois having my powers has, if it were really possible, made us even closer. Now we can share literally everything. We'd like to give that gift to the other Lois."

"My boy, that is an extremely wonderful gift that you wish to bestow. I will be sure to return in one year and I will do whatever I can to facilitate the process." Turning to Lois, Herb said, "My dear, it has been a pleasure meeting you." Herb reached for Clark's hand. "My boy, again, my congratulations and may you enjoy a long married life with Lois."

Herb pulled out a device from his pocket and entered some coordinates. When he depressed a particular switch a portal opened in the air in front of him. With a final wave to the couple he stepped through and the portal closed behind him.

Lois and Clark took to the air as soon as Herb had disappeared. Hand-in-hand they returned to Metropolis. After a brief stop at home to change into work clothes, they took off again, landing on the roof of the Daily Planet. They both spun into their work clothes and descended the stairs to the bullpen. They were a little early, even beating Perry White into the office.

They each booted up their workstations and started looking at what investigations they had in process.

A while later Clark's phone rang. "Daily Planet, Clark Kent."

"Hey Clark, Pete. I can't believe how early you are in to work. I tried the house and when you didn't answer I thought I'd try there."

"Hey, Pete, what's up? Not a problem, I hope."

"Nah, no problem. I was wondering if you and Lois could swing by STAR Labs sometime today. I've been thinking about our little project and I think I have a reasonable approach mapped out."

"Sure, Pete, we can come over right now, if that would be convenient."

"Give me a few minutes. Not everyone has as easy a pregnancy as a certain woman I could name. Lana had a rough night and was sick this morning. I've been comforting her. I should be there in a half hour or so."

"What can I say, Pete? Some women are lucky that way."

"Well, some have a super edge, if you know what I mean."

Clark was laughing as he replied, "Yeah, I know what you mean. Some women have all of the advantages." He smiled at Lois. He was sure she was listening in on the entire conversation because she was smiling too. "We'll see you shortly."

Clark told Perry that they had some things to follow up on and asked if they could take it as vacation time. Perry gave his okay and they headed out.

When they arrived at STAR Labs they immediately went back to the Mineralogy/Geology lab and were greeted by Dr. Pete Ross. As soon as they were inside, Pete closed the door. He got right down to business.

"Okay, here's what we have. First off, I found that we had a small sample of green Kryptonite in storage."

Clark looked around, worriedly.

Pete calmed him when he said, "Don't worry, I have it secured in a lead container. The thing is I compared these new samples to it and I am convinced that these are alternate forms of Kryptonite."

"How could that be? They don't affect me?"

"Well, if you think about it, they really did. The red form did something to your physiology and Lois' then the sapphire form stored your powers. That being the case I've started calling the red form simply red Kryptonite and the sapphire form, well you can guess."

"I have fractured the sapphire Kryptonite and the red Kryptonite ... for the sake of saving words I think I'll use SK and RK as a sort of shorthand from now on. Okay, I've fractured the RK and weighed out ½ carat portions. The remnants of the SK that you got from the jeweler I have also weighed out. Now, what I propose is that I start handing Lois packets and adjust the weights until we determine just how much of each is necessary to achieve the desired result. Lois, I need you to remove your sapphires."

Lois did so and then Pete started handing her packets, blue paper packets with SK and red paper packets with RK. Slowly as packets were added she could feel her powers returning. When she felt that she was back to full strength Pete added two extra packets, as a safety margin. He said, "Well, it looks like the SK alone requires a lot more than the SK/RK combination. The way the RK energizes the SK is a mystery, but it sure is effective. To achieve full strength Lois needed only 6 carats of the SK combined with 2.5 carats of the RK. That's not a whole lot of the material. There's enough here to take care of many generations."

Clark looked at Lois and said, "I have an idea. Feel up to another flight to the Congo? I want to visit M. Artois. I'd like him to make another piece of jewelry."

Lois smiled and said, "We could stop off and visit with

Jacques and Madeleine this time! Let's do it."

"Okay, we will. Pete, I'll need enough of the SK and RK to power at least two women."

Pete picked up the two piles of paper packets he had been using in the testing and handed them to Clark. "Here you go. They're already weighed out. Remember at least 12 of the blue packets to 5 of the red."

"Got it, thanks, Pete." Clark put the packets in his pocket and he and Lois prepared to depart.

Before they did Lois turned to Pete and asked, "Do you and Lana want to join us for dinner?"

With a sly smile, Pete said, "Sure, what is Clark cooking?"

Lois smiled and said, "I don't know, but it has to be better than anything I could make. At least it will be edible."

Clark laughed, "Just edible? I'll have you know that even before you became, you-know-who, you enjoyed my cooking."

She smiled and said, "You had better believe I did." Turning to Pete she said, "He is a really good cook, isn't he?"

With a look of contrition Pete replied, "Actually, it's a good thing that I married Lana and you married Clark; that way at least one member of each family is a good cook. Lana does all of our cooking. About all I can do well in that line is Bar-B-Q."

As they were turning away, Clark said, "How about 6:30 this evening? That okay with you?"

"We'll be there. See you guys later."

Chapter 05 — The First Pendant

February 28, 1993

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 040 — Alt 1 alternate

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Later that same day, 4:30 PM local time, again in Brazzaville Lois and Clark visited Artois' Jewelers.

As they walked in Jean Luc saw them and bustled out from behind the counter and in typical French exuberance threw his arms around Clark and said, "Charlot, mon ami."

Clark in his turn gave Jean Luc a man-hug and said, "Jean Luc, It's good to see you again. I've brought you another commission. I need a piece of jewelry crafted and I couldn't think of anyone that I could trust to make it. Of course, you remember my wife, Linda?"

"Mais oui, but of course, 'ow could I forget ze zery beautiful wife of my friend." Turning to Lois he asked, "'Ow are vous today?"

Smiling, Lois replied, "I'm fine, thank you, Jean Luc. It's good to see you again."

Turning back to Clark, Jean Luc asked, "Another piece of jewelry? After zat magnificent stone." Looking at Lois he spotted the star sapphire earrings, necklace and the ring on her right hand.

As he looked at her, Lois smiled and her right hand came up unconsciously and touched first her earring and then her necklace.

He said, "Ahhhh, zey look tres magnifique on vous."

Lois smiled again and replied, "I love the set! You did a wonderful job on creating it. I'm never without them."

"Zat makes me zerry 'appy. Now, what can I do por vous?"

"Jean Luc, you've heard of the new superheroes in Metropolis, have you not?"

"Mais oui! Magnifique! L'homme super et la super femme."

He brought his hand up, brought his fingertips to his lips, kissed them and then flung his hand up in a sort of salute. 'E ees one lucky man, such ... a ... woman!"

Clark was chuckling as he said, 'I agree with you, he is a lucky man. Anyway, here's what I need ...' Clark went on to describe a pendant in the shape of his 'S' crest and gave Jean Luc

a drawing. He then handed Jean Luc the colored packets, separating them according to the directions Pete had given him and said, "These stone fragments need to be imbedded in the pendant."

Opening one of the blue packets, Jean Luc said, "Zees stones are zee remnants from zee making of zee set. Some of zem are large enough to use as decoration." He picked up the sketch and added circles, indicating where he would be adding stone fragments.

Looking at it Clark said, "That would be wonderful. What do you think Linda?"

"I like it. Yes, do that."

Jean Luc asked, "What metal do you wish? Gold would be zery beautiful."

Clark thought for a second, <Gold and lead have very similar atomic weights. Gold may be just as effective at blocking radiation as lead.> "Let's use silver."

"Zery well, silver it shall be. I have all of the materials I will need. I can form the mold out of clay. I can have it ready in just a few hours."

Looking at Lois with an unspoken question and getting her nod of approval Clark said, "I'd like two, if that would be possible."

"Once ze mold ees formed, one or one hundred, zere ees little difference. Two eet shall be. Just a few hours."

Turning to Lois Clark said, "Let's go visit Jacques and then maybe we could go out on the Ubuntu." Turning back to Jean Luc he said, "We'll be back later. Thank you, Jean Luc."

After a pleasant visit with Mayor D'Arnet and his wife Madeline they went to the marina.

When they arrived in the marina they boarded the Ubuntu. Clark went to release the spring lines while Lois manned the helm. As soon as the lines were released she started the engine and eased out of the slip. She kept the speed to ten knots until they were away from the harbor area and then after looking around she slid the lever into neutral which idled the propeller, and grinning started to fly with her feet firmly planted on the deck. She kept the speed to thirty knots as she headed for a cove they had found on an earlier trip while preparing to follow the gunrunners.

It was only a matter of fifteen minutes before they were anchored.

After Clark had set the anchor he tied it off and moved back to the quarterdeck where he joined Lois.

Seeing him approach, Lois started unbuttoning her top, slowly, teasingly. When she suddenly pulled it open her uniform was revealed. Giggling, she wiggled out of her shorts and then removed her uniform skirt and cape. Now she was standing there in a Speedo swimsuit. With a laugh she shouted, "Last one in cooks dinner," as she dove over the side.

Clark had more than a little bit expected her to be wearing a bikini and seeing her uniform had thrown him off for a second and she got the jump on him. Quickly he spun out of his clothes retaining only his red Suit briefs which were also a Speedo suit. As it was he cleaved the water an instant after Lois and caught her underwater and initiated a kiss. Lois didn't have all of her gems and her powers were reduced so after a relatively short time they returned to the surface. When they broke the surface they also broke the kiss.

Lois took off using a lazy crawl stroke toward shore. Clark easily kept up with her. Suddenly she stopped and treaded water and in a slightly irritated tone said, "You know, this is very familiar. I remember a race we had around the boat one day." She splashed him in the face, "You let me win! How patronizing is that? You could have won easily!"

Defensively he said, "You know I had to keep my powers a

secret. If I'd done that I'd have given myself away." He bounced his eyebrows at her as he said, "Besides, I was trying to make a good impression on the girl of my dreams."

She laughed and said, "I guess it worked, look where it got us. Let's go back to the boat." She struck off in that direction, but he scooped her up and flew both of them back up on deck with her giggling the entire time.

As they passed by Clark gathered up their discarded clothes and carried Lois down to the cabin. The first time her feet hit the floor was in the cabin. As soon as they did she reached up and slid the straps of her suit off of her shoulders. With a little shimmy she pushed the suit down and once it was past her hips it fell to the floor in a pile and she was standing there perfectly nude. She gave him a look with one raised eyebrow and said, "A bit overdressed aren't you?"

Taking the hint he quickly removed his trunks and she moved in and throwing her arms around his neck, initiated another kiss.

Since the cabin had a low overhead he floated them up only a couple of inches and then floated them horizontal and over onto the bunk with her on top. She released a contented sigh as she wiggled her hips. "Ahhhhhh, you don't know how I've wanted this. It's been subtle torture to be with you all day and not be able to do this."

Smiling as she was saying this he reached up and cupped her breasts and gently started to squeeze them.

She released another sigh and said, "Not too hard, they're tender because of the pregnancy." As he stopped she placed her hands on his and said, "I didn't want you to stop! Just take it easy, that's all. Besides, I'm not super right now, I only have on my ring and earrings. The rest of the jewels are over there in my clothes." After a minute of this she started to close her eyes and throw her head back. Her breathing started coming more rapidly.

She started to cry out her ecstasy as Clark called her name.

Lois collapsed onto his chest and simply lay there until her breathing returned to normal. She continued to lie there, simply luxuriating in the contact, wanting to prolong their time of joining.

After a time they separated and taking some towels they both moved out of the cabin and onto the roof to sunbathe.

A while later, they returned to the marina and berthed the Ubuntu. Locking up, they headed for the jewelers.

When they returned to the shop, Jean Luc had been as good as his word and there were two pendants ready.

Jean Luc brought them out on a black velvet tray.

With an "Oooooooo," Lois reached out to pluck one from the tray. She said, "M. Artois, these are beautiful!"

<http://www.folcsite.com/misc/Pendant.jpg>

Jean Luc was beaming as he replied, "I am 'appy zat you find zem so."

Clark completed the cash transaction and as soon as they walked out of the shop, Lois donned hers. It came to rest deep in her cleavage and since she was wearing a deeply cut 'V' neckline it was visible.

They went to La Jardin for a meal and then finding a dark alley they spun into their uniforms and flew home.

Later that evening, 7:30 PM Metropolis time, Lana and Pete joined Lois and Clark for dinner.

They had just finished and Lana noticed Lois' new pendant. She said, "Oooooo Lois, love the new pendant. Won't that raise some questions though?"

Lois thought for a second and then said, "Clark, she's right. This could be a giveaway."

Clark thought for a short time and replied, "I think we need to go back to M. Artois. He has the mold. He could make more, maybe not in silver, definitely not with the RK and BK included and they could be sold as Superman/Superwoman memorabilia.

Maybe we could use the income from the sale of the pendants and other items to support worthy causes. We could start a foundation."

Lana said, "I like that idea. You know, I wouldn't mind being involved in something like that."

"Would you like to run it?"

"Sure, why not? It is something I could do from the house, at least initially. If it got too big, I could hire staff and rent an office."

"Yeah, that should work. It would make money for him and by flooding the market it wouldn't be such a giveaway. Plus, it would give us seed money for the foundation."

"We can talk to him the next time we see him."

Just then there was a knock on the door.

Lois looked at Clark and asked, "Were we expecting anyone else?"

"No." Clark slipped his glasses down his nose and scanned with his x-ray vision. "Well, I'll be."

Lois scanned and asked, "What's he doing here? We just saw him yesterday."

Pete asked, "Who?"

"Let me let him in and I'll introduce you."

Going to the door, Clark opened it and said, "Herb! What brings you here so soon?"

"I needed to speak with you and Lois."

"Come on in. Pete, Lana, this is our friend Herb Wells."

Herb tipped his hat and said, "Pleased to meet you." Turning to Clark he said, "I really need to speak with you and Lois in private."

Clark replied, "It's okay, Herb, Pete and Lana know our secret."

"Oh, I understood that. I really need to speak privately. It is most urgent."

"Okay Herb, let's go into the office."

Clark led the way as Lois and Herb followed to the office.

As he was closing the door, Clark said, "Make yourselves comfortable. This shouldn't take long."

As soon as the door was closed, Clark said, "Before I forget, Herb, here's a present we'd like you to give to the other Lois for us. It should give her powers too."

"Thank you, I'll see to it that she gets it. Now, about why I'm here ..."

A minute later there was a knock on the door and Pete asked through it, "Would you guys like us to open a bottle of wine?"

There was no answer.

Pete knocked again and repeated, "Clark ... Lois ... Would you like some wine?"

When there was no answer again he opened the door to find an empty room.

Chapter 06 — Halloween in Smallville

October 11, 2013 AD

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 — Canon Lois and

Clark universe also called — Prime

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A/N — Prime is the L&C canon universe. The time period is key here.

Jon Kent was feeling a little apprehensive. He was sitting in study hall next to Hattie Kaplin and they were going over World History. They were studying the period of the crusades, but this wasn't the cause of Jon's discomfort. Jon was worried because today was report card day. He was pretty sure he had done well. Teaming up with Hattie as study partners had been a good move on his part. She was really smart and a good student. He had

learned a lot on how to improve his study techniques from her. Today would tell the tale. Jon excelled in math and science, while Hattie excelled in the languages and social sciences so they balanced each other out. She helped him with French, English and history while he helped her with algebra and physics.

Jon really wanted to do well so that he could win a scholarship to Met U. He wasn't sure just yet which branch of science he was most interested in, but the friendship his parents had with Dr. Bernie Klein brought Dr. Klein to the house occasionally and Jon really enjoyed talking with him. Dr. Klein was able to explain what he was working on in terms Jon was able to understand, at least most of the time, and this had really piqued his interest and determination. He was determined that one day he would work at S.T.A.R. Labs.

Hattie nudged him and said, "What has you so distracted? I've asked you two questions and you didn't even acknowledge either one."

"Sorry Hattie, I was thinking about the report cards we are getting at the end of the day. I hope I got good grades."

Hattie started to chuckle, "You can't miss! We've been studying together, haven't we? I guarantee you did well."

"I wish I was as confident as you are."

"Just wait, I'm betting we both did well. You've really helped me with algebra. If it wasn't for you I don't know how I would have even passed. You're a good tutor."

"I just hope you're right. I really want to win a scholarship and I need good grades to do it."

Hattie replied, "As long as we stick together we can't miss. What about a sports scholarship? You could always play football or baseball or something. I want to win a scholarship too, you know. I plan to work on my tennis, just in case I can't get in on an academic scholarship."

"My mom plays tennis, or at least she used to. She was captain of her girl's team in high school. Maybe she could give you some pointers."

Hattie got that look of hero worship in her eyes again. It happened every time she thought about Lois Lane. In an awed tone she asked, "Do you really think she would?"

"Sure, she taught all of us how to play. I'm sure she'd be willing to help you."

"Wow, that would be awesome!"

"I'll try to remember to mention it to her tonight."

"Thanks, Jon! You're a real pal."

"Hey, what are friends for anyhow?"

When Jon got home he had some time before Lara and the twins arrived. The four of them no longer went to the DP day care center. Since Jon was in middle school now, he had been given the responsibility for making sure that they all worked on their homework until their parents got home with the rest of the family. Since he had a few minutes he prepared a snack for himself and his siblings.

When they arrived they would all have report cards to show their parents. How well they all did would reflect on him and his ability to supervise his sisters and brother and how well he oversaw their homework. Jon hoped they all had done well.

The other three were all in the same school building and rode the same bus so when they got home they arrived in a bunch.

Since today was report card day they hadn't been given any homework so they were able to eat their snack and watch a movie. Today they were watching "Kung Fu Panda" while they waited for the rest of the family to arrive. All four of them were taking karate classes and really liked this movie because it was so ridiculous.

When the rest of the family arrived the first one in the door was Lois carrying Sam in his car seat next came Jessie and

Jimmy followed closely by Clark who had Lucy by the hand.

Sean and Celeste both shouted, "Mommy!" and ran over to give Lois hugs. Lois knelt down, placing the car seat on the floor and wrapping her arms around the twins, accepted the hugs. As soon as Clark released Lucy's hand she took off and headed for the sofa since she saw that the TV was on.

After giving Sean and Celeste each a kiss on the cheek Lois called Jon and Lara over. Each of them gave and received kisses in turn. Lois stood up and in a mock chiding tone asked, "Well! TV and not homework? Okay, what's the story?"

Jon replied, "It's report card day. We didn't get any homework."

Acting like she hadn't known that the report cards were coming in that day, Lois said, "Report cards, huh? Do I need to prepare a dog house for each of you?"

Lara said, "Awww Mom, they can't be that bad. Jon's been a real slave driver, making sure we all do our homework."

"I'll believe it when I see it. Okay, where are they?"

While the kids went to retrieve the report cards Lois took Sam out of his car seat and placed him belly down on the floor where he started to crawl around.

They all presented the cards to Lois. She looked at the envelopes. The kids didn't realize that she was using her x-ray vision to actually see the cards. Keeping a poker face she turned to Clark and said, "Why don't we take these where we can look them over without little eyes looking over our shoulders. That way, in private we can discuss the consequences, if these aren't as good as they should be." Silently she sent, "I took a quick peek and these are outstanding. Let's have some fun with the kids."

Clark sent back, "You're just being cruel to them."

"Let them think there's a problem, then when they get a reward, it'll be that much better."

"Okay, but if they are as good as that, it will need to be something really special."

Lois said, "We're going upstairs to look these over. We'll let you know when we come back downstairs what will happen."

Looking at Lara she said, "Please keep an eye on Sam."

As Lara picked Sam up she replied, "Okay Mommy. I'll watch him."

Lois and Clark headed upstairs. When they had entered their room and closed the door Lois opened the envelopes one at a time. Jon had one 'B+', in French, but he had an 'A+' in Physics and the rest were 'A's. Lara had straight 'A's as did the twins. She showed them to Clark and thought, "Well, what do you think? I think we ought to reward this kind of performance."

Replying in the same fashion Clark said, "I agree, one hundred percent. What can we do?"

"Let's call Martha and see if she has any suggestions."

"Good idea! Mom always knows what to use as a reward. So the kids don't overhear, why don't you stay here with them and I'll fly to Smallville and talk it over with her."

Lois leaned in, gave him a kiss and sent, "See you in a little bit."

Clark spun into the Suit and flew out the bedroom window faster than the eye could follow. Lois went back downstairs and started getting Sam's dinner together. After breastfeeding him she would be giving him some strained carrots which were his favorite. After she had his highchair ready, Lois retrieved Sam from Lara and took him upstairs to breastfeed him.

Jon, Lara and the twins were all apprehensive because of this delay, so, when Lois had come downstairs and didn't say anything about the report cards, they became even more nervous. What was going on? Were they happy or mad? They couldn't tell because it was like Mom was wearing a mask, hiding her emotions. When she took Sam up to breastfeed him all they could do was worry the more. The longer the delay the more concerned they became.

Lois had finished breastfeeding Sam and had brought him downstairs to feed him his strained carrots. About the time she finished and had cleaned Sam up Clark came in through the back door and putting his arm around Lois' waist and still carrying Sam led her back upstairs.

He sent, "Mom had a terrific idea. Halloween falls on a Thursday this year so Smallville is having a giant Halloween party on Saturday night. She has offered to make costumes for the kids if we bring them Friday night. It's going to be a lot like the Corn Festival. There will be games and music and other entertainment. There will also be a costume contest. The best costume will win a prize."/

"Sounds like a plan. Let's go tell the kids."/

They moved downstairs. The movie had finished so some of the kids had moved into the play room. Clark called all the kids into the living room.

Lois, in a very serious tone said, "Okay, we've looked over your report cards. We just don't know what to say." Lois paused for a long time.

Jon and Lara had surprised expressions. They didn't think that their grades were that bad. What was it with the serious tone?

Slowly, Lois started to smile as she continued, "We are just so proud of all of you, we don't know what to say. These report cards are outstanding! We took so long before talking to you because we wanted to come up with a proper reward."

Jon and Lara both jumped up and shouted, "Yeah!", and then they all started babbling asking what the reward was going to be.

Clark was laughing at their antics as he tried to get their attention, "I spoke with Grandma and Grandpa Kent. Halloween is in a couple of weeks and Smallville is going to host a big Halloween party the Saturday after. Grandma has offered to make costumes for all of you. At the end of the party there will be a costume judging and the best costume will win a prize. Start thinking about what kind of costume you each want. I'll let her know in advance so that if there is anything we need to bring, she can let us know."

Wishing she was a couple of years older so that she could have a computer and an e-mail account, Lara dashed upstairs and wrote a quick note to Mike letting him know about the Smallville Halloween party and letting him know that they would be there. Her note went out with the morning mail the next day.

On Tuesday, Mike received Lara's note and immediately asked his parents if he could visit Great Uncle Wayne in Smallville so that he could attend the party.

Since he had also had an outstanding report card his parents were amenable to the request and after checking with Uncle Wayne, made the flight arrangements.

Mike sent Lara a note saying that he'd be seeing her there and letting her know what costume he planned to wear. He asked her to coordinate her costume with his.

[b]Friday, November 1, 2013[/b]

The Kent family had changed the way they traveled to Smallville. They packed the van and then once the younger children were in their pajamas they were all loaded into the van. They started to drive and before long the younger children were all asleep. Once they were outside of Metropolis they stopped and Lois moved into the driver's seat. Clark got out and spinning into his Suit picked up the van and started flying. Once they were near Smallville he landed the van and changing back into his regular clothes got back in and Lois drove the rest of the way to the farm.

The younger kids were still asleep as they were moved into their Smallville beds and all of them were in high spirits when they woke up in Smallville on Saturday morning.

[b]Saturday, November 2, 2013[/b]

The day was spent in costume preparation. Sam was going to wear a costume Martha had made many years ago for Clark. He was going to be a little lamb.

At Martha's request, Lois had brought one of Lucy's dresses and Martha modified it slightly, an apron that Martha had made for one of the girls went on over it, a straw hat went on her head and with a shepherd's crook she would be Little Bo Peep to Sam's lamb.

Jimmy wanted to be Batman so Clark went out and purchased that costume for him.

Also at Martha's request, Lois had brought one of Jessie's dresses. It was a fancy party dress. Martha modified it slightly, put some petticoats under it, ballerina shoes on her feet and a blond wig and a tiara on her head. With a long wand in her hand she became Glinda the good witch from "The Wizard of Oz".

The twins were going to be a little more difficult. Sean had brought a karate gi which Martha started off by dyeing each part a different color. Clark flew off and found a store that had fake katana swords and purchased one. Next he flew to Japan and purchased a small cotton kimono (traditional Japanese dress) with an obi (wide sash worn with the kimono), two pairs of geta (wooden platform flip flops) as well as a Japanese paper parasol. When he got back Martha fitted the kimono. After applying some makeup and highlighting their slightly almond shaped eyes that they had inherited from their father, a long black wig for Celeste and some black angel hair for a mustache and Fu Manchu style beard for Sean completed their costumes. When they finished there was a samurai, with a sword in his belt, and his geisha standing there. There were a lot of clomp, clomp, clomping sounds as they practiced walking in the geta. Celeste had to practice taking small, mincing steps while Sean had to take broad arrogant strides.

Jon and Lara asked if they could have some time alone with grandma. After they had spoken with her Martha called Lois and Clark aside and said, "The kids have made a special request. Now, it's supposed to be a surprise, so, no *peeking*!" Martha, Jon and Lara moved into the room where the sewing machine and fabrics were located.

After a few minutes Martha called for Lois. She gave Lois a list and asked her to fly to Wichita to find what she needed in a fabric store there. Lois looked at the list and immediately a number of questions jumped to the forefront of her mind, but, wishing to allow the kids their special reward; she flew off and a little later returned with the requested materials. The problem was, her curiosity was getting the best of her and when she got back she asked, "Martha, what is all this material for?"

Martha had a sly look on her face as she replied, "Let's let that be the kids' secret for the time being, okay?"

"Okay, but, those colors. I seem to remember something about them. I don't know."

Martha patted her on the arm and said, "Don't worry about it. Just give us some time. You'll see."

After a while, Martha called Lois and Clark upstairs. They came into the room to find Martha by herself.

With a Mona Lisa smile, Martha asked, "Ready for the unveiling?"

Lois and Clark both nodded. Martha raised her voice and asked, "Who's first?"

The other door opened and in stepped a pint-sized copy of Superman, but the main color of the Suit was black instead of blue and unlike Superman he wore a mask.

Lois snapped her fingers and said, "Now I remember! Jon told us he wanted a *black* Suit. Okay, that accounts for the

black spandex. The rest was the same colors as my Suit.”

Martha raised her voice and said, “Lara?”

In stepped a pint-sized version of Ultra Woman, but, the colors of the uniform were reversed; the body being teal blue with hot pink accents and a pink cape.

Lois and Clark were both blown away. Lois said, “My baby, my babies are growing up! Are you sure you are ready for this?” Just how grown up was plainly evident in the new suits. They had both entered puberty and Lara was starting to fill out. She was already displaying a feminine figure which promised to rival her mom’s while Jon was showing a musculature which would rival a body builder.

Jon replied, “Well, we both are superfast now and really strong. We have our super hearing and our invulnerability is kicking in so we can’t be hurt. We don’t have our super vision and we can’t fly but that’s only a few years away.”

Lois gave them a thoughtful look. “You’re both still growing and Lara just had a growth spurt. In the last few months she’s almost outgrown a lot of her clothes.” Turning to Lara and closely examining her Suit, she said, “That’s going to start getting tight across your chest.”

Lara started to blush and Martha saved her, “I cut it a little big to give her room to grow.”

“Okay, I trust you, Martha. Well, kiddos, when do you plan to make your debut?”

Jon replied, “Not for a while yet. We still have a lot to learn.”

“Are you planning to wear those costumes to the party?”

Jon continued to act as spokesman, a habit that he would continue throughout his life, “Nah, if we did that, we wouldn’t be able to use them in the future. Once we unmasked it would be all over.”

“Okay then, what are you wearing to the party?”

Lara piped up and said, “Mike is going as Robin Hood so I thought I’d be Maid Marian!”

Jon said, “I was going to be Will Scarlet.”

Lois sent to Clark, “Oh boy, should we tell them the true story? About the Fox and Lady Loisetette.”

Clark sent back, “Maybe someday.”

Out loud Lois said, “Mike’s going to be here? How did he find out about the party?”

Looking down at the floor in embarrassment, Lara scuffed a toe as she said, “I sent him a note. He got straight ‘A’s so his folks sent him as a reward.”

Jon’s costume was fairly easy, red tights and a red tunic. On his head was a red Robin Hood hat with a red feather; around his waist he wore a wide belt with a pouch hanging from it in lieu of pockets, and he carried a bow and arrows.

Lara, by the time Lois finished directing the construction of the Lady Loisetette costume, was the spitting image of her, and the first time Clark saw her all he could do was whistle. In an amused tone he said, “You look just like your mom.”

Mystified, Lara asked, “Huh? Like Mom?”

With a little smile, Lois said, “We’ll tell you the story sometime.”

Chapter 07 — At the Halloween Party

Saturday, November 2, 2013

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 — Prime

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As they all piled out of the van Mike came running up. He stopped when he saw Lara and said, in an awed tone, “Wow! You look ... amazing!”

Lara did a curtsy and when she stood up again she gave him a

close appraisal and said, “You look pretty good yourself, Sir Robin.”

Mike laughed and said, “We’re bound to win the prize. Robin Hood, Maid Marian and Will Scarlet; I just hope they don’t ask me to actually shoot any arrows. I’m not too good.”

Lara laughed and said, “Neither is Jon, but, he’s carrying a bow too.”

Lois and Clark had gotten into the swing of things along with the kids and were dressed up as King Arthur and Queen Guinevere. Lois carried the car seat with Sam and Clark had Lucy by one hand.

Mike said, “Hi Mr. and Mrs. Kent, I’m sure glad you were able to come.”

Lois responded, “We are too, Mike and we’re glad to see that your parents let you come. It’s good to see you again.”

Mike responded, “When I got Lara’s note all I did was ask my folks. My grades were so good they let me come as a reward.”

Lois said, “Okay, well, I guess you kids can run along and enjoy yourselves. Jon, here’s some money. Put it in your pouch so that you can pay for some games and treats.”

Mike said, “I’d like to treat Lara, if that’s okay with you.”

Lois looked at Clark with a raised eyebrow and then turned back and said, “I guess that would be okay. Go have some fun.”

Mike crooked his arm and Lara put hers through it and the three of them walked away.

Lois sent, “I think our little girl has a boyfriend. They’ve been corresponding ever since summer camp.”

“I think she’s made a good choice. He’s a good boy and a good student. Besides, he’s Wayne Irig’s grand nephew. We know the family.”

Out loud and with a chuckle, Clark asked, “Shall King Arthur win another teddy bear for Queen Guinevere?”

Laughing, Lois replied, “This time, if they have a Superman doll, I want that.”

Looking down Clark said, “Maybe I should try for two. How about this, a Superman and an Ultra Woman and we should give them to Little Bo Peep and her lamb.”

Chuckling, Lois said, “You might be right about that. Let’s go see how strong you are.” The twins, Jessie and Jimmy followed their parents as they went over to the Test of Strength and cheered when their dad won a couple of times. Clark made sure to not make it look too easy and also used a number of tickets so that the attendant wouldn’t lose too much on the prizes. Lois handed Lucy the Ultra Woman doll and then put the Superman doll in the carseat with Sam.

They took the kids over to a bouncy house and let them play in there for short time, then they took them over to the hay ride. As the kids were approaching the wagon they spotted the driver and shouted, “Grandpa!” and ran over to him.

“Hi, Kiddos!” Jonathan Kent climbed down from his tractor and gave each one of them a hug before lifting them up onto the hay wagon.

After Jonathan deposited the last child on the hay, Clark put his arm around Jonathan’s shoulder and said, “We didn’t tell the kids why you were so busy today, or why you left so early. We wanted it to be a surprise when they saw you here with the wagon.”

Jonathan was smiling as he replied, “I think it was. Are they having fun?”

“Are you kidding? I think they are having a blast!”

“I think this is enough for one load. I’d better get them moving before they throw all of the hay off the wagon.” He was chuckling as he turned away to climb back up on the tractor.

After that ride they gave the twins some tickets and allowed them to wander off. They didn’t worry because Lois and Clark could both keep tabs on them by listening for their heartbeats.

There was something about the rate and rhythm that differentiated them from non-Kryptonian heartbeats. They took Jessie, Jimmy, Lucy and Sam around to other games and everyone had fun.

Later

At around eight o'clock Jon, Mike and Lara decided to get a snack and stopped by Maisie's Diner's booth. They placed their orders and Maisie was in the process of filling their orders when she discovered she was out of some condiments. She said, "Well, Robin, Maid Marian and Will Scarlet, you guys will have to wait a few minutes. I need to go back to the diner and get the condiments. I'll be right back." Maisie headed across the park to the diner. They watched as she pulled out her key and opened up the door and disappeared inside.

They were talking, discussing what activity they wanted to go to when they had finished eating. They were drinking the sodas that Maisie had given them to tide them over until the rest of their order was ready when Jon noticed that Maisie had been gone an unusually long time. He pulled Lara aside and whispered so low that anyone without super hearing couldn't hear, "Miss Maisie has been gone too long. There might be a problem. I think we need to check. You need to use the rest room."

Jon turned to Mike and said, "Lara and I are going to go to the rest rooms. Hold our places, okay?"

Mike said, "Sure, hurry back."

Jon and Lara jogged off. Once they were out of sight of Mike they changed direction and headed for an alley between two stores. They both had their new super Suits on under their costumes so they both tried what they had seen their parents do and super speed spun into their new Suits.

Jon looked out to the park again and said, "She still hasn't come out. Let's check through the back so that we won't be seen."

They both ran at super speed down the alley and behind the various shops until they came to the back of Maisie's Diner. As soon as they got there Jon saw that the door was ajar. He whispered, "I don't think that Miss Maisie would leave the door open like that. We need to go in and see what's happening."

Lara replied, "We need to be careful."

Jon nodded as he opened the door. They both slipped in silently. They found themselves in the kitchen.

They both crouched down so that they wouldn't be seen through the serving window and crept forward. They could hear a gruff voice and a voice that they recognized as Maisie's.

Maisie was saying, "You'll never get away with this."

The intruder replied, "You think not. I've already cleaned out the tills of five other businesses. With everyone out in the park at the party there hasn't been anyone to see me, until you showed up."

"I've never seen you before. You're new around here, aren't you?"

"Never been here before and never will be again."

"They'll catch you, you know."

"How will they catch me?"

"As soon as they find me they'll start searching. Sheriff Broadhurst will come after you."

"Not if they don't know where to look and what I look like. I plan to just mingle with the crowd out there until the party breaks up and leave with everyone else. The only problem is ... you. You could identify me. I can't risk that."

Jon risked peeking around the corner. He could see that the intruder had Maisie tied to one of her chairs and he was standing in front of her, his left side was toward Jon and he was brandishing a knife. Since he wasn't looking directly at Jon, Jon slowly stood up.

Jon crossed his arms over his chest the same way he had seen his father do on many occasions and in an authoritative voice Jon said, "I'd put that knife down if I were you."

The intruder whirled on him and said, "Who do you think you are, kid? You're sticking in your nose where it doesn't belong. Get over here and join her."

Jon replied, "I don't think so."

Lara stepped around Jon and stood next to him with her hands fisted and placed on her hips.

The intruder exclaimed, "What's goin' on? Is the entire costume party comin' in here?"

Lara replied, "We aren't here for the party. We're here to stop you."

"Just who do you think you are, Superman and Ultra Woman? I got news for you kids; your costumes are the wrong colors. Get over here and sit in a couple of these chairs before I put you over my knee and spank you. If you don't move fast enough she might get hurt." He brandished the knife close to Maisie.

Jon picked up a plate that was on the counter next to him at super speed and hurled it like a Frisbee. It was moving so fast that the intruder couldn't move out of the way and the plate impacted the knife in his hand, knocking it across the room. Jon super sped over and pushed him into a chair, grabbing his arms and pulling them around behind.

While he was doing this, Lara super sped over to Maisie and removed her ropes. Quicker than it could be told she had the roped around the intruder and Jon said to her, "Go for the Sheriff."

Lara super sped out the front door and sped around until she found Sheriff Broadhurst. When she found him she ran up and stopped in front of him.

The Sheriff was startled by the sudden appearance of this diminutive copy of Ultra Woman in front of him.

Lara said, "Sheriff, you're needed in Maisie's Diner. We have captured a crook that has robbed several businesses and was holding Miss Maisie captive."

The Sheriff said, "Sure thing. Nice costume little girl, it might even win a prize. Did you just get here? I don't remember seeing you around." He leaned down so that he wasn't so much looking down on her and said, "Look little lady, just because you're dressed up like a superhero doesn't mean that you have to make me think you've stopped a robbery. Go play superhero somewhere else."

Lara was exasperated and said, "Sheriff, I'm *not* kidding."

The sheriff said, "Look, why don't you just run along and have some fun."

Lara decided it was time to test and see just how strong she actually was. She said, "Sheriff, I'm really *not* kidding. I guess I'll just have to show you. Hold on to your hat Sheriff! Here we go!" Lara moved in closer and picked the sheriff up and super sped him to Maisie's Diner. He had not heeded her warning and lost his hat in route. Once in the door she placed the now hatless sheriff back on his feet.

The sheriff looked around and saw just where he was and then at her with a dumbfounded expression. He asked, "How???"

Jon zipped over and said, "Sheriff, this man," he pointed to the intruder, "broke in here and several other businesses to rob them. We found Miss Maisie tied up and he was threatening her with a knife."

Maisie was still in the process of getting herself together after her ordeal and she said, "What they have told you is the truth sheriff, every word of it. They saved me and subdued him. They tied him to that chair with the rope he had used on me."

The sheriff reached up and started scratching his head. When he did this he realized that his hat was missing. He looked back and forth between Jon and Lara and asked, "How were you able

to move so fast and, and carry me? Who are you supposed to be? You look like Superman and Ultra Woman but the costume colors are wrong and you're too young to be them."

Jon hadn't given much thought to what name to use when in costume but Lara came to the rescue and gave him time to think. Lara answered by saying, "I'm Ultra Woman too."

Maisie asked, "Ultra Woman two, as in the second Ultra Woman?"

Lara replied, "I meant too as in also, but, I guess you could say it that way."

The sheriff looked at Jon and asked, "Are you Superman two, or junior or something?"

Jon replied, "My name is Kam-El."

The sheriff asked, "Camel, like the animal?"

Jon looked exasperated as he said, "No Kam," pause, "El."

"Well, Ultra Woman two and Kam ... El, I'm going to need statements from each of you."

Jon replied, "Sheriff, I'm really sorry, but, we have to be going. Miss Maisie's statement will have to be enough." Jon turned to Lara and said, "Let's go, UW."

Lara nodded and they both seemed to disappear as they moved into super speed and ran out the back door. They ran back to the alleyway and spin changed back into their Halloween costumes, went back to Maisie's booth and rejoined Mike.

Mike said, "You guys were sure gone a long time, but you still got back before Miss Maisie. I wonder what happened to her."

Jon looked at Lara and said, "Yeah, I wonder." They looked over in the direction of Maisie's Diner just in time to see the sheriff exiting with the intruder in cuffs and Maisie following looking very flustered.

Mike saw what was happening and asked, "Who is that? I've never seen him around Smallville before."

Lara said, "Neither have we. It looks like Maisie caught him in her diner."

Maisie came back over to her booth and said, "I'm sorry! I got held up."

Mike said, "That's okay, we didn't mind the wait."

Maisie said, "No, I mean, I got *held**up*. There was a robber in the diner. He had me tied to a chair but, a couple of kids saved me. The boy called himself Kam — El and the girl called herself Ultra Woman two. You kids haven't seen anyone in costumes like Superman's and Ultra Woman's have you?"

Jon said, "Our little brother is dressed up like Batman and we've seen several Superman and Ultra Woman costumes."

Maisie said, "Yeah, I've seen them too, but, these costumes were different colors. The Superman costume rather than blue was black and the Ultra Woman costume was colored the opposite of hers."

Mike spoke up, "Sorry Miss Maisie, we haven't seen any costumes like that."

Maisie's expression was full of wonder as she said, "They could do some of the things that Superman and Ultra Woman can do. I wonder if they are their children. If they are their children, what were they doing here?"

Jon said, "If they are Superman and Ultra Woman's children maybe like them they show up when and where they are needed."

Maisie said, "I'm sure glad they showed up when they did. I was afraid that crook was going to kill me so that I couldn't identify him. Anyhow, here's your order. Keep your money. It's on the house. You had to wait too long."

They chorused, "Thanks, Miss Maisie."

Around 9:30 they had the costume judging contest. The costume judging started as a parade of all of the contestants. There was one very interested observer; Maisie. She was looking for her rescuers. There were a number of Supermen and Ultra

Women but none like the costumes she had seen. Seeing these she realized that what she had seen was no store bought costume. The way it had been made, the materials, these had to have been the real thing.

At the conclusion of the parade the judges made their announcement as to the winners. It was a virtual sweep for the Kent clan. Second runner up was Little Bo Peep and her lamb. First runner up was Robin Hood, Maid Marian and Will Scarlet. First prize was awarded to a samurai and his geisha.

At the end, before everyone could disperse, the sheriff, now with his hat back on, took the stage in the gazebo and made an announcement.

"While everyone was here at the party we had a series of robberies." A gasp went up from those gathered. He continued, "The crook was caught in Maisie's Diner by a couple of kids in costume." Everyone started looking at the kids. He continued, "If they are here I'd like them to come forward and be recognized. This community owes them a debt of gratitude. They were dressed up like Superman and Ultra Woman and called themselves Kam ... El and Ultra Woman two. If there's anyone who knows who they are, please come forward." Everyone started really looking closely at all of the superhero costumes.

No one made a move to go forward.

Disappointment in his voice, the sheriff said, "I'm sure we'll be hearing about them again. They showed at least some of the powers that Superman and Ultra Woman have so they are probably their children. If they are I'm glad that they have the same motivation to help, as their parents. I'll say this, wherever they are, thanks. Smallville thanks you."

Maisie moved up beside the sheriff and added, "I want to add a special thanks. I'm sure that they saved my life tonight. If not for them ... well, I don't want to think about it. Thanks."

The party broke up and families started moving to their vehicles. Mike walked with Jon and Lara as they headed for the van. Mike was beside himself. He said, "Wow! Another Superman and Ultra Woman! The sheriff called them kids. I wonder how old they are. I wish I'd seen her. I wonder what she looks like. I wonder how much like the real Ultra Woman she is. I wonder if she has a boyfriend."

Lara was dying inside. Here she was and Mike was going bonkers over her secret identity. She wanted to hit him over the head with something, but, that would probably have given everything away.

Jon said, "I guess, sooner or later we'll be hearing more about them. We'll just have to wait and see."

Mike was flying out the next day so they said their goodbyes at the van. He and Lara promised to write to each other and then he headed for his uncle's truck.

Later — Back at the Kent farm

Lois and Clark saw to it that the younger children were in bed and then called Jon and Lara into their bedroom.

Lois gave both of them hugs and Clark ruffled up Jon's hair and gave Lara a kiss on the top of the head.

Clark was the first to speak, "You kids did really well on your first outing. How did you know something was happening?"

Jon told the story while his parents listened in amazement. When he finished, Clark looked at Lois and said, "Two chips of the old block. Well, what are we going to do to recognize this achievement? We should do something." Turning to Jon and Lara Clark asked, "Do you want to make a formal announcement? You two could take over for Mom and me." Looking at Lois he winked and said, "Wouldn't you like to take a break and let the younger generation take up the task?"

Lois caught his wink and played along, "Yeah, it would give me the time to catch up on 'The Ivory Tower'."

With an air of offence at his teasing, Lara said, “Moosoooooooooooo, Daaaaaddddd, no I don’t want to make a formal announcement! I’m not ready for that! I need time to do my school work. Besides, Jon and I can’t fly yet.”

Clark said, “Well, I guess you have a good point there, squirt. You and Jon can’t fly, yet, but, it won’t be long. Lois do you think you can wait?”

With a sigh of resignation Lois replied, “I guess I’ll have to. Oh well, I’ll just have to keep recording it. Maybe someday I’ll get a chance to catch up.”

Clark dropped the teasing tone and said, “All teasing aside, you kids did really, really good. I think that the best thing we can do is make more trips to Smallville so that you can practice here at the farm so that when the time comes, you’ll be ready.”

Lara gave her dad a hug while Jon hugged his mom and they both said, “Thanks! You guys are the best mom and dad in the world.”

From that point on, every holiday and a lot of weekends in between were spent at the farm.

Every holiday, at least, Mike just happened to be there spending time with his Uncle Wayne.

Chapter 08 — Game Night

Monday, November 4, 2013

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 — Prime

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Jon Kent walked into homeroom. As soon as he crossed the threshold he spotted his best friend Hattie Kaplin and started to smile. Her desk was right next to his and when she looked up from her book she spotted him and smiled too.

Sitting down he said, “Hi Hattie, how was your weekend?”

“Booooooooooooooooooooooooooooo! There was only one thing that kept me from dying of boredom.” She reached into her backpack and pulled out a brand new pad computer. “Ta da! At least I had this to play with. My folks bought it for me as a reward for my good grades. They think it will help in my studies. I still wish your family hadn’t gone away for the weekend. I missed hanging out with you guys. You were in Smallville. Anything interesting happen?”

Thinking about all that had happened he had a broad smile as he replied, “It’s a small town. What could happen?”

Hattie was looking at him while he was speaking and the expression on his face didn’t match up with what he was saying. There was a look of excitement and pleasure on his face even when he was asking that question, so she challenged him, “Yeah, just what could happen in a small town like Smallville, huh? All right, I can tell, you’re holding out on me. Come on, give! What happened?”

Jon was silent for a few seconds while he thought about just what he could tell Hattie. He was just about to speak when the teacher started taking roll, so Jon, thankful for the reprieve, said, “I’ll tell you later.”

Jon was distracted during Physics class because he was deciding just what to tell Hattie.

Could he tell her that Grandma Kent had made him his new uniform? Well, that would be a no.

Could he tell her about what they wore to the Halloween party? Definite yes.

Could he tell her what they had to eat? Probably. Nothing special there.

Could he tell her what had happened to Miss Maisie? That would be a maybe.

Could he tell her about the thrill he had experienced the first

time he did a spin change into his new Suit? No way!

Could he tell her about stopping the robbery and saving Miss Maisie? Nope

Could he tell her about turning the crook over to the sheriff? Not in a month of Sundays. That was far too embarrassing. He hadn’t given any thought to a super name. Obviously Lara had because she popped right out with Ultra Woman 2. He really didn’t want to ride Dad’s coat tails or his cape for that matter, so Superman 2, Son of Superman and Superman Junior were out of the question. When he had been put on the spot, all he could think of was his Kryptonian name, Kam-El and that’s what popped out of his mouth. What made it even worse was when the Sheriff mispronounced it as camel. How mortifying that was.

Okay, what did that leave? The costumes and the results of the costume judging.

He was shocked out of his reverie by the teacher calling on him to answer a question. Embarrassed, he had to ask for the question to be repeated. Fortunately he knew the correct answer, Archimedes. The teacher still admonished him to pay better attention in class.

Jon had lunch with the other guys on the football team and Hattie had eaten with some girlfriends so, right after lunch, in study hall, Hattie cornered Jon and said, “Okay, it’s later, what happened?”

Jon decided that he needed to be careful to follow his plan, so he said, “Well, it was a Halloween party and everybody was dressed up in costume. Lara and I were dressed as Maid Marian and Will Scarlet. My friend Mike Lee was dressed as Robin Hood. We won second place in the judging. Get this, Sean and Celeste were dressed as a samurai and his geisha and they won first prize!”

Laughing, Hattie clapped her hands and asked, “That’s great! Did you take any pictures? I can’t wait to see you as Maid Marian.”

“Very funny. Ha ha ha. Mom took a bunch of pictures. Say, we aren’t going anywhere this weekend. Why don’t we plan a game night for Friday?”

“Sounds good to me, it’ll be a lot better than last Friday. I missed my best friend.”

With a lopsided grin that he had inherited from his father, he asked, “You missed me, huh?”

“Not you! Lara!” Of course she was smiling as she said it so he knew that she was teasing. He still put on a hurt expression. She finally relented and said, “Oh, all right, best friends, you and Lara. There, feel better?”

“Lots. At least you put me first.”

She slapped at his arm as she said, “Don’t let it go to your head, Kent. Let’s go over these French declensions.”

He nodded and cracked open his book. They spent the rest of the study hall working.

Over the course of the week, Saturday’s events in Smallville, initially reported in the Smallville Press, a weekly paper published on Wednesdays, had made the wire services. It didn’t appear in the Metropolis papers until two days later. Since there were only two witnesses to the appearance of the two pint sized superheroes it wasn’t given much credence.

Friday, November 8, 2013

They had been planning this weekend and Hattie had brought a small bag with her to school in the morning. She was spending the weekend with the Kents.

Since Hattie wouldn’t be taking her regular bus home Lois picked her and Jon up after school and dropped them off at the house.

They both started doing their homework and when Lara, Sean and Celeste arrived Hattie restrained herself. She wanted so much to spend time with Lara in girl talk, but they all had homework to do and her determination to excel in school took precedence and she kept her nose to the grindstone until she had it all finished. The only interruption had been snack time when Jon had prepared the snacks for everyone.

When she finally closed her last book she let out a loud sigh. She asked a rhetorical question; “Why do they really pile on the homework on Fridays? Don’t the teachers realize that we have lives outside of school?”

Jon laughed and said, “They probably just don’t remember what it was like when they were kids.”

Lara had finished her homework a little earlier and said, “Hey, while we wait for the rest of the family, let’s watch a movie!”

Hattie said, “Let me guess, ‘The Incredibles’, right?”

“Well, we could or we could watch ‘Kung Fu Panda’. I was actually thinking of an older movie, ‘Galaxy Quest’. It’s so cool! These actors from a TV show are recruited by aliens that look just like humans, to take charge of a ship they created to duplicate what they had in the show. They get into a battle and have to fight another bunch of aliens on the ship and keep it from blowing up and they had to get help from kids like us to figure out how to save the day.”

Hattie replied, “Sounds like fun. We all know that there are aliens and they can look just like us. After all, Superman and Ultra Woman are aliens, aren’t they? You can’t tell them apart from Earth people. Your mom and dad could be aliens and we’d never know it.”

Jon was getting a little uncomfortable with how close this was coming to the family secret so he changed the topic. “After Mom and Dad get home we can look at the pictures from Halloween. Lara, why don’t you put in the DVD?”

Having the same concern as Jon, Lara moved to comply and within just a couple of minutes the opening credits were running. A flaming comet crossed the screen. In the tail of the comet the name appeared and then a ship appeared out of a warp field.

Hattie was hooked. She forgot about the conversation they had been having and sat on the sofa between Lara and Jon and watched the movie.

When the actors were transported to the star base and the Thermians appeared in their natural form she was shocked and was ready to scream just as that extra guy did. Since he did, she didn’t feel the need, in fact she giggled at his reaction. Then suddenly the Thermians changed and looked human. They apologized for not having their appearance generators turned on.

Hattie grabbed the remote, paused the DVD and in an excited tone asked, “Do you think that’s how they do it?”

Puzzled, Jon asked, “Who, that’s how who do what?”

“Superman and Ultra Woman! Do you think that’s how they look so human? Do they have appearance generators to make them look human? They could really look like those Thermians and use some kind of device to look human! Wow, just think about it. There’s no way to know what they *really* look like. They could be walking down the street ... looking just like a normal human. They could look like you or me or your mom or dad and underneath they could look like,” she flung her hand toward the screen, “that! That just blows my mind! You know, when I become an investigative journalist, I’m going to investigate that. I’ll find out for sure.”

Jon asked, “What would you do with that information, once you have it?”

“I’d keep it a secret! That’s not something that should get around.”

Jon breathed a silent sigh of relief. Hattie would keep the secret if she found out.

About the time the movie finished, Lois and Clark with the rest of the clan arrived. Lucy shouted “Hattie!” and ran over to climb into Hattie’s lap.

Hattie gave Lucy a hug and said, “Hi Squirt! How are you?”

“Me’s fine. How’s Hattie? Is Hattie staying wis us?”

“Yeah Squirt, I’m staying the weekend.”

“Goody, goody! Me’s like Hattie.” Lucy gave Hattie a hug and then jumped down off her lap and ran to the play room.

As Lois took Sam out of his car seat and handed him to Lara, she asked, “Can you watch Sam for a little while, Sweetie? I need to get his dinner ready.”

“Sure Mom, no problem.”

Hattie asked, “Can I hold him for a while?”

Lara handed him over and Hattie fussed over Sam until Lois called for him.

The evening edition of the Planet carried the story from Smallville. It was on an inside page of the ‘A’ section. The family didn’t even know it was there.

Seeing the paper which Clark had carried in Hattie asked if she could read it and was given permission.

The headline story was of a Superman rescue written by Lane and Kent. The brakes on a semi had failed as it was on a down slope with a sweeping curve. It was reminiscent of a Harry Chapin song, “Thirty Thousand Pounds of Bananas” only with a better outcome. Superman had prevented the accident by slowing the trailer while Ultra Woman slowed the cab. Doing it that way prevented the truck from jack-knifing and continuing its path of destruction.

It was continued on page 2 so Hattie turned there to finish the story. When she finished she saw the story from Smallville. She said, “What’s this?” She started reading the article and was getting more and more excited as she did. She practically shouted at Jon, “You were holding out on me!!!! Why didn’t you tell me about this?”

Not knowing what Hattie was talking about Jon asked, “Why didn’t I tell you about what?”

“Don’t play dumb with me, Jon Kent! You were in Smallville when they were there!”

“When who were there?”

“The new superheroes!”

With a mystified/concerned expression Jon cautiously asked, “What new superheroes?”

“The ones that rescued,” she referred back to the article, “Maisie Matthews, the owner of Maisie’s Diner and captured the thief that was holding her hostage and threatening to kill her.”

Jon blanched and said, “Let me see that.” Lara who was also an interested party looked over Jon’s shoulder as he read the article. She whispered something in Jon’s ear that Hattie couldn’t hear and then backed away.

Jon said, “Well, yeah, we heard something about it. The Sheriff said that something had happened and asked if anyone had seen a couple of kids in outlandish costumes, but, come on, everyone there was in costume. Who could tell? Besides, it could just have been a publicity stunt. There were only a couple of witnesses.”

“Yeah, but one of them was the Sheriff! I wonder. Could it have been Superman and Ultra Woman changing their appearance to make people think that there are more superheroes around? If they are using an appearance generator, they could, you know. There’s another thing, neither Superman nor Ultra Woman were seen anywhere else at that time, so it *could* have been them.”

Relieved that Hattie was going off on that track, Jon heaved another silent sigh of relief. He had almost started sweating; she had been getting too close for comfort.

After dinner Lois brought out the pictures from Halloween

and Hattie was suitably impressed by the costumes. She complimented them, “Oooo Lara, you look so Regal. You look like you just stepped out of a story book. Jon, you were absolutely handsome. Those red tights, wooo woo!”

Jon started to blush.

Lucy was sitting on Hattie’s lap and when she saw the picture of herself she said, “There’s me!”

Hattie said, “Yes, Little Bo Peep come to life with her little lamb.”

With the directness of a child, Lucy replied, “That no lamb, that Sam!”

Hattie was laughing, “I know Squirt. Sam looks cute in his costume. All fuzzy wuzzy.”

With a childish chiding tone, Lucy replied, “No Hattie! Fuzzy Wuzzy was a bear. That Sam.”

They all had a good laugh at that one.

After a bit they got out some board games. Clark disappeared to run some ‘errands’ and Lois took Sam upstairs to change him and spend some one-on-one time nursing her youngest.

The younger kids were playing games like ‘Chutes and Ladders’ while Lara, Hattie and Jon played a kids version of Scrabble.

When playing games, Hattie had the same attitude that she had in karate class, take no prisoners and go for the kill.

Toward the end of the game she had a difficult assortment of letters and only saw one possible move. She placed her tile.

Jon said, “Hey, that’s not a legitimate word. You can’t use that!”

Hattie said, “Let’s see.” She pulled out her pad computer and surfed to a dictionary site. She typed in her word and searched. She found an entry and showed it to Jon.

CHUMPY

Use 1 — Chumpy Adj , state of being

Use 2 — Chumpy vb,

Def.: being or acting like a chump

Ex. 1: He was a chumpy man.

Ex 2.: She was being chumpy.

Jon said, “Let me see that.”

Hattie handed over her pad computer and Jon looked at the entry. He said, “Hey, this isn’t Webster’s! This is more like Wiki! People can add anything they want. He scrolled to the bottom of the entry and let out a groan.

Lara asked, “Hey, Bro, what’s the problem?”

Jon handed the pad to her and pointed to the bottom.

Lara read, “Contributor — Lois Lane”

Lois had just come downstairs with Sam and overheard this conversation. She walked over and as she was handing Sam to Lara she asked, “Okay, what’s going on?”

Jon said, “How could you, Mom?”

Taken aback, Lois asked, “How could I what?”

Jon pointed to the board and said, “That!”

Lois looked carefully at the board and spotted just what Jon was talking about. She moved the ‘Y’ tile aside and saw that it rested on a ‘Double Word Score’ space and started to laugh. She said, “Well played! Who played that tile?”

Lara and Jon said in unison, “Hattie!”

That just made Lois laugh that much harder. She looked at Hattie and said, “I knew I liked you from the first minute that Jon introduced you to me. If you didn’t already have a set of parents, I’d adopt you.”

Hattie squeaked out, “Really?”

“You’d better believe it. You’re so much like me, it’s scary.”

Clark walked in just then, having returned from his ‘errands’. He asked, “What’s so funny?”

Lois didn’t say anything, she simply pointed to the game board.

Clark looked at the words spelled out and let out a groan. He

said, “Is history repeating itself or what? Did you pull that on the kids?”

With a smug look Lois said, “No, I did not. Guess who.”

Clark looked at each of the three kids around the board and said, “Nah, it couldn’t be ... Hattie?”

Lois burst out in more peals of laughter, such that the only answer she could make was a violent nodding of her head. When she finally composed herself she asked, “Can you believe that?”

Clark replied, “I knew right from the start that the two of you were like two peas in a pod. If she keeps this up she might even win a Kerth earlier than you won your first.”

The thought that this might in any way be possible sobered Lois up immediately. She choked out, “You really think so? Could that be possible?”

Clark replied, “Anything could be possible.”

Looking directly at Hattie, Lois said, “Not that I don’t wish you well, but I do hold the record as the youngest Kerth winner. You’re going to have to work really hard to beat that record.”

Sam started to fuss and Clark was reaching to take him from Lara when they were interrupted by a knock on the door. Clark glanced in that direction and said, “I wonder who that could be. Were you expecting more company, Honey?”

“No, I was expecting a quiet weekend at home. Why don’t you go see who it is?”

Popping up and heading for the door, Jon said over his shoulder, “I’ll get it. Pop’s busy.”

When he answered the door he immediately recognized the individual on the stoop and said, “Hi! I’ll call Mom.” Over his shoulder Jon shouted, “Mom, it’s your friend, Mr. Wells!” To Herb he said, “Won’t you please come on in?”

Herb smiled at this welcome and said, “Thank you, my boy. I’m so happy that you remembered me. It’s been a while. Let me see, it would be about three years since I was last here.”

“Yeah, it was Mom’s birthday, just over three years ago.”

Just then Lois and Clark walked up behind Jon. Lois said, “Hi Herb, what brings you around this time? You missed my birthday, not that I would expect a present every year. The last one you brought me was ... special. I still don’t know how to thank you for that.”

Herb smiled and said, “As I told you when I dropped that off, it was a present from,” looking at Jon, who was taking this all in he finished, “an old friend of yours. I was simply the delivery boy, uh, man.”

“Well, if you haven’t already, please, give him my thanks.”

Herb was still smiling as he said, “In a way, that, is one of the things I came to see you about. Can we go somewhere to talk, privately?”

Indicating Sam, who was still in his arms, Clark said, “Sure Herb, just let me turn this one over to his sister.”

Clark went into the game room and handed Sam to Lara and joined Lois and Herb in the office.

Hattie asked Lara, “Can I hold Sam for a while?”

Lara said, “Sure,” and handed him over.

Hattie pulled Sam’s shirt up and gave him a raspberry on his tummy and he started squealing in delight.

Chuckling at this, Jon said, “I think I’ll go ask Mom if we can have a snack.” Jon got up and approached the office door. He knocked and got no answer. After a few seconds, he knocked again. He listened with his superhearing and there were no voices, not even heartbeats, there was only silence. He nudged the door open and saw that the office was empty.

Chapter 09 — Herb Returns

Thursday, October 27, 2108

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Universal Locator designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124 Lori and Clark universe
— Alt-Prime

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A/N — The Alt Prime universe was created when Lois' life was not prolonged by exposure to the Kryptonian aura. Lorelei (Lori) L. Lane-Kent is the next incarnation of Lois

It was a pleasant mid afternoon in Metropolis. They were experiencing an Indian Summer day when a portal opened in the back yard of the Kent residence on Wisteria Lane. Herb stepped through and as soon as he did the portal closed after him.

He checked his TaDT to confirm the time, 2 pm and date, October 27, 2108, and assuring himself that everything was correct he walked up to the back door and knocked.

A few seconds later Lori Kent answered it. When she saw Herb she said, "Herb! This is an unexpected visit. Is there a problem somewhere?" Suddenly she realized that they were still standing at the door and hastily said, "Won't you come in?"

Herb chuckling at her apparent discomfiture entered and said, "Actually, my dear, I'm here to see CJ. I'd like to ask him to take a short trip with me."

Lori had a quizzical look on her face as he said this. She asked, "What is the problem? Are you sure that Clark wouldn't be better suited to the trip?"

Herb said, "No, CJ is the one best suited to this mission. Please allow me to assist you in recovering a memory."

Lori was wary, "What memory?"

Herb replied, "A memory that I had to block some time ago but which it is now time to unblock." Herb pulled out a small device and punched a button. It hummed for a second and then he saw Lori's visage change as the memory returned.

As a memory reconstituted itself a look of understanding took its place. She asked, "Why did you block that memory?"

"For the same reason that your memories of most of the time CJ was with you as Lois were blocked until the appropriate time. Most of those memories were time triggered so that you would remember them a little at a time. That made it a little less overwhelming."

She nodded in understanding and said, "That's why I didn't remember everything at once. I understand and I guess I thank you. I'm not too happy about you messing with my memory, but, you've been doing just that most of my life. He's in his office, right this way." She led him into the office where CJ was studying. He was in the process of completing his college degree requirements by taking on-line classes. He was going to complete his masters in Electrical Engineering in about two more months. There were just a couple of required courses and a thesis to go.

Lori knocked on the door and said, "CJ, you have a visitor."

He said, "Come on in, Mom."

Lori opened the door and said, "CJ, I'd like you to meet Herb Wells. Herb is an old friend of mine and your Dad's."

CJ reached out his hand and said, "Pleased to meet you."

Herb shook his hand and said, "Oh, my boy, you don't know it yet, but, we've met before."

CJ looked at Lori with a questioning expression. She nodded her head and said, "He's right. It was shortly after you were born. He's the one that took you back into the past to protect you when your father and I went to New Krypton. I'd like you to hear him out and ... it's important that you do what he says and that you go with him."

CJ asked, "Go with him? Where?"

Lori said, "Into the past."

CJ was incredulous and asked, "The past?"

"Yes, you see he has a mission and you're an important part of that mission."

Herb said, "My boy, it is necessary that I cause you to recall some memories, memories of your early life. Please sit down and relax."

CJ sat back down in his chair as Herb pulled a device from his pocket. Herb reassured him, "Now, this won't hurt at all. All I'm going to do is to help you remember. As soon as we are finished I'll be asking you to accompany me." Herb pushed a few buttons and the device in his hand hummed a gentle tune for a few seconds. As it did a smile took over CJ's features.

CJ opened his eyes and said, "Momma. I remember!" He looked at Lori and said, "She was so much like you that I never realized the difference."

Lori replied, "I know CJ, you see, I was her or she was me, we were the same person, I have her memories. Ohhhhh, it's so frustrating! Herb, what's the best way to say it?"

Herb was chuckling as he said, "You have all of her memories so to all intents and purposes you are her." Turning to CJ he said, "Now, my boy, it is time for me to go back and pick you up and bring you back home. I would like you to go with me. I'd like you to meet the woman that will become your mother and who was your mother for that period of your life."

CJ looked at Lori and she said, "Yes, please go with Herb. It's important." She moved over and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

CJ turned back to Herb and said, "Okay, I'm ready."

Herb nodded and pulled his TaDT from his pocket and entered the desired coordinates. The portal opened and he and CJ stepped through.

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Universal Locator designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 — Prime
1998

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A portal opened in an alley down the street from of 348 Hyperion Avenue and Herb and CJ stepped through. They walked down the street. As they did they witnessed a young couple, Lucy Lane and Jimmy Olsen, exit the house they were headed for, get into a car and drive off. Once they were out of sight, Herb and CJ approached the door and Herb prepared to knock.

CJ stopped him and said, "I can hear them, they're upstairs. She's crying. We might want to wait a few minutes."

They waited at the door and CJ monitored the conversation and activity upstairs. When he determined that Lois had gotten her emotions under control he said to Herb, "Okay, you can knock now."

Herb knocked on the door and they heard Clark's voice say, "Just a minute."

A few seconds later Clark opened the door. He had checked with his vision beforehand and knew who was there. In a resigned tone he said, "Herb, I guess it's that time." He looked at Herb's companion with a questioning look.

Herb noted this and said, "Let's go inside. We have some things to discuss."

Clark nodded in resignation and said, "Okay," and led the way into the living room. He called upstairs to Lois, "Honey, Herb is here. Is CJ still asleep?"

CJ and Clark could both hear Lois gasp and heard her breathe, "Not now, not yet. We're not ready." She came to the head of the stairs and they could see the tears in her eyes. She started to descend the stairs, slowly, like a condemned prisoner headed for the gallows, holding onto the banister with both hands as she moved almost sideways down the steps. When she was half way down she saw that Herb was not alone. The young man with him was tall and looked a *lot* like Clark, right down to the glasses. His appearance shook her. There was a pang of recognition. Finishing her trip like one in a dream, she moved over and completely ignored Clark and Herb, her entire focus was on this stranger.

Clark started to say something, but, before he could utter a

word, Herb put his hand on Clark's arm and stopped him.

Lois walked up to the stranger and just stood there for almost a full minute intently staring at his face. She said, "I ... I feel like I know you. It's so strange. I've never met you before, but, I feel like I know you." Hesitantly, with shaking hands she reached up and took off his glasses. As soon as she did so they fell from her nerveless fingers. A look of total recognition overcame her features as she put her hands on either side of his face and in a voice full of wonder and in a hushed questioning tone asked, "CJ?"

He put his arms around her and said, "Momma."

At that instant Lois' knees went weak and her legs seemed to turn to jelly as she almost collapsed but he held her up as she started crying uncontrollably. He gently pulled her into a tight hug and said, "Yes, Momma, It's me, it's CJ."

Clark moved over and took both of them in his arms.

After several minutes Lois was finally able to stand on her own, but Clark and CJ led her over to the couch. Once she was seated Clark sat on one side and CJ on the other. She was still looking at CJ's face and her hand was on his cheek.

Clark asked, "Lois, how did you know? Herb hadn't introduced him to me yet and I didn't know."

Lois, without turning and still looking at CJ answered, "A mother knows. I just knew he was my baby. My baby's all grown up."

CJ said, "Today's my eighteenth birthday. Herb brought me with him as a birthday present so that I could see you again. Also so that you could see how I had grown up, thanks to you, Momma and also my Mom."

Lois asked, "How is she? Did they save New Krypton?"

With a sad look he said, "Herb told me that I can't say anything about that except, New Krypton is still there. Something along the lines of too much information ..."

Lois interrupted him, "Yeah, I know that line; 'too much information too soon is not good'. Okay. So you can't talk about it. What are you going to be doing?"

"I'm just finishing up on my degree and I plan to work at STAR Labs."

Clark said, "Good for you. I'm sure they are still doing very important work."

Lois asked, "Do you have a girl friend?"

"Actually, I've been to New Krypton a few times since my powers started to come on and I've met someone. I think she'll be joining me on Earth soon. Her name is Elka and she's the daughter of Tel-Ka and granddaughter of Zara and Ching. Uncle Ching, when he gave up his military title, took his family name of Ka. She was named Elka to honor the family of El. Mom and Dad decided to name me Ka-El. Ka as a diminutive of Kal and it's also the family name of Uncle Ching and Aunt Zara. When we pair bond she will be Elka Ka-El. She decided to take the Earth name Laura."

Lois asked, "Do you have any pictures?"

CJ reached into his pocket and pulled out a small device. When he pushed a button a holographic picture of a very lovely girl with dark hair flowing loosely around her shoulders with dark eyes and a beautiful smile dressed in flowing robes sprang into existence. She bore a striking resemblance to Lois.

Lois said, "She's lovely. She looks a lot like me."

"Mom said the same thing. I think, subconsciously, I was looking for you. Don't get me wrong, I love my mom, but you and she are a little different, if you know what I mean. I was concerned when Herb first showed up and suggested this trip. Mom encouraged me to come. I didn't know how seeing you again would work out. I just want to say, thank you. I love you, Momma." He looked past Lois and said to Clark, "I love you too; you have got to be the best Dad a boy ever had."

Herb and CJ spent a good part of the afternoon with Lois and Clark. Eventually it came time for them to return to the future.

While Lois went upstairs to get CJ and his things Clark got the diary. As he handed it to CJ he said, "These are our memories of your time with us. We kept a copy for ourselves, so that ... so that we can remember you. Now we will also remember the man you have become."

Lois came down the stairs with CJ in her arms. She handed the baby to his older self and said, as she handed the diaper bag to Herb, "Take care of him. I wouldn't want anything to happen to you. You know, that sounds so weird. He's you. You're who he will become."

Clark put his arm around Lois and said, "What she's trying to say is, we're proud of you. The man you've become. We just hope that at least part of that is a result of the time you spent with us."

Looking over at Herb who nodded his head, CJ said, "Before I came on this trip, Herb used a device to restore my memory of the time I spent with you." He started to tear up as he continued, "I remember that it was a period of intense happiness and joy. Your care, your tenderness; I hope I never forget that. I love you, both of you more than I can express."

Lois looked at Herb and said, "Thank you, Herb. This is a tremendous gift you have given us. It makes it a lot easier to give him up now that I see the young man he has become."

Herb replied, "You should take comfort in the fact that what he has become is a direct result of his time with you. A large part of the most formative period of his life was spent with you and it was your influence that formed so much of his character. He is a reflection of you. You should be proud of that."

Lois put out her hand and cupped CJ's cheek and while looking into his eyes said, "We are Herb. We couldn't be prouder of him if he were actually ours."

Herb chuckled and said, "In many respects, he is. Yours, I mean. In every way that counts you are, were, his parents. He is the living proof of how any child you would parent and nurture would turn out. You have every reason to be proud."

Clark nudged Lois and said, "See, I told you you'd do a good job as a mother."

She replied, "Yeah, I guess I did do okay."

Chapter 10 — Back Home

2091

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Universal Locator designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124 Prime Alt

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Lori and Clark were about to take their leave of New Krypton. Ching and Zara were not going to accompany them on their return. Zara, after Ching being absent for four months, was reluctant to allow him out of her sight even though she would have been with him on board.

Zara asked, "How are you guys going to handle this absence? It's been longer than you anticipated, hasn't it?"

Lori replied, "No, actually, we knew that we were going to be gone for eight months before we left."

Zara asked Lori, "Didn't you just have a child?"

Lori said, "Yes, we did. He's about a year old now. I can't wait to get back to him."

With a sympathetic tone Zara said, "I don't know how I would handle this much time away from my newborn child. You've missed so much of his development."

Lori replied, "Subjectively, we've only been gone a few months, but I still miss him terribly. As far as missing his milestones, well, we haven't exactly missed them, you see, we have this 'friend' ... Herb Wells, he's a ... time ... traveler.

Anyhow, he visited us the night you arrived. He took CJ, back into the past and gave him to us so that we could take care of him. That was at a time after your previous visit. Since we were the ones that cared for him, we have all of the memories of that time with him. I'm still looking forward to getting him back though."

Zara said, "I can believe that. Remembering how he grew up is not the same as being there with him, being able to hold him and play with him ..."

Lori interrupted, "You're right. It isn't the same. It has been a sacrifice, but it was a sacrifice we had to make. The survival of New Krypton depended on it. If there had been any other way ... but there wasn't. I just hope he remembers me." There were unshed tears in her eyes as she said this.

Zara reached out and gave Lori a hug. She said, "You have sacrificed so much for us and that after all that happened in the past. All of New Krypton will know of your sacrifice. Your name will be revered as much as Kal-El's is."

Lori looked at Zara and said, "That's really not necessary."

Zara replied firmly, "New Krypton must know what you sacrificed for them and I am going to see to it that they do. You have sacrificed so much for us, it's the least we can do."

While Zara and Lori had been talking, Clark had been packing their things. He came into the room just as Zara was finishing up and walked over to Lori and putting his arms around her said, "We appreciate it."

Zara asked, "Is that everything?"

Clark looked at the bags and said, "Yep, all set to go."

Lori said, "Wait, one last thing." She ran to their room and grabbed her bow and quiver of arrows. "I almost forgot this. It is my main souvenir of this trip. Won't the kids be surprised at what I can do with this?"

Chuckling, Clark replied, "With that you are even better than you were and before you could have given Robin Hood a run for his money. Oh well, come on, the bus is about to leave."

"I think I have everything now. I guess we can go."

Zara said, "Then I will wish you a pleasant and safe trip home. Ching and I will be needed here to complete the preparations for the negotiations and also rebuilding our military preparedness."

Ching walked in and asked, "Are you ready to go?"

Clark replied, "We are very ready. We can't wait to get back."

Ching clasped Clark's forearm in that forearm shake and said, "Thanks. Thanks to you and Lori we have a chance. We hope you can come back soon."

"Depending on how our suggestion is accepted, you may be seeing some other members of our family pretty soon. We will come back as needed."

The new throne ship had been retrofitted to have the new shields installed for protection and had also been armed with a pair of rail guns. On their return trip they were going to be taking Kal-El's ship back with them so that the FTL drive that Jor-El had developed could be analyzed and duplicated. It was estimated that it would shorten the transit time between Earth and New Krypton by as much as eighty percent.

They would be able to establish a regular shipment schedule that would improve trade and also enable the Kent clan to follow through on the plan of families 'vacationing' on New Krypton. The New Krypton year was broken down into ten months of forty-five days each, one orbit taking 450.25 days. Each family would take at least a portion of one of the months.

The trip back took the same amount of time as the trip to New Krypton since the speed when in FTL drive was a constant. Clark spent a portion of each day in a sauna which used 5400 degree Kelvin lights. These lights simulated a yellow sun spectrum and started rebuilding his power reserves, preparing him for their return to Earth. That way he would have his powers

as soon as he exited the ship.

Eventually they arrived in Earth's space and assumed an orbit in a LaGrange point as they had done previously. Lori and Clark were ready and thanks to the sauna treatments Clark had regained his powers, both floated into the air lock and waited for it to depressurize. When the hatch opened they shaped their course for Metropolis. As they entered atmosphere Clark sent a broadcast thought, "Kids, we're home!"

A chorus of replies came back, most with side channel emotions of relief. Finally one cut through. Jon sent, "Welcome back! Shall we have a gathering?"

Clark replied, "I'll get back to you on that. We have some things to do first."

Once they had landed they entered the house to check on things. After a few minutes Clark went out back to the secure storage he had constructed and pulled out his space craft. He sent, "Commander?"

"This is commander Zar."

"Commander, this is Kal-El. I will be there with my ship in just a few minutes. Please see to it that the landing bay hatch is open."

A few seconds later he received, "Pod bay outer hatch cycling. Rainbow flash, initiated."

"Thank you commander. I'll be there in minutes." He picked up his ship and took off.

When Clark was dropping the ship off he asked, "How soon must you leave, Commander?"

"We are not on a schedule. Did you have a request?"

"Yes, Commander, I'd like to propose to my family the idea that we have had for them taking turns visiting New Krypton. I may have some passengers for you on your return trip."

The commander started to smile as he said, "I will have some accommodations prepared. We will delay our departure as long as is needed."

"Thank you, Commander. We should know within a day or so. We'll let you know."

When he returned he found Lori in the bedroom, crying. He moved over and sitting down next to her put an arm around her shoulders. He asked, "What's wrong, Honey? We prevented a war, saved a world and made it back in one piece. Why all the tears?"

She turned and buried her face in his chest as her sobs increased. He wrapped her up in his arms to try and comfort her. After a few minutes she was calmed down somewhat. She pulled back and said, "I was just sitting here thinking, trying to remember CJ and how he had been when we had him in the past and suddenly this wave of grief just swept over me. All the time we were away, little by little things from that time would come to my memory. You know what it's like. I'd remember what it was like to put him to my breast and how eager he was to feed. I'd remember that time, before I knew about the problems with chocolate how I'd had a couple of Double Fudge Crunch bars and afterward he was colicky because of the stomach problem it caused and then the absolute mess he made in his diaper. Actually, believe it or not, they were happy memories. Now I remember the soul shattering grief of having *my* baby taken away. How could I have allowed Herb to do that to me? Why didn't we come up with another solution?"

"Honey, you know it had to happen this way. I guess that memory was blocked until now so that we would do what needed to be done. It was the only way."

"I know that, but, it doesn't make it any easier. Herb should be here soon with CJ. I need to clean the house. We've been away for over eight months." Walking over to a table she swiped her finger across the top and said, "Look at the dust. I'm just glad I have super speed now. It won't take too long to clean up, especially if you help." She gave him a hopeful smile.

“How can I resist when you ask so sweetly? Let’s get started. I’d like to call a family conference for this evening. I’d like to propose the family vacation plan we came up with.”

Lori brightened and said, “Yes, let’s do that. Right now I feel that it could be imperative that there be a superhero on New Krypton. Sam’s is the only family that wouldn’t provide a hero since Alice is from New Krypton. All of our older grandchildren and their spouses, including Liz and Teri, in just a few years, can take turns as well. Let’s get the cleaning done so that we can have the family over.”

That evening

At the gathering Clark summarized the plan and then put the question, “So, there it is. How many families would consider taking their vacations on New Krypton?”

All of the families raised their hands in assent.

Clark said, “I thought as much. Who would be able to leave within forty-eight hours?”

There was some discussion within families and finally Lara and Michael, Celeste and Bill raised their hands.

Clark addressed Lara, “How can you justify the absence?”

Lara replied, “You’ve been gone for eight months. In that time we have left the LA firm and accepted Sam’s offer to work for The Foundation. We started two months ago. We head The Foundation office in LA now and we still handle the New Kryptonian trade contracts. Since contracts with New Krypton are our specialty, I’m sure Sam can see the advantage of us spending some time on New Krypton. In fact, Mike and I will have to talk this over; we might be open to a permanent move.” There ensued a conversation at the speed of thought between them.

This was totally unexpected and shocked Clark and Lori as well as the rest of the family. There was an excited babble. Finally Clark asked, “Permanent? Are you sure you would want to move there, permanently?”

Lara replied, “Well, yeah, why not? We just discussed all of the ramifications of a move of this sort and we are satisfied that as long as some details can be overcome, it should be doable. Since the rest of the family is going to be setting up rotating visits, it won’t be like we won’t be seeing everybody. With us there permanently, they will have at least one full time superhero and when a second family visits there will be at least two. Occasionally, when another family comes out, we can come back for a vacation here. It’s a win, win situation.”

“For a permanent move, won’t you need more than forty-eight hours?”

Looking over at Sam, Lara said, “As long as we can get some help settling our house and all, we should be ready.”

This had all been happening too fast and Clark and Lori were perplexed. Something said earlier finally hit them and said in unison, “The Foundation office in LA?”

There was some general laughter. Finally Sam spoke up, “While you were away some changes have occurred. The Foundation has opened some new offices. We now have subsidiary offices in twenty cities. Some of the offices are primarily medical clinics, provide security consulting services or perform other necessary services at reduced prices or free services. Each office is run by a family member. I let the family members chose what city they wanted. Each city that has a branch office of the Foundation now has a resident superhero or team.”

“We realized as a result of the drug interdiction that clustering almost all of us here in Metropolis wasn’t efficient. Now we are spread out for greater coverage. As more of the kids develop their powers eventually we will go international.”

Sam said, “With respect to the move, we can take care of that

detail. Let’s see, you have the house in LA. Louise hasn’t chosen a city yet. Louise, why don’t you take the LA office and you can continue to live at home. As long as we know when to expect you back for a visit, it will be ready for you when you arrive.”

Louise said, “That would be great! All my friends are there anyhow.”

Lara said, “That would be just fine. In the morning we will start packing what we will need. Sophie, Rob and Mary are all over ten so their powers are coming on which means that they will be able to handle the environment on New Krypton. Okay, now that that is settled, we can be ready in forty-eight hours.”

Mike added, “Torque will become the resident superhero of New Krypton.”

Lori snapped her fingers and then said, “When you get there, make sure you pick up my spare bow and arrows from Ching.” She zipped into the office and back. She held up the bow to display it. “They made a backup in case this one broke when I was practicing. It came in very handy when we had that meeting. You’re almost as good as me with a bow and I think that this one will help you be even better. There will be little need of compensating for drop. The arrows you loose from this bow will be moving at supersonic speed. They will have a pretty flat trajectory as a result.”

“Thanks, Lori. I will,” said Mike.

Clark looked at Celeste and Bill and asked, “How could you guys do it?”

Celeste said, “We now head the Detroit office where we have set up a free clinic. I have an assistant and staff who could handle the practice for a few months. I’ve covered for him for a like period when he’s gone on a medical mission to Africa. I’ll tell him I’m going on a medical mission to New Krypton. Agnes, could you head the office while I’m away?”

Agnes replied, “Happy to, Mom.”

Bill said, “I could turn the security consulting function over to my assistant. The office is so new we don’t have that large a clientele yet.”

“Could you guys be ready in forty-eight hours?”

“Easily.”

“Okay, why don’t we do this, both families will depart with the transport now in orbit. Cele, Bill and their family will return in three months. When that transport arrives there will be another family ready to take their turn. All I can say is thank you. This means a lot to us and also to New Krypton. With the threat posed by the Hangaresi the presence of a super hero or two could mean the difference between survival and extinction. When Herb returns with CJ we will request additional pendants for each of the spouses.”

Lori spoke up, “Will your unmarried children be going with you?”

Lara and Mike looked around at their children and receiving nods from each said, “Yes, they will,” Lara laughed and continued, “Who knows, they might find their soul mates there the way Sam did.”

Celeste had already surveyed her family and said, “Ours will go too.”

Clark said, “I’ll notify the commander.” He sent, /”Commander.”/

/”Yes, Lord Kal-El.”/

/”You will be having two family groups consisting of thirteen individuals riding back with you. They should be ready to go in forty-eight hours.”/

/”We will prepare accommodations. Thank you.”/

/”Thank you commander.”/ He said, “All set. Lara and Celeste, if your families could stay so that we can brief them, the rest can go on home.”

There was a chorus of farewells and some hugs exchanged as the families were leaving.

Clark and Lori briefed both families on what had occurred before they headed out to prepare for their departure.

Mid-afternoon the next day, Herb showed up with the infant CJ.

As Herb handed CJ to Lori she marveled at how much the baby had grown and she started fussing over him. CJ had a somewhat quizzical look on his face. He asked, “Momma?”

Lori said “Yes, CJ, it’s Momma.”

CJ looked around and in an agitated tone said, “Momma?”

Lori frantically looked at Clark and said, “He doesn’t remember me.”

Clark said, “Here, let me.” Clark reached for CJ. CJ readily went to Clark and CJ said, “Dadda!”

Clark said, “That’s right, Sport.” Clark pulled Lori in and said, “Momma.”

CJ said, “Momma?”

Clark said, “Yes, CJ, Momma.”

Lori reached for CJ and he shied away.

Lori started to cry. “Oh, Clark, my baby’s forgotten me.”

Clark replied, “You’re younger than Lois was and you wear your hair differently. Just give it a little time. Think back. Remember some of the things you did as Lois.”

After a minute’s thought she said, “Let me have him. I have an idea.”

Clark handed him over and Lori lifted his shirt and gave him a raspberry on his tummy. He squealed in delight and put his hands on the sides of her face and said, “Momma!”

Lori pulled him into an embrace and showered him with kisses, and said, “Momma loves CJ.”

CJ repeated, “Momma lubs CJ.”

That’s right, “Momma loves CJ.”

While this was going on Herb pulled Clark aside. Herb reached into his pocket and pulled out a handful of pendants. Herb said, “Each of these pendants is a double strength. On the reverse you will see a numeral two. That way you can tell them apart. Your family will need them when on New Krypton.”

Clark chuckled and said, “Right, history. Thanks Herb. New Krypton appreciates it.”

With an enigmatic look Herb said, “They may come in handy.”

“Oh, are we correct about the threat?”

Herb retreated behind his motto, “Too much information too soon ...”

Clark interrupted and finished with, “Is not good. I know, but you can’t blame me for trying.”

Shortly after that Herb left.

After Herb’s departure, Lori picked up the diaper bag so that she could put away the supplies. When she opened the zipper she was confronted by a brown and white stuffed bunny. She lifted it out and CJ saw it and smiled as he reached for it. Lori handed it to him and he hugged it with both arms. When she put him down for his nap he wouldn’t settle until he had his rabbit but once in his possession he was content. That rabbit was his constant companion for several years.

When it was time for the families to depart, the ship sent down some travel pods to carry what was to be moved to New Krypton.

Clark had a small capsule made of Plexiglas which was airtight and had an attached air supply and a small heater unit. They put CJ into this and carried him with them when they went up to the ship before it departed. When they arrived, Lori took CJ out of the capsule so that his siblings could all say their goodbyes.

Clark handed the extra pendants to Lara to take to New Krypton and then hugs, handshakes and kisses were exchanged

before Clark and Lori left to return home with CJ.

After exiting the lock, Clark and Lori hung suspended in space as the ship broke orbit and they were able to watch it disappear into the void before heading back home.

The next day they started preparing the articles for the Planet. They decided to work from home for convenience and also so that they could spend some time with CJ.

In the evening Lori sent, “Lucy?”/

“Hi, Mom! What’s cookin’?”/

“That’s just it. We need to restock, but we’ve been so busy with these articles we haven’t been able to do that yet. I was thinking we might go out for dinner. Is Teri available for babysitting duty?”/

“I’ll check. — She has finished her homework. I’ll bring her over in a few minutes. She’s really missed CJ. She says that you shouldn’t even consider asking anyone else to babysit him, ever. Hahaha. See you in a few.”/

“Tell her Grandma won’t ask anyone else.”/

Lucy brought Teri over and spent a few minutes with Lori, Clark and CJ before going back home.

Lori and Clark changed into dinner clothes. Lori put on a short black chiffon dress with stiletto heels and Clark put on his charcoal suit. They were just finishing up and about to head downstairs when there was a knock on the door. Teri shouted upstairs, “I’ll get it!”

They heard the door open and then they heard Teri, “Oh, NO! Not you again!” Wrapping her arms even more protectively around CJ and turning so that she was between the visitor and CJ and with a stamp of her foot she declared, “You’re not taking CJ away again, I won’t let you!” Turning toward the stairs she shouted, “Grams! Grams! *He’s* here again!”

Lori and Clark had come rushing downstairs at her shout. As they neared the foot of the stairs they both shouted, “Herb?”

Herb turned to Teri and replied, “Please rest assured that I have not come to take CJ away again.”

Teri was holding CJ very protectively, keeping her body between Herb and CJ and glaring at Herb.

Herb turned to Lori and Clark and asked, “Is there somewhere we can speak, in private?”

Clark said, “Sure, Herb, in the office.”

Lori said, “Yes, Herb, have I got something to show you! While we were on New Krypton they built me a new bow. It’s in the office. I can’t wait to show it to you.” Then Lori turned to Teri and said, “Relax Teri, honey, Herb says that he isn’t here to take CJ again. Sometimes he does just stop for a visit. Hey, how about this, CJ’s cereal and carrots are in the fridge. Could you give him his dinner?”

Still casting a wary eye at Herb, Teri answered, “Sure thing, Grams. Happy to.”

Teri headed to the kitchen with her little charge while Lori and Clark headed for the office with Herb.

A minute later Teri was at the office door. She knocked and said, “That jar of carrots is almost gone. Should I open another one or can I give him the sweet potato instead? Grams?” Using her superhearing all she heard was ... silence. There were no voices and no heartbeats, just the sound of the air coming from the AC vents. She pushed the door open to find an empty office. She wondered just what had happened because even Gram’s new bow and arrows were missing.

Chapter 11 — Sam and Alice

Saturday, September 3, 2039

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Universal Locator designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 — Prime

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A/N — We now return to the L&C canon universe, but in another time period.

It was Saturday and the Labor Day weekend was upon them. Everyone in the Kent clan packed up their families. All of the cooks in the family were bringing dishes to share with the rest. Clark had the Bar-B-Q pit fired up and was getting a head start on the grilling since this would be a rather large gathering. The backyard of the Wisteria Lane house had been decorated. In one section some pools of various depths had been put up for the children along with some lawn games. A number of tables had been set up for serving and eating.

Except for Lara and Mike all of the families started arriving at around noon. Since Lara and Mike lived in LA they used the same trick that Lois and Clark had used when their children had been small. After the younger children were asleep they moved them by super express to Metropolis. The children woke up in their rooms in the Wisteria Lane home and thought nothing of it.

Cold dishes were placed into the refrigerator until it was time to start eating. The grandchildren all mobbed Grandpa Clark and Grandma Lois as soon as they arrived to say hi, before going over to the play area.

As families arrived, groups would gather and start talking.

It always amazed Clark that even though he could recognize everyone's heartbeat, he could still pick Lois' heartbeat out of the crowd and know exactly where she was and her emotional state. Today he could tell that she was immensely happy. She really enjoyed having the kids and the grandkids around. Pretty soon they might even have the next generation showing up. Lara and Mike's eldest daughter, Louise, was going to be fourteen soon. It just seemed like the years were flying by.

It seemed like the kids were all taking turns spending a few minutes with Clark, one on one as the party progressed.

There only remained a couple and one of them was approaching even as Clark was thinking about this. Sam, the youngest of the first generation walked up and said, "Hi, Pop. How's the cooking going?"

"I'm glad that Grandma Kent taught me to cook. I'm also glad that I spent some time with Great Uncle Mike. He taught me some things about cooking for large groups. He really learned to cook in the Army and he passed on some of those techniques to me as the family grew." Clark looked around and chuckled as he continued, "I'd say that we have the equivalent of a tank company here today. How are things at the Foundation?"

"Well, you know, when Murray retired a few years ago it left us in a little bit of disarray. It was okay when I stepped in as business manager, but, you really needed a promoter. That was what Murray really excelled at. Now that we have Stu on board, that aspect should be covered. Actually, things are running so well, I might finally be able to take a vacation."

This sent Sam back several months in memory.

January 2039

Sam was in his office as director of the Superman Foundation. The office was on the top floor of what had previously been LexTower, but, was now simply called The Foundation. The open balcony was very convenient for the comings and goings of the super family when they had reason to visit the offices.

Since only the top ten floors were used for the foundation the rest of the building had been rented out. Ever since The Foundation had been purchased from the 'estate' of Lex Luthor the clients in the rented office space in the building had seen a reduction in their rentals. Rents had been reduced so that expenses were covered with a smaller profit margin to the delight of the occupants. As a result, unoccupied office space was

virtually non-existent and there was a waiting list for companies seeking space in the building.

Thanks to Sam's business acumen, after extensive remodeling and the addition of extra entrances and exits the sub-basement — which had been Luthor's bunker — had been turned into an underground shopping mall. Consequently it had become something of a tourist attraction. There was a food court that held a variety of ethnic cuisines which Sam made sure were all different. Upscale shops vied with one another to get space.

Running the Superman Foundation was a full time job and a half and Sam found himself putting in long, sometimes, very long hours. His family started to worry about him. Keeping your nose to the grindstone was one thing, grinding it completely off was another thing entirely. Fortunately, one of the perks of being the Director was the use of the attached private apartment.

Sam was the eighth child of Lois and Clark and he was not married so, occasionally, one of his siblings would set him up with a blind date. In order to placate them he would take an evening off and go out with the girl. He had to admit, usually he had a good time, but, there just wasn't that zing. He had seen it happen, over and over with his siblings. He was beginning to feel that the state of marital bliss just wasn't for him and he had just about resigned himself to bachelorhood.

One day he had a call from Lara. "Hey Bro, what's happening?"

"Not much Sis. Just the usual. I move this piece of paper from one side of my desk to the other and then move it back again. Repeat as needed to look busy." He couldn't help chuckling at his own joke.

He could hear Lara laughing as she replied, "Well, far be it for me to interrupt such important work, but, I need to ask you to do me a favor."

Wary, Sam replied, "Oh, and just what would that be? Not another blind date, I hope."

Defensively Lara said, "No, I've given up on that. No more matchmaking for me, so, not this time. Here's the situation, I have an out-of-town visitor and I'd like you, since you're the only unattached member of the family, to act as a tour guide for a couple of days. She'll be arriving in Metropolis 3:30 this afternoon on the flight from LA to Metropolis. Her name is Alice. She has shoulder length auburn hair and is wearing a beige business suit. What I need you to do is simply show her the sights. If you feel like taking her to dinner, so much the better, but it isn't required. She just wants to see the sights."

"Okay, Sis. As long as it is with the understanding that there are no expectations. You said 3:30?"

"Right, 3:30 on the flight from LA."

"Okay, I'll pick her up and show her around."

"Thanks, Bro! You're a life saver. Oh, one more thing, I've okayed any monetary expenditure to be covered by The Foundation."

"Sis, how does this tie in to The Foundation?"

"I'll explain later. I have a meeting to get to. We'll talk later. Bye."

"Okay, bye Sis." He hung up the phone and had a pensive expression as he mulled over this conversation. The obvious conclusion was that his sister was setting him up again.

At 3:30 Sam was at gate 5 which the monitors had indicated would be where the flight from LA would deplane. Sam didn't know just what to expect. This probably had something to do with the firm that Lara worked for in LA, perhaps a client. As the passengers started to deplane, among the first off, indicating a business class seat, a stunningly beautiful woman with shoulder length auburn hair came through the door. She was beautiful, in an exotic sort of way. Her skin was not pinky pink but had a slightly darker cast and her eyes had a very slight slant. Sam

couldn't believe his eyes. There was an immediate attraction. He was going to have to call Lara and thank her for this one.

She walked right up to him and in a voice that was somewhat throaty and sultry with a slight but interesting accent, asked, "Are you Samuel Kent?" It almost sounded like Zamuel when she pronounced it.

He was entranced. She was an absolute vision of loveliness. As he stared he stammered, "Yeah, Zamuel," he realized that unconsciously he had imitated her pronunciation of his name and quickly corrected himself, "Uh, that is Samuel, Samuel Kent. You must be Alice. Alice what?"

She giggled at his apparent bemusement and said, "Alice, just Alice." When she pronounced her name it sounded almost like Al'-i-Sea

Surprised by this cloak of mystery, not wanting to reveal her last name Sam thought, <I really need to call Lara,> before he said, "Okay, Alice, are there any particular sights you are interested in seeing?"

"Your sister has told me a lot about The Foundation Mall. Can we go shopping?"

"We can do more than shop there. Would you like something to eat as well?"

"That will not be necessary; we had a meal on the air-o-plane. It was an interesting flight. Not like what I had expected. The accommodations were somewhat ... cramped."

Sam was surprised by this statement. From the order in which she had exited the plane he knew that she had flown business class. Those were the most roomy accommodations on any aircraft. He thought, <She must do most of her travel by ocean liner. She would have a large cabin to sleep in and plenty of deck to walk around on.> He asked, "Did you bring any luggage?"

Her reply surprised him, "Luggage, what is this ... luggage?" Sam was becoming increasingly convinced that English was not her first language. He thought that he needed to try to get his questions across in a form that she might understand. "Do you have any extra clothing that you placed into boxes to bring with you?"

"Ah, extra clothing. No, I did not bring extra clothing with me."

Sam thought, <Ah, that's why she wants to go shopping. She must have lost her luggage and Lara made the arrangements for The Foundation to pick up the tab as a good will gesture. Well, The Foundation can afford to buy some clothes, no problem.>

Sam took her out to his car. He was proud of his car. It was a classic. It was a 2010 Jeep Grand Cherokee which he had restored to almost factory mint condition.

As they walked up to it she stopped and looked at it. She asked, "This is your conveyance?"

Sam was a little taken aback. He replied, "Well, yeah. I know it isn't exactly new, but, it is in perfect condition. I did convert it over to a fuel cell, but, other than that it is factory mint."

He heard her mutter, "Primitive."

He couldn't let on the fact that he had super hearing so he pretended not to hear the comment, even though it stung. He was very proud of his car.

He opened the door and she got in. As she got in the car, her skirt hiked up and Sam got a good view of a pair of very shapely legs. He showed her how to fasten her seat belt.

She asked, "Why is this physical restraint necessary?"

He looked at her in astonishment and asked, "You mean, the seat belt? It's to help keep you safe in the event of an accident."

With a deadpan expression she asked, "Would it not be better to avoid accidents?"

He barked out a startled laugh and said, "That's why they call them accidents! Sometimes they are unavoidable."

She said, "Curious."

Sam moved around and got into the driver's seat and started

the car. He pulled out of the lot and headed downtown. He parked in the parking building adjacent to The Foundation and led the way to The Foundation Mall.

They started off in a shop specializing in casual clothes. She selected a couple of sporty outfits. A pair of regular jeans and some shorts that were so short they made 'Daisy Dukes' look long. These she paired with several tops some of which would allow a bare midriff. She found some foundation garments and sleepwear. Some of the sport outfits she tried on for size and asked if Sam would give his opinion on them. When she modeled the shorts with the short top Sam started sweating. He had seen just how shapely her legs were when she got into his car, now, seeing the entire package, whew! He could feel his pulse racing and he could hear that hers was slightly elevated as well.

Next they went to a more formal shop and she selected a couple of business outfits. One suit had a skirt and the other had slacks, both had jackets. She picked out some silk blouses and shoes to go along with them.

Next they went to a formal shop. She found a gown and modeled it for him. It was an off the shoulder gown that was fitted on the top and then loose and flowing below, almost like a flowing robe.

Sam had all of these purchases packaged and sent to the Foundation office.

Sam invited Alice to join him for a bite to eat in the food court.

While they had Chinese he asked, "How long will you be in town?"

"That is as yet to be determined. It will depend upon availability of transport."

"Where will you be staying?"

"Your sister has arranged for me to stay with your parents."

This surprised Sam. His parents were going to have to be careful with a stranger in the house. He said, "When we finish up here, we'll go pick up your purchases and I'll take you to the house."

"That would be acceptable."

"I would like to take you out to dinner tonight."

"Perhaps another night. I would like to spend the time with your parents this evening."

March 2039

Sam had started seeing Alice on a regular basis. This pleased Lois and Clark because this was the most they had seen him since he took over as Director of The Superman Foundation. They had been dating for months now and she was still pretty much a mystery to Sam, which made her all the more enticing.

One Saturday Sam and Alice were downtown doing some window shopping. As they were strolling along suddenly they heard shots being fired and racing engines.

Sam looked around and spotted an alleyway. He said, "Wait here, I'm going to go for help." He started to run off. Suddenly, just as the car was passing them the rear side tires, one after the other exploded. Sam stopped and turned back to see what was happening. He started looking around for another family member, but, he couldn't find anyone.

The car skidded to a halt and the perps jumped out brandishing weapons. The police cruiser pulled up and the cop jumped out and took up a position behind his door with his gun held in both hands. He shouted, "Police, you're under arrest! Drop your weapons!"

The perps both brought their guns around and started to bear on the cop. Before either one had a chance to squeeze off a round the metal of the weapon in the hand of one of them became too hot for him to hold. The high density polymers of the Glock in the hands of the other started to melt and flow, seizing up the

mechanism. The perp dropped it and both of them put up their hands.

Sam sent a mental call, /Who did that?/

He received back a thought, /Tee, hee, hee, I did./

Sam didn't recognize the source and sent, /Who is that?/

/Me./

/Who is me?/

/Me./

Sam was mystified. This sounded like a kid, but kids didn't have powers.

Alice reached out and took Sam's hand and said, "There, you see, you don't have to leave me now."

They continued their day and Sam was in a quandary as to what had happened, but, he was starting to have some suspicions.

June 2039

Sam had invited Alice to go to the beach with him. He had picked her up and they had driven to the shore. When they got there they made quite a stir. When Alice removed her cover-up, she revealed a body that was every bit the equal of his sisters and sisters-in-law. She was gorgeous. His Kryptonian physiology gave him a physique which was like that of an extreme athlete. They made quite a pair. Sam had chosen red as the primary color of his uniform with blue trunks and trim. He couldn't help thinking that his uniform looked a lot like the later uniform that Mr. Incredible wore. Alice was wearing a bikini with a red top which was the exact shade of his uniform and blue bottoms that matched the color of his trunks.

They spent some time just lying on their towels soaking up the sun and talking.

Suddenly, Sam heard a call for help. A swimmer had gotten caught in an undertow and was being swept out to sea. He jumped up and said, "Let's go for a swim."

Hand in hand they headed for the surf. When they were in waist deep he released her hand and dove. His plan was to remain underwater as he rescued the swimmer.

Once underwater he started flying. When he neared the area he detected two swimmers. It appeared as though the swimmer he had heard was a father who had been trying to rescue his daughter. Sam thought he could rescue both, but, he didn't know just how he could make it look realistic. He came to the surface near the man and started swimming to him. The man shouted, "Don't worry about me, get my daughter!" Sam looked in that direction and suddenly an auburn haired head popped to the surface next to the child. Alice grabbed the girl and looked back at Sam.

Sam was dumbfounded, how had she done that? It would have taken powers like his!

Suddenly he received a thought, /Let us take them to shore. I believe that you have some questions you wish to ask./

They stopped at a fast food franchise and picked up something to eat and went out to the car. Once in the car Sam asked, "How is it that you have powers?"

"I was born this way, although I didn't have the powers until I arrived."

"Until you arrived! Arrived from where?"

"New Krypton. You had asked about my name. On New Krypton, genealogy is important to us. Our name expresses our lineage as does yours. I am Ali of family Ce." She pronounced it sea.

Astounded, Sam asked, "Why are you here?"

"On New Krypton I am the unmarried granddaughter of a member of the council of Elders. It was felt that a trip to Earth to learn the customs and to spend some time with Lord Kal-El and Lady Lois would be beneficial."

"Why did you keep your powers a secret?"

"I was cautioned by your sister Myel and also Lord Kal-El and Lady Lois that it should be so."

"How much longer will you be here?"

"That still has not been determined."

"Can you stay? Permanently?"

"Why would I do that?"

"Because I want you to. I want you to stay ... with me. Ali of the family Ce would you marry Ben of the family El."

"Do you mean form a life bond?"

"Yes, I mean, form a life bond."

"Ben of the family El, it would be my pleasure to form a life bond with you. I knew, from the first moment I saw you that you would be my life mate."

"I felt the same thing. It was love at first sight. You are my first Love."

"As you are mine."

Saturday, September 3, 2039

At the appointed time Lara disappeared into the house and reappeared a few minutes later with a justice of the peace that she had scheduled earlier. He performed a civil ceremony for the young couple.

Jimmy had worked to create an Earth persona for Alice so on the marriage license appeared the name Alice Richards which immediately changed to Kent.

As soon as the justice said, "You may kiss the bride," a cheer went up from all gathered.

The Justice left after receiving his fee.

Shortly after his departure, Clark was about to say something to Sam when there was an interruption.

A few minutes earlier Lara had disappeared into the house as she was escorting the minister out. Now she reappeared in the company of several men who looked like old fashioned monks dressed up in robes. As soon as Lara led them out the back door of the house they, upon seeing Clark, bowed before proceeding into the yard. Clark called Mike over. "Mike, can you take over here for me for a bit? I've got something else I need to do."

"Sure thing, Pop. Go ahead. Lara's been planning this for weeks."

"Why that sneaky ... She takes after her mother. Don't let the steaks burn."

"I've got it. Go greet your visitors."

Clark walked over and the leader of the delegation bowed again as Clark approached. Clark said, "Trey, my old friend. I didn't know that you were coming."

Trey said, "Lord Kal-El, it is a pleasure to see you again." He called a specific individual forward. "I'd like to introduce Gan-Ce, grandfather of Alice. We came to officiate in the ceremony."

Alice had come over behind Clark, hand in hand with Sam, AKA Ben-El. She broke away from Sam and standing before Gan-Ce placed her closed fist over her heart, gave a small bow and said to Gan-Ce, "I honor you, Grandfather." Then she lost some of the formality and said exuberantly, "You came! For the joining ceremony?"

Gan-Ce replied, "Yes, Granddaughter. A happy day. The joining of the house of Ce with the house of El."

Alice held out her hand to Sam and he came forward and took it. She performed the introductions, "Ben-El this is my grandfather Gan-Ce."

Sam said, "It is an honor to meet you, sir." Sam didn't know how to appropriately greet him so he proffered his hand. Gan-Ce reached forward and clasped his hand around Sam's forearm in a forearm shake.

Gan-Ce said, "My granddaughter has chosen well."

A few minutes later, with the family gathered around, all

except the younger children and a couple of the teens who were watching them, the ceremony binding Alice and Ben-El in a life bond took place.

After the ceremony Trey and the rest of the Council of Elders joined in the festivities.

Sam and his new wife excused themselves and went into the house. Lara had planned well. Knowing about the Kryptonian bonding ceremony she had prepared Sam's old bedroom so that Sam and Alice could use it to complete the second part, consummating the wedding.

Clark returned to the cooking and Trey drifted over there to talk. It was a pleasant conversation.

Chapter 12 — Labor Day Picnic

Saturday, September 3, 2039

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Universal Locator designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 — Prime

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This had been some party! So far they had had an announcement of a baby on the way from Jimmy and Peg along with their anniversary celebration. There had also been the arrival of a delegation of the Council of Elders from New Krypton who had come to officiate at a Life Bonding Ceremony for Sam and Alice, which had followed an American civil wedding ceremony.

Clark had just had a conversation with Trey, who had gone off to sample the foods that were on the buffet. The conversation with Trey would require some additional thought before Clark actually answered the questions Trey had asked.

In order to buy some time to come up with some good answers, Clark had sent Jon over to talk with the leader of the New Kryptonian Council of Elders.

A few seconds later Lois approached. He heard her heartbeat even before he saw her approaching and a smile lit up his face in response to that knowledge. When he looked up he saw her, his wife of so many years. Still beautiful at age sixty-three, almost sixty-four, he marveled at her grace and beauty. A sprinkling of gray in her hair, a few lines, here and there but still a beautiful woman. Today, in honor of the planned wedding of Sam and Alice she had chosen to wear a modest business suit in peach with a red blouse under the matching jacket. She had allowed her hair in recent years to go longer and it flowed softly around her shoulders.

As she walked up she greeted her husband, "Hi, handsome. Wow, what a day."

Chuckling he said, "You can say that again. We knew about the Justice of the Peace but that sneaky daughter of yours ..."

Laughing, Lois interrupted, "Daughter of *ours*! She's just as much your daughter as she is mine."

"Oh, I don't know about that! Keeping something like inviting a delegation of the Council of Elders, including Gan-Ce, Alice's grandfather, to officiate at a Bonding Ceremony. I never did anything like that to you."

With a surprised look Lois retorted, "You *never* what? You never kept it a secret that Clark Kent was Superman? You never lied to me, giving me really lame excuses for why you had to duck out, especially when we were in the middle of a really important conversation? I'd say you bear just as much responsibility for this behavior as I do."

"Okay, if you put it that way, I guess we have to share the responsibility." Giving her a very close appraisal up and down he said, "I must say that you are dressed very nicely today. That outfit makes you look almost good enough to eat."

Lois did a pirouette so that he could see the entire package. "I wanted to look nice for the wedding. You like, huh?"

"Always."

With a somewhat wonton look she said, "You look kinda good yourself! I always like you in a suit. The only thing is, I catch myself being like Alice White was with Perry when he wore a tux. I can't wait to get you out of it."

He started to laugh and said, "The only reason to wear a suit to a party is if there's going to be a wedding and you're the father of the groom."

Lois moved in and put her arms around his neck and pulled him down into a kiss. "I think I'm going to go up and change. This outfit is okay for a mother of the groom at a wedding, but, this is a party and now I aim to get comfortable. I'm going to go in, check on some things and change. See you in a little while."

"Okay, I plan to go change in a little while myself."

Lois walked off and Clark observed that Trey had been watching, even as he had been listening to Jon as he told the story about his and Jen's relationship.

A short time later, Jon finished his story and he and Jen had excused themselves so that Jen could feed George, their sixth child.

Trey returned to enjoying the Earth delicacies that had been provided by Lord Kal-El's family as Clark returned to mulling over the discussion he had previously had with him.

earlier

As Clark was still in the process of cooking Trey had approached. As he neared Clark he bowed slightly and said, "My Lord, Kal-El ..."

Clark had interrupted him at this point. He said, "Trey, please, this is Earth, not New Krypton and this is a party, a festive occasion. I don't want all of the bowing and scraping that you feel necessary. You are a guest in my house and I honor you as such. You are also a friend. If it hadn't been for your courage, bucking Nor, my atoms would have been scattered across the galaxies. Really, I owe you my life."

With a humble expression Trey replied, "It was my duty. An injustice had been done. Lt. Ching pointed out the law and I was duty bound to act on it. Furthermore, if you hadn't defeated Nor, we would be suffering under his yoke even today. Besides, the council had been tricked into the judgment that had been handed down. Your defeat of Nor proves that you were in the right."

Clark was somewhat embarrassed by all of this and replied, "Okay, there were good things done on both sides. This is a party. Why don't we just relax and have some fun? This gives you an opportunity to meet some of our children."

Trey replied, "I look forward to doing just that, but, I have some questions. You have a number of children, but, has it been worth it? By staying here on Earth and using your powers, it appears as though you have shortened your expected life span. You appear to be aging at the same rate as Lady Lois. By the way, where is she?"

Clark was caught in a quandary by this line of questioning. He would need some time to think about how to answer. He said, "She's around being the perfect hostess. Why don't we resume this conversation when she returns? In the mean time you could go over to the buffet and sample some of the dishes that my children have prepared."

Trey said, "Thank you, I think I shall. We can talk more later, as you suggest."

Trey watched as Jon and Jen headed to the house so that Jen could feed four month old George in private. As they neared the door a ravishingly beautiful blond came out through the door. She was dressed in a halter top, shorts and sandals which showed off her long shapely legs. Most of her upper body was hidden however by a baby carrier with a four month old infant in it. She

stopped and had a short conversation with Jon and Jen before they proceeded into the house and she moved into the yard.

Trey was wondering just who this woman was. He didn't recognize her as the wife of any of the sons of Lord Kal-El and Lady Lois. She appeared to be the correct age to be the wife of one of them; however, the only blonde-haired daughter-in-law was Jennifer, whom he had just officially met. He watched her as she moved toward the rest of the party. He was surprised when she moved in the direction of Kal-El. When she neared him he took her in his arms and careful of the infant in the carrier he gave her a hug and a kiss. With a knowing look Trey nodded his head. He arose from his chair and approached Kal-El.

When he was near enough he said, "Ahhh, I see that you have followed at least some of the traditions of New Krypton. Is this one of your concubines?"

Before Clark had a chance to answer a five year old, brown haired whirlwind swirled into their presence. She put a brown smudged hand on the woman's leg and transferred some of the brown substance to the bare skin as she said, "Mommy, Mommy, tell him I can have another piece of cake."

The woman looked down. She saw that not only were the hands covered in this brown substance; her face was also smeared from nose to chin. She took all of this in before she asked, "Tell who Sweetie?"

"Brother!"

"Which brother, Sweetie?"

The little girl pointed at a brown haired seven year old and said, "Him, CJ."

Clark leaned down and picked up the girl and tossed her into the air to her absolute delight. She was squealing the whole time she was in the air. When he caught her he held her up in front of himself and asked, "Just how many pieces of cake have you had, Pumpkin?"

As Clark had been playing with the little girl a dog had come over, obviously following the girl. The dog spotted the brown stain on the mother's leg and started licking it off. Startled, she looked down and said, "Shelby, good dog." She reached down and petted his head as he cleaned her up.

The little girl answered his question, "Three, but they were small pieces."

Laughing Clark said, "It looks like you got as much on you as you did in you."

Hurt in her tone she replied, "That was Ben. He tried to grab my cake and he slipped and pushed it into my face. Besides, CJ said that I shouldn't be eating brown cake cause I'm an olive so I should only eat green cake."

"Clark Jerome Kent Jr. why are you teasing your sister that way?"

CJ dug his toe into the turf as he looked down. He knew that he was in trouble. Whenever Mom got that tone in her voice and used his full name, the boom was about to be lowered. All he could say was, "Cause."

His mom reached over and took his ear in her hand and said, "Because? Because is not a reason. Just because her middle name is Olive doesn't give you leave to tease her about it, and you, young lady, where do you get off eating three pieces of cake?"

"Aw, Mom, it's chocolate!"

"I know very well that it's chocolate. Your sisters ordered it that way." She settled down some as she said, "I know you can't help it. You all inherited my penchant for chocolate. I guess I really can't blame you too much. I just wish I could eat some of it." She looked longingly in the direction of the table where the anniversary cake was placed. Then she looked down at the baby in the carrier and thought better of it. "I'd like to have some too, but it would be a real problem for Martha." She reached up and stroked the baby's dark hair.

Trey had been taking all of this in and finally his curiosity got

the better of him. Turning to Clark he repeated his question, "Lord Kal-El, is this woman one of your concubines?"

Clark had a smile on his face as he said, "Hold that question for a couple of minutes. I need to go change." He raised his voice, "Mike, can you take over here for me for a few?"

Mike answered, "Sure Pop. Got it covered."

When Mike had come over to man the grill, Lara had come over with him so Clark turned to her and asked, "Lara, could you supervise CJ and little Lois for us for a few minutes?"

"Sure Pop, I'd be happy to."

Little Lois started to object because she knew that she could wrap Clark around her little finger but Lois put a stop to that by saying, "Lois Olive Kent, you obey your sister. She's in charge till we get back."

"Aw, okay." She turned to Lara and asked, "Can I please have another piece of cake?"

Lara laughed and said, "Oh, I suppose so. Let's all go have a piece."

Clark handed over the spatula and fork and headed for the house then disappeared through the door. Less than a minute later he reappeared wearing a polo shirt, shorts and sandals and appeared to have dropped a good thirty years in those few seconds. Trey's jaw dropped. This was Lord Kal-El as he remembered him from over thirty years ago, young and virile. Was this another man?

Clark walked up to Trey and said, "I'm sorry we had to deceive you, but, you see, we weren't expecting you. We knew of the arrangements for the Justice of the Peace and we had to dress appropriately for his arrival. We had to be the appropriate age. Now, since it's just family, we can remove our disguises. Trey, this is not my concubine, although she was that once upon a time. This is Lady Lois."

Trey sputtered, "But Lady Lois has dark hair!"

Laughing at his confusion Lois said, "Not now she doesn't."

Clark looked at Mike, and asked, "You got it?"

Smiling, Mike replied, "I'll try not to burn anything. Go ahead, have a talk."

Clark led the way over to a table and he Lois and Trey all took seats.

Clark reminded Trey of his question, "You asked if I thought it had been worth it to give up my long lifespan to stay here on Earth. As you can see, I really haven't given that up, but, frankly, even if I had I wouldn't have traded that for being with Lois. I think you saw thirty years ago, I was willing to give her up for the greater good, the welfare of New Krypton. However, if it was a choice between my first love and aging prematurely, I would choose to spend what time I have with the only woman I have ever really loved."

"When we found out that Lois' life had been extended by exposure to the Kryptonian aura we realized that we would have to take steps to prevent the world from discovering just who Superman and Ultra Woman were. We adopted a plan of using makeup to make it appear that we were aging. At the appropriate time we will retire our original personas. As it is we have retired from the Daily Planet in those personas and have assumed new identities. In the new identities we courted and married assuming our original names again thanks to the laws of the state. As the new Clark and the blonde Lois Kent we are again a reporting team at the Planet."

Clark elaborated, "Since Lois is now affecting blonde hair, when she goes out on a rescue as Ultra Woman she wears a brown wig which duplicates her original hair in length and style. The apparent fact that Lois and I have aged while Ultra Woman and Superman have not has added to the security of our secret identities. No one associates the now older Lois and Clark with the ever-youthful superheroes."

Trey was blown away. He asked, "So, you will live a normal Kryptonian life span and Lady Lois will also now have the same life expectancy?"

"That is essentially it. I just had a thought. Let me talk with the kids."

Clark thought specifically of each individual that he wished to communicate with so that it wasn't a general band communication and sent, "I have a question ..."

After the communication he turned to Trey and asked, "Trey, would you consider possibly conducting the Kryptonian Life Bonding Ceremony again? At this time the only ones who have gone through it are Sam and Alice. I just had a conference with the rest of the family and we would all like to honor the traditions of Krypton by participating in the ceremony also. There will be nine couples."

Trey began to smile as Clark had been talking and said, "We would be more than happy to perform the ceremony for you and the rest of your family."

Louise, Lara's fourteen year old daughter and her twelve year old brother, Greg, were called over and they gathered up the younger children that had all drifted over to the food and herded them down to the play area.

Trey and the other elders that had come stood in the center of a circle formed by the El family, all but Sam and Alice, and conducted the ceremony binding them according to Kryptonian custom as life mates.

At the completion of the ceremony Trey and the other elders departed by going into the house where the Kryptonian teleport transferred them to their ship.

After the Kryptonian elders had left, Jon, who was in the house with Jen heard a knock on the door and answered it.

He was startled by who it was. "Mr. Wells? Mr. Wells, you don't seem to have aged a day since I last saw you. Won't you come in? Mom and Dad are in the back yard."

"Well, well, well, my boy, it pleases me that you remember me. I must say, it has been quite a few years. I do have something very important that I must discuss with you and your siblings. Could we possibly gather them together?"

"What about Mom and Dad?"

"Actually, this time I am here to see you, your brothers and sisters and spouses. Oh, and your cousin and his wife as well."

"Well, if you're sure. I'll call them."

"Please have them come in, a couple at a time."

"Okay."

Seconds later, Jen was there with Jon as were Sean and Heather. The others drifted in a couple at a time until all had come in.

Lois and Clark were still in the back yard surrounded by their grandchildren, CJ, little Lois, and Benjamin were enjoying themselves in the play area and baby Martha was in her carrier.

Lois looked around for Lara because she wanted her to take Martha for a few minutes while she prepared some drinks, but she couldn't see her anywhere.

Looking around it suddenly dawned upon her that all of the children were missing. She moved next to Clark and asked, "Did you see where everyone went?"

"Everyone? Everyone who?"

"All of the kids."

"No, I've been busy cooking and then there's all of the grandkids." Looking around, Clark suddenly realized what Lois was getting at. None of the first generation children were in the yard. Even their nephew, Jimmy Olsen Junior, and his wife were missing. He muttered, "That's strange." Lowering his glasses, he did a scan of the house and found it to be empty. "Did you hear

any take-offs?"

"No, that's what's so puzzling. Everybody should be here. Well, I guess maybe they decided to give us some time to spoil the grandkids without them interfering."

"Let me check," Clark tried a telepathic call, "Kids?" There was no reply. With a puzzled expression he said, "It's like they just dropped off the face of the Earth! Where could they be? If I didn't know better, I'd think that Herb had a hand in this. You haven't seen him have you? I sure haven't." He looked at Lois.

They both thought about that possibility for a few seconds before they both shook their heads and said, "Naaaah."

A few seconds later, with a worried look, Lois asked, "It couldn't be ... could it?"

Chapter 13 — The Birth

1997

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 036 — Alt 1

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A/N — Alt 1 is the canon Alternate universe.

Lois and Clark were on one of their visits to Alt 1 after taking Carrie to Smallville for a visit. They would be in the other universe for at least a day and were going to visit with Lucy and James for dinner and even though they would only be gone for five minutes Alt-2 time they wanted Carrie to be with the Kents and not alone. A lot can happen in five minutes.

Lois and Clark were at home. Lucy and James had come over for dinner. Part of the dinner conversation had been about the Planet.

Clark said, "I spoke to Perry the other day. He has decided not to run for another term in office, so he will be available in about fourteen months."

James replied, "I guess I could hold on till then, unless, of course, Lois wants to take over as Editor-in-Chief again."

Lois had a frightened look as she replied, "Not on your life! Much as I liked seeing my name on the masthead, my place is beside my husband, investigating. I guess you're stuck in the big chair. Besides, I'm going to be taking some time off here, pretty soon." She reached over and put her hand in Clark's and squeezed then she pulled his hand over and laid it on her baby bump, which had become more of a mountain as she was nearing her term. "Really soon."

Lucy asked, "What's it going to be, boy or girl?"

Lois smiled and said, "This is one surprise package I want to wait for." She got a faraway look as she said, "Carrie knows." Turning to Lucy and James she said, "Remember the flower girl?" They both nodded. "She is displaying psychic powers. She was about to tell us what the baby would be, but I stopped her."

"So, you really don't know?"

"We really don't know."

"Why are you keeping all of the arrangements so secret? You haven't even told us what hospital you're going to be in."

"Lucy, we decided that there could be a problem with my going to a hospital so we thought that we would use a midwife, one that we can trust. We've been seeing her regularly so that she could monitor my and the baby's progress and we're both just fine. The important thing is that we can trust her to keep my secret."

"How soon are you due, Sis?"

"We aren't sure, but it could be anytime."

"You'll be sure to call me as soon as it's born, right? After all I'm going to be the auntie."

"You'll be the first call I make."

"Promise?"

“Promise.”

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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A/N — Alt 2 is Kryptonian Lois' home universe.

They were having lunch in the kitchen of 348 Hyperion when suddenly Carrie said, “Daddy, Mommy’s going to have the baby tomorrow.”

Lois looked at Carrie and asked, “Are you sure about that Sweetie?”

“Yes, Mommy, I’m sure. You’re going to have the baby tomorrow and ...” Suddenly a look of fear overtook her features, “and then the bad men are going to try to take the baby away.”

Worried now Clark asked, “Carrie, Honey, are you sure about that?”

“Yes, Daddy, I’m sure. Mommy will have the baby and the bad men will come.”

Clark looked at Lois and said, “Forewarned is forearmed. We need to be ready.”

They had surprised Martha when they had arrived that afternoon. Lois told Martha that she expected that tomorrow would be a rough day.

In spite of the news, they spent a pleasant evening together. Carrie spent most of it in Jonathan’s lap looking at the Farmer’s Almanac with him. Scrappy was curled up on the floor at his feet. Martha was finishing up on another project. She had been relieved that as a result of the longer pregnancy of a Kryptonian woman, she had had the time she needed to complete the booties and blanket. With the extra time she had also made a sweater for the baby. She was just finishing up on another project, an afghan for Carrie’s bed. She had asked Carrie what her favorite colors were and Carrie had told her purple and blue. Martha had taken Carrie into town with her when she went for the yarn and allowed her to pick out the colors she liked best so the afghan was alternating stripes of those colors.

Carrie went to bed at 8 PM. Lois and Martha tucked her in. One of the nice things about being Kryptonian under a lighter gravity and yellow sun was the fact that pregnancy didn’t slow Lois down one whit. She was able to float upstairs where an earth human would have struggled.

Jonathan and Martha were in bed shortly after Carrie, leaving Lois and Clark cuddling on the sofa in the living room watching a movie. The movie finished at about 11 PM and they also went to bed.

They had decided to sleep in so it was almost ten in the morning when Lois woke up and blessed Martha for her foresight. Thanks to her, Lois had started sleeping on a waterproof sheet. Lois was awakened by a slight pain and a big wet feeling. She looked for Clark and saw his side of the bed was empty. She called him mentally, “Clark ... Clark ... it’s time to call your mom.”

Clark had been with his dad in the barn, but hearing Lois he dropped what he was doing and flew to her side.

A minute later Martha, with Carrie by her side and Scrappy on her heels, walked in and said, “Carrie told me that it was time and I figured I’d better get in here. Was that the first?”

“Yeah, the first and my water broke.” Just then Lois let out a groan as another pain hit. She started panting as she tried to deal with the pain.

When she started panting Clark was instantly by her side, holding her hand and encouraging her.

Shortly the pain had passed and Lois was able to get up out of bed.

Martha nodded and said, “Why are you just standing there? I

have the area prepared. Let’s go into the spare bedroom, the one next to Carrie’s.”

When they got there, Lois and Clark saw that Martha had turned it into a birthing center.

Carrie said to Lois, “Mommy be okay, baby too.”

Martha entered after them and asked, “How often are the pains?”

Lois replied, “They just started. That was only the second one”

“Good, okay, the first thing for you to do is remove that nightie. For one thing it’s wet and for another it would just get in the way.”

Martha said to Carrie, “Carrie Honey, I want you to go play for a while, okay?”

“Okay Grammy. I’ll go play in my playhouse.” She scampered out with Scrappy at her heels. Jonathan had built a small house out next to the barn where he could keep an eye on her, complete with a door and windows. He had furnished it with a kid sized table and chairs a play stove and sink. There was even a miniature bed for her stuffies and dolls. Scrappy had a dog house attached to the play house so that he would be right there for his little mistress. He would lay there in the doorway content to be near her.

Back in the birthing center, Lois pulled the nightie off over her head.

Martha knelt in front of her and placed her hands on Lois’ abdomen. After feeling around a bit she said, “Good, the baby is head down already. Okay, you have a choice to make. You can use the birthing stool, you could use the bed or you could float or even walk around. Now, keep in mind that no decision is final. At one point any one may be more appropriate than the others and five minutes later that could change. I would like you to start off on the bed so that I can check to see how dilated you are.”

Lois floated over and lay down on the bed and in order to be comfortable her legs were up and her feet rested on the footboard which was somewhat elevated and which Martha had padded. Lois could feel the baby resting on her spine. This was a change since she had been sleeping on one side or another now for months. She mentioned it to Martha.

Before starting the exam, Martha replied, “That’s pretty normal. That’s just another indication that even though you are super you are undergoing a normal pregnancy. I guess that goes to prove what I said before, supermom — superbaby, all things are equal. No shortcut to motherhood even for a supermom.”

Martha did a visual exam and said, “Okay, we have a way to go. I’d say that you are only a centimeter or so dilated. You will need to be at least ten. Because of your invulnerability we will not be able to do an episiotomy. Nor will painkillers help. This is one time that your invulnerability isn’t going to help. Frankly, since this is a superbaby and you are a supermom all things are going to be equal. I don’t know just how much work this is going to be. Since all things are equal it may just be the same as a normal birth and you can’t expect any shortcuts to motherhood because of your powers.”

Just as Martha was finishing up Lois was hit with a contraction. She screamed in pain, “Aaaarrrrrggggg.” and started panting, breathing through the contraction which lasted over half a minute.

Martha timed the contraction and then asked Clark, “Okay, Papa, how many minutes in between?”

“Almost twenty.”

“So far so good. Just like any other woman.” Martha turned to Clark and said, “You stay with her. Get her anything she wants. She will be having contractions and they will get longer and with less time in between. When they are below five minutes, come and get me. I need to start dinner. Farmers eat early dinners and Jonathan will be getting hungry.” She smiled at Clark and said,

your ... fault!!!! AAAAAAaaaaaaahhhhhhhh You did this to MMEEEEEEEEEEEEEE.” She grabbed his wrist that was holding her hand and twisted and squeezed it. Clark was amazed that it actually hurt.

Martha shouted, “PUSH!”

Lois was sitting up with Clark’s arm behind her and she screamed at Martha, “I *AM* pushing!!!!”

As if this was an everyday occurrence, Martha calmly said, “Here it comes. I can see the head.”

The contraction passed and Lois collapsed back on the pillows.

Martha said, “It won’t be much longer now. One or two more. The rest should be easy.”

Lois gasped out, “Easy for you to say! You’re not the one on this end. Aaahhh here comes ... another ... one ... aaaaAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRrrrrrrggggggggggggggggggg.”

Martha shouted, “PUSH!!!!”

Lois rose up with Clark’s help and bore down with all she was worth. She could feel movement. The second the head passed out through the birth canal and was outside she knew it and started crying in relief.

Martha shouted, “I have the head. One more push should deliver the rest of the body!”

Even as Martha was saying this the contraction hit. Lois was instantly up and pushing. This time she didn’t scream, her whole being focused on delivering this new little person. She felt it when the rest of the baby passed out of the birth canal. The feeling of relief was palpable. She knew that she still needed to deliver the placenta, but that was the easy part.

Martha held the infant up and used a squeeze bulb to clear the nose and mouth of amniotic fluid and holding it up by the ankles gave it a slight swat on the bottom which it responded to with a lusty, healthy cry. Martha quickly used two clamps on the umbilical cord and turning to Clark said, “Use your heat vision to cut the cord, between the clamps.”

He did just that and Martha turned away with the baby to clean it up. She said, back over her shoulder, “Clark, rub Lois’ tummy in gentle circles. She needs to deliver the placenta. I need to clean this little one up.”

A few seconds later, Martha turned around with a clean baby and said, “Congratulations, it’s a ...”

Just then, unexpectedly, Carrie came running into the room and shouted, “Bad men are here,” Interrupting Martha.

Suddenly Lois and Clark heard a powerful telepathic communication, /”We search for Kal-El’s child!”/

The communication was so unexpected and forceful that both Lois and Clark were stunned for a second.

In surprise, Clark said, “Kryptonians.”

Chapter 14 — When Worlds Collide

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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Coming out of his stupor, Clark replied, /”Who seeks Kal-El?”/

The reply came quickly, /”We do not seek the impostor. We seek the offspring of Kal-El”/

/”I *am* Kal-El.”/

/”No, you are not! You are an impostor. You do not belong here. Kal-El died after passing on his essence to his mate. It is the child of that which was Kal-El that we seek.”/

/”Why do you seek Kal-El’s child?”/

/”It must not be allowed to exist. As long as it exists then there is another claimant to the rule of New Krypton and I will

not allow that. Therefore the child must be destroyed.”/

/”Who are you to decide the fate of this child?”/

/”Oh, did I neglected to mention that? My name is Nor, Lord Nor and I’m the new ruler of New Krypton. As long as there is no claimant from the house of El, that is.”/

/”Well, I’m sorry to inform you that there is no way I will allow you to kill this child.”/

/”I don’t think you will have any say in the matter.”/

/”I think I can have a significant say in the matter. You see, I’m the father and I don’t take kindly to death threats directed at my child. The only way for you to kill this child is for you to do it over my dead body.”/

/”I’m sure that can be arranged.”/

/”I can be rather hard to kill. Others have tried and failed. This communication is ended.”/ Clark and Lois both threw up mental blocks to prevent further communication. Clark said, “It could make it harder for them to find us if we have our blocks up.”

Lois, in a pleading tone asked, “Clark, what are we going to do? We can’t let them kill our baby! What is to stop them from killing us as well since we can have more children which Nor would perceive as a threat to his rule?” As she finished saying this she delivered the placenta.

Clark cleaned his wife up and assisted her to cover herself as he replied, “Absolutely nothing, in fact, that is exactly what he would have to do.”

“Whatever we do, it will have to be final.”

Carrie said, “Don’t worry Mommy. I won’t let bad mans hurt baby.”

Lois held out her arms to Carrie. Obediently Carrie stepped over so that Lois could wrap her up in her arms. Lois said, “I know you won’t, Sweetheart. No matter what happens, I want you to stay here with Grandma, Grandpa and baby to protect baby.”

“I will Mommy. I’ll protek baby.” As she finished a tremendous yawn escaped.

Looking at Carrie, Lois said, “Well, if you’re going to help take care of baby, you need some sleep. I think Scrappy is waiting in bed for you. He needs his sleep too and I don’t think he’s sleeping while you’re in here with us. You need to go in there so that he can sleep.”

After another yawn, Carrie said, “Okay Mommy. I’ll go to bed.”

“That’s my girl. We’ll see you in the morning.”

Carrie scampered out of the room headed for her own bed.

Martha handed the now swaddled baby to Lois and she put it to her breast for its first feeding. She felt the first flow and heaved a sigh of relief.

While Lois nursed, Martha went to Carrie’s room and tucked her in.

When the baby finished Lois handed it back to Martha who put it in a cradle.

As she was getting up Lois said, “I’m going to take a quick shower. Afterwards we need to discuss how we are going to handle this.”

Clark was standing over the cradle looking down at this new person and in a distracted fashion said, “Are you sure you’re ready to be up?”

With a small laugh she replied, “I’m just super. Clark ...”

“Yeah, Honey?”

“I’m sorry about what I said ... I didn’t really mean it. It was just everything that was happening, the pain and all. Do you understand?”

He stopped looking at their new child and gave her his full attention as he said, “Don’t think anything of it. Mom warned us, remember? I guess that happens every time a baby is delivered. It just, I don’t know, happens, I guess.”

She looked at him and said, “Thanks.” Then with a mischievous grin asked, “Want to scrub my back for me?”

With a smile he replied, “Try to stop me.”

While they were in the shower Lois said, “Okay, Papa, what did we have? I couldn’t see.”

“Well, I wasn’t going to peek, but when I cut the cord I couldn’t help but notice. It’s not an it anymore, it’s a she. We had a girl and she’s as cute as a new penny.”

“Penny, huh? How about Penelope? That can be abbreviated to Penny. Penelope Ann Kent. What do you think?”

“I like it. Penny Kent. I wonder how long until her super powers will manifest.”

“We’ll just have to wait and see.”

The next day

At the breakfast table, Lois was holding Penny as she was eating. She made an announcement, “We’ve decided on her name. We have named her Penelope Ann Kent, Penny for short. What do you all think?”

Carrie smiled and said, “I like Penny. It’s short.”

Martha and Jonathan both smiled their approval and nodded.

After a big country breakfast with Carrie, Jonathan and Martha, Lois and Clark outlined their plans. They felt that concealment here at the farm would reduce the possibility of Nor finding the baby. Lois and Clark would be maintaining their blocks and Lois would be returning so that she could feed and change the baby. After breakfast Lois put Penny in her cradle then she and Clark spent a few minutes with Carrie before they left.

Carrie watched as they did their spin change into their uniforms. Lois knelt down and gave her one final hug and kiss before they slowly took to the air headed for Metropolis. Carrie waved as they took off and both Lois and Clark returned her wave before putting on a burst of speed.

After finding Luthor and helping the MPD re-capture him, Lois as Olive and Clark had written up that story and had spent a few days on follow-ups before taking some time off. They figured that Lois should be nearing her term and felt that it was time for some vacation. Lois and Clark, in order to hopefully conceal the location of the baby had decided to go back to Metropolis and in to work. Fortunately, thanks to her Kryptonian physiology and the fact that under Earth’s yellow sun she was super, her figure would return quickly. Another benefit of being super — no stretch marks. She would still be able to wear her bikini at the beach.

After they had wrapped up the Luthor recapture, they had been out for a little over a week for the birth and now, because of the Kryptonians they would have to cut the vacation short and head back to Metropolis. When they had left the Planet for vacation, Lois had been in her Olive disguise.

When they stepped off of the elevator into the bullpen Lois was no longer wearing her Olive disguise. It had become something of an open secret in the newsroom that it was really Lois, but considering the fact that Luthor was on the loose, everyone kept it hush hush. Perry was the first to see them and he got a smile on his face. He stepped to the door of the office and shouted, “Lois, Clark, got a minute?”

Hearing Perry, Jimmy looked around and shouted, “Welcome back, guys! Both of you!”

Lois said, “Thanks Jimmy. It’s good to be back.”

Conspiratorially, Jimmy asked, “Is Olive going to be making a return visit?”

Laughing, Lois said, “I hope not! She was here for two full months! That’s long enough I think. Besides, I don’t like the competition.” She looked at Clark and smiled at the joke as she

said, “She was teamed up with my husband. I prefer it be me.”

Jimmy was chuckling as he played along, “I don’t think you had anything to worry about. She wasn’t as attractive as you, she looked like she was pregnant and those glasses, ugh.”

Lois and Clark were both laughing as they made it into Perry’s office. They both sat on his couch.

“Welcome back you two. That was a nice job you did on Luthor, helping the MPD corral him like that. How did you tumble to his whereabouts?”

Lois offered, “Well, it’s this way ... we started trying to think like Luthor, which means we had to start thinking like the rat he is. Clark asked where would a rat hide out? The obvious answer was ... underground! From then on it was simple.”

Clark said, “We checked and found out that he had been behind the construction of the subway. We passed the info on to Superman.”

Lois continued, “When he found a lead lined bunker ... well, why else would there be a lead lined room underground ... in an abandoned subway?”

Clark added, “From that point on it was just coordinating with the MPD. Actually he was pretty smart, laying that false trail to make us think he had fled the country and doubling back into the city, right under our noses, so to speak.”

Perry was smiling at their explanation, the way they meshed, finishing for one another. That was what made them such a good investigative team. The best he had ever seen, even better than the legendary Norcross and Judd.

He asked, “So you’re back from your vacation now, is that it?”

Lois said, “Yes, with reservations.”

Instantly alert, Perry asked, “What reservations?”

Clark replied, “We just had a hot tip about a story.”

Smiling Perry asked, “What do you have?”

Lois tried to explain, “Through our contact with Superman we have found out that we may soon be invaded by some aliens, well, not exactly aliens, people related, well, not really related, people from Superman’s home planet.”

“So, they will be super powered like Superman and Superwoman?”

Clark replied, “Unfortunately, that will probably be the case. The problem is that they may be less than friendly.”

Perry was intrigued rather than frightened, “Less than friendly, how?”

“Something about Superman and Superwoman being a threat to the ruler, a guy by the name of Nor.”

Just then there was a knock on the door and Perry motioned the individual to enter. A petite brunette wearing a conservative beige business pantsuit came in through the door.

As she was entering both Lois and Clark rose from the couch and turned to greet the newcomer

When she entered, Perry introduced her, “Uh, Lois and Clark this is our new research assistant, Sara. I hired Sara while you were on vacation. Sara, Lane and Kent, the Hottest Team in Town.”

Sara put out her hand and Lois took it. As they shook hands, Lois felt the clasp tighten, far in excess of what an Earth human would ever be capable. For a second she had a startled look, then, looking at Perry, Lois said, “I think we need to talk to Sara, you know, get to know her.” Looking at Sara she said, “Why don’t we go into the conference room and talk.”

Since they were maintaining their blocks Lois could not send a telepathic message to Clark.

Sara nodded and the three of them headed for the conference room closing the door to Perry’s office as they left.

Once the door to the conference room was closed behind them, Lois moved over and closed the blinds. When she was done Lois rounded on Sara and hissed, “Okay, just who the hell are

you?”

Clark had been watching this behavior in bewilderment and when Lois was finished, asked, “Lois, what’s going on?”

Without taking her eyes off Sara, Lois said, “*She’s not from *around* here.”

Looking back and forth between the two women he asked, “How do you know that? Does she have an accent that you picked up on?”

Sara answered, “No, Kal-El, she means that I’m not from Earth. I’m ... Kryptonian.”

Clark’s eyes widened in surprise and he asked, “Are you with Nor?”

Sara looked at Clark and said, “No, I’m not. Quite the contrary. Where can we go so that we can talk?”

Lois asked, “What about right here?”

“Too much chance of being overheard or someone walking in on us. If you don’t have anywhere you can be sure of we have a place, in a warehouse across town. It is secure.”

Lois was skeptical and it was evident in her voice as she asked, “What makes you think we will trust you? You could be leading us into a trap.”

“I assure you that I am not. Perhaps this will convince you. Kal-El, do you know what your mother’s name was?”

“Yes.”

“It was Lara, was it not?”

Cautiously he replied, “That is correct.”

“On Krypton the family name is part of a woman’s name. Your mother’s name Lara means La of the house of Ra. My name isn’t Sara, I changed it slightly to meet Earth naming conventions. My name is really Zara, Za of the house of Ra. Your mother, Lara, was my aunt. Kal-El, you and I are cousins. You didn’t know it, but I am also your birth wife. Our joining was arranged before either of us was born.”

Lois was shocked and blurted out, “Wait a minute; you’re supposed to be his wife? Well, he already has one, thank you very much, and I’m not about to let him go so that you or anyone else can marry him. I’m kinda old fashioned that way. We’re married and we’re going to stay that way. It can’t even be a question of him marrying an Earth woman because I am Kryptonian.”

Zara held up her hands in a gesture meant to be calming as she said, “I understand that and I’m not here to try to steal him from you. Like I said, the bond was arranged before either of us was born. A lot has happened since then. Can we go to our secure location so that we can talk freely?”

Lois, still giving Zara a wary eye, said, “Okay, lead the way.”

After exiting the conference room, Clark stuck his head in Perry’s door and said, “Chief, we have to go out and follow up on that story we were telling you about. I think we need to take Sara with us. She is going to be a big help. We’ll check back in later.”

Perry waved his hand in acknowledgement.

Zara led the way to the roof. She did a spin change into a gray two piece suit vaguely reminiscent of a military uniform and took to the air. Lois and Clark both spun into their uniforms and followed. They landed and Zara led the way into what looked like an abandoned warehouse. Inside was a large white sphere. As Zara approached she put up a hand and all three were suddenly inside what appeared to be a small conference room. Zara hit a switch and, indicating the chairs and table that rose out of the floor said, “Please have a seat. We can now talk freely and we will be undisturbed.”

Clark could hear a very faint hum after Zara hit that switch so he did a quick x-ray scan of the walls and discovered that he could not see through them. He asked, “Where exactly are we?”

Zara spread her hands to indicate the space and said, “We are inside a travel pod. Ching and I stole it to come down from the ship.”

Just then a portal opened in the wall and in stepped Lt. Ching.

Lois and Clark both noticed the look that passed between Zara and Ching as soon as he entered.

Stopping just inside the room, Ching said, “Lord Kal-El and Lady Lois, I am pleased to finally meet you. I am Lt. Ching, bodyguard to the Lady Zara.”

Lois and Clark heard the words, but they both knew that there was more to it. There were obvious feelings there. Curious, Lois asked, “How is it that you know us?”

Ching replied, “We have been observing you since you arrived in Metropolis this morning.”

Zara said, “Please Ching, come in and sit down.”

Once Ching was seated Zara began, “The field I activated will keep Nor from hearing what is said and will also prevent him from listening in telepathically, therefore we can speak freely. As I said, Kal ... or would you prefer to be addressed as Clark?”

“Clark and Lois would be fine.”

“Very well, Clark, as I said, before either of us was born a marriage was arranged, a birth marriage binding the house of El more securely to the house of Ra. The son of Jor-El, the head of the council of scientists, and the daughter of Gee-Ra, the traditional ruler of Krypton, would form the basis of the new ruling house. Jor-El discovered the core instability of Krypton only a double hand span of years before Krypton destroyed itself. His announcement was generally dismissed; however some other members of the science council took his warning seriously and took the appropriate steps to ensure the continuation of Krypton. In secret they built a ship to act as an ark carrying samples of the genome of the entire planet. At the time of lift off I was three years old and you had just been born. It was determined that you would not survive the rigors of cryo-sleep and were left behind while I slept for three years, the time it took for the maintenance crew to find a suitable world. For the last twenty years we have been attempting to establish ourselves on this new world.”

Zara stood and started to pace, “The current Council of Elders determined that the time had come to reestablish the ruling house. Since Jor-El and Lara perished with Krypton along with Gee-Ra and his wife Mona a search was conducted. As the time of Krypton’s destruction had drawn near, the science council became aware of Jor-El’s experiments with an advanced FTL drive. It was considered to be a possibility that Jor-El and his family had survived so a search was made. Faint traces of a drive signature were discovered which led us to Earth.”

Zara stopped pacing and turning to Clark asked in a challenging tone, “It was discovered that only Kal-El had survived. A bioelectromagnetic signature of Kal-El had been recorded at his birth and that was used to trace him. A grave was found with his remains and in an adjoining grave were those of a woman. Both bodies bear a striking resemblance to the two individuals sitting across the table from me. Can you explain?”

Calmly, Lois replied, “The Kal-El of this world was killed in an attempt by a criminal to eliminate his competition for my affections. Shortly before this his Kryptonian physiology was transferred to me making him vulnerable to the attack.” Turning to face Clark she said, “Clark, Kal-El, my husband, is the Kal-El from a parallel universe. The woman in the grave is the Lois from his reality. She died during an investigation. He was brought here, to me, so that we could be together and fulfill our joint destiny.”

Nodding, Zara said, “That explains the bodies in the graves. It is also the grounds for our problem. There is a faction within New Krypton that wants to replace the ruling family with a new ruler. The head of that faction is Nor. He is attempting to usurp the rule and become dictator of Krypton. Traditionally the rule of Krypton has been benign and beneficent. But, if Nor were to assume the position of dictator, the peace of Krypton would be destroyed. He would be a cruel taskmaster. He has already made threatening statements about Earth. The fact that while on Earth Kryptonians enjoy super abilities, makes inhabiting Earth

desirable for them. He has spoken of enslaving all of the peoples of Earth. The only thing preventing him is that as long as there is a descendant of Kal-El, or in this case Kal-El's essence, with me there is a legitimate claimant to the throne."

Lois looked at Clark and then placing a hand in his turned back to Zara and said, "We just had a baby. The telepathic broadcast we received was a threat against our child."

Zara replied, "Because that child represents a threat to his rule. You see, Nor's full name is Nor-Na. Mona, who was the wife of Gee-Ra the traditional ruler of Krypton, was his aunt and his family is the last of that line. A union between the house of Na and Ra would be accepted almost as well as a union between the house of El and Ra, which was the expressed wish of Gee-Ra and that is the case he will make."

Lois asked, "What can we do to prevent him from harming our baby?"

Ching gave the answer, "There is a custom of Krypton which allows for single combat to resolve issues such as this. The combat is limited to family groups. Nor could be assisted by his sisters, brothers, cousins and their spouses. There would be nine altogether."

"Not very good odds. It would be me and Lois against nine of them."

Zara pointed out, "As your cousin, I could fight at your side."

"Okay, that makes it three against nine. That's still not very good odds. Where would this combat take place?"

"Since Earth is the object of the conflict, it would take place here, which means ..."

"Which means that all of the combatants would be super powered. We don't have any more relatives on New Krypton?"

"I'm afraid not. You and I are each the last of our families."

"How soon will this war start?"

"We have a couple of days to prepare. There is a Kryptonian weapon allowed. It is called a Drei. It is a staff of power. Lt. Ching will instruct you in its use." Zara looked at Lois and said, "Women are prohibited from using the Drei. There are a number of other weapons we can choose; however, they will be largely ineffective against a super powered individual. All we can hope to do is overcome them one at a time and keep them subdued, preventing their relatives from freeing them while keeping from being overcome ourselves."

With a sarcastic tone Lois said, "Yeah, with three to one odds against us. While we are dealing with one of them two others could trap us. This sounds like a no win scenario."

Chapter 15 — When Universes Collide pt 1

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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Inside the travel pod with the security field activated, Zara was in the middle of her explanation of the rules of the combat when suddenly there was a pounding on the outside of the travel pod. Ching moved over to a viewer and adjusted the field of view. He spotted two individuals standing outside. He looked over his shoulder at the people at the table. He said, "This is passing strange. There is a Clark Kent and a Lois Lane standing outside requesting admittance. She wears her hair differently from you." He indicated the local Lois who wore her hair in a just short of shoulder length page boy.

Clark stood, stepped over and looked at the monitor. The local Clark who was Alt Clark thought <Could it be? Could that be her? That's just about the same hair style.> he said to Ching, "I believe that I know them, Ching. Please, let them in."

"I don't know how this can be. How can there be more of you," he looked pointedly at both Lois and Clark, "but if you say

so, I shall." Ching operated a control and instantly the two newcomers were inside.

Clark was dressed in tan slacks and a navy blazer with a cream colored shirt. The tie that he was wearing was, well, it was sort of a dark blue paisley with overtones of Fourth of July fireworks. As usual his hair was soft and that unruly front lock was curled on his forehead.

Lois was wearing a business suit in maroon with a dark red shell and a single strand of pearls. The skirt reached a point just below mid thigh. Her hair was short with a loose perm giving it body without a lot of curl.

Alt Clark strode up to the new Clark and asked, "Please identify yourself."

The look of surprise faded as he replied, "Clark and Lois from Herb's universe. Who are you?"

Instead of answering Alt Clark asked, "Were you once trapped in a time bubble?"

Clark started to smile and asked, "Yeah, but, that was a while ago. Did you help us with Tempus?"

Alt Clark smiled and held out his hand. As the other Clark took it he said, "I'm glad to see you again. I never expected to, unless you needed another hand. Looks like this time it's the other way around. You said that was a while ago. What time did Herb pluck you from?"

"It was early November of 2013 when Herb picked us up. What year is it here?"

"It is 1997 here." Clark turned to his wife and explained, "This couple," he indicated the newly arrived Lois and Clark, "are friends of mine from an alternate universe. They're the ones I have told you so much about. I traveled to their universe to help them when they were in trouble. Now it looks like they will be able to help us."

(A/N — For the sake of consistency, with the exception of the local couple I will use the year they are from to differentiate the individuals.)

Alt Clark released Clark's hand and turning, held out a hand to local Lois. She arose and stepped up beside her Clark. He said, "After that adventure, as we were leaving Herb offered to help me find my Lois. He did, but she still died in the Congo. The way Herb explained it, in that universe she was meant to die and there was no way to change that fact. After a while he found a universe that had a Lois without a Clark. She is fully Kryptonian and is now my wife. This is her universe." Turning to his Lois he said, "This is the Lois that helped me create Superman." The two Loises moved into an embrace.

The newly arrived Lois, 2013 Lois, asked, "So, this isn't the universe I visited? Hmmmm, fully Kryptonian? There has to be a story there. You're wearing a uniform so you work together. What name do you go by?"

Smiling, local Lois replied, "I use Superwoman."

"Your uniform is a lot like Clark's, the same colors." 2013 Lois commented.

"It's a long story. If we have some time, I'll tell you later."

Local Lois replied.

Alt Clark asked, "Why are you here?"

2013 Clark replied, "Herb came and recruited us. He said that there was a couple that needed our help."

With a smile Alt Clark turned to Zara and said, "See, that's what I was saying. The odds just got better."

"Yeah, now at least it's four against nine." Zara commented dryly.

2013 Lois looked at Zara's military style attire and asked, "Hello Zara, it's been a while. What do you mean?"

Zara was struck speechless. She finally asked, "You know me?"

"Of course, we met you about sixteen years ago. Oh, wait, this is 1997 so it is sixteen years ago. Time travel can be so

confusing.”

Answering Lois, Alt Clark interrupted, “We are being invaded by a group from New Krypton. They have super powers. I don’t know why Herb brought you. You’ll just be in danger.”

With a tone of incredulity, 2013 Lois said, “Oh, no, not again! Please tell me it isn’t Nor,” seeing the look on their faces at that name Lois shook her head in disbelief and said, “That’s just great! Here we go again, Clark.” Turning back to Zara she continued, “Well, appearances can be deceiving. I think your odds are better than you thought.” She spun into her uniform. When she stopped, Ultra Woman stood in her place. Holding her arms out she said, “Ta da!”

In an awed tone, Alt Clark said, “You’re super now! How did that happen?”

With a smile at the memory, 2013 Lois replied, “Herb dropped off a present. I thought it was from you. It’s a special pendant with two kinds of Kryptonite.”

The memory coming back to mind, Alt Clark said, “Right! I knew about the Kryptonite. Herb told me about it. I didn’t know he had given it to you.”

Local Lois asked, “Your uniform is quite different from your Clark’s. What name do you go by?”

“Clark gave me my name. He called me Ultra Woman and it stuck.”

As a surprised Zara and Ching were assimilating this information, suddenly there was more pounding on the hull. Ching still had the monitor zeroed in on that area and saw another couple. Startled he said, “There appears to be another couple. Yet another Lois and Clark. I presume you wish to admit them as well.” At local Clark’s nod, he activated the switch and the new couple materialized inside.

This Clark was dressed casually in jeans and a polo shirt. His hair was loose, parted in the middle and softly falling in twin curls over his forehead. He looked identical to Alt Clark in that respect.

This Lois was also dressed casually in off-white slacks and a cream pullover. Her hair was pulled back in a short pony tail.

2013 Clark asked, “Which Clark and Lois do we have here? You look like the one that helped us with Tempus,” he looked back and forth between the newcomer and the Clark he had just been speaking with, “but, I thought he was already here.”

Looking around before replying and seeing two other Clarks, one in a Superman uniform and the other dressed for work and two more women, each in different uniforms, Clark said, “Clark and Lois from ... well, I guess we’re all from Metropolis. Let’s see, I had lost my Lois in the Congo and Herb took me back in time to find her.” Putting his arm around his Lois he said, “I managed to save her when she was shot by the gunrunners. We discovered the Star Sapphire Kryptonite.” Indicating the women he said, “Am I to assume that you are each a Lois Lane as well?” Turning to the Clark that had asked the question he asked, “Were you trapped in a time bubble?”

Shocked, 2013 Clark again looked back and forth between the other two Clarks, and expressed his confusion, “How can this be? Both of you know about that. I wish Herb was here to explain.”

The local Clark, (Alt Clark) was shaken and all he could do was shake his head in response. This was his story up to the point where he had saved his Lois. In his case she had died. The realization hit him that this was him on the other side of the inflection point. The Lois by the side of this Clark was the Lois he had gotten close to and lost. This had been *his* Lois. After that nod of his head he couldn’t manage to move, all he could do was stare at Lois with his mouth open slightly. His mouth had suddenly gone dry and there was a catch in his breath. The realization of just who this woman was hit him like a ton of bricks. He could feel himself being drawn to this woman,

strongly drawn to this woman, after all, this was his original Lois, alive and vibrant. It also came to him that he had an even stronger pull and that was to his wife. Somehow, the soul mates connection he had felt for his first Lois had been supplanted by what he felt for this other version of her. Possibly it was because of what they now shared. They now had a maturing married relationship, a healthy sexual relationship and most recently, he’d had a child with this Lois. At this point, he had been with his wife, longer than he had been with the earlier Lois in the Congo. That had been a matter of months. He had now been married to this Lois for over a year. They now had a deep and binding history together, not to mention a life that worked for them in multiple universes.

Standing there, in his uniform, with his mask on, it was not apparent to this latest couple just who he was, other than the fact that he was ‘a’ Clark Kent. Without his mask, it would have been like looking into a mirror and it would have been apparent to everyone just what the problem was.

Local Lois had also been shaken by the appearance of this new Clark. He was identical to her husband, even to the hair style and after listening to the story, she knew the significance and why her Clark had responded as he had. She pulled an unresisting Clark into her embrace and sent, “It’s her isn’t it? The one you lost.”

Overcome with emotion he jerkily nodded his head and sent, “Herb had told me about the alternate outcomes, but to have the result here before me, that’s something else entirely.”

Both of the new arrivals were looking at local Clark and wondering at this reaction to their presence.

Looking at them, local Lois said, “There is a story, but for another time. Welcome to our universe. It would appear as though Herb is recruiting from different times. What year did he pluck you from?”

“I had gone back to 1992 to find Lois when she arrived in Brazzaville. Herb picked us up in 1993.”

The latest Lois, seeing his reaction, was curious, but nodded in understanding. She was determined to hear the story behind this reaction before she left, but decided that it would have to wait.

Still holding her Clark, Local Lois asked, “Did Herb recruit you to help as well?”

Just then an authoritative voice rang out. “Hold! Just who is this ‘Herb’ you are all going on about? Is he from yet another planet?”

All the Clarks and Lois’ turned and looked at Zara. Then they looked at each other and they all started to laugh at once. Local Lois looked at Local Clark and said, “Why don’t you fill them in. I need to go feed our baby who by the way is in Smallville with the Kents.”

Local Clark nodded. “Will do. Hurry back!”

His Lois smiled and said, “Well, it will be only be a short time anyway. She’s an eager eater.”

Ching operated a control and local Lois disappeared from the room and reappeared on the monitor. She quickly left for Kansas.

Once she had left, Zara and Ching looked at each other in astonishment.

Local Clark started the explanation, “Herbert George Wells is a science fiction author from England. He was born in 1866 and died in 1946. He wrote about traveling in time. But more than write about it, he built a machine that actually did travel in time. Not only does he travel in time, but now he hops universes too. All these couples are from different universes. The science of it is a little beyond my understanding, but all these couples can verify that what he does, works. He apparently universe-hopped and recruited these other couples to help us out.”

1993 Clark nodded his agreement and continued the story, “Yes, he said there was a Lois and Clark couple that needed a

hand. Is it you or them?" He turned to the other couple and asked, "I helped you out before, didn't I?"

2013 Clark replied, "I don't know. I was trapped in a time bubble by Tempus."

1993 Clark smiled and said, "I thought so. I kept working on Tempus while Herb took Lois to find you." He turned to his companion and said, "This is the Lois that helped me create Superman."

2013 Lois was mystified and in her confusion blurted out, "Wait a minute. I helped you create Superman?" She pointed at local Clark and said, "I helped *him* create Superman. How could that be?"

Local Clark said, "I think the answer is multiple universes and I can explain in more detail, but not right now."

Seeing how upset he was they all decided to let it lie for the time being.

Looking at 1993 Lois, Local Clark asked, "Are you super too?"

1993 Lois nodded and said, "Yeah, there was an incident at the White Orchid Ball where a laser was used against Luthor. We were accidentally hit and it changed my physiology and energized the Sapphire Kryptonite giving me the powers."

Not having any way to know the whole story behind the new couple and the local couple beyond the obvious fact that here were two more super powered individuals to help in the upcoming conflict, Ching said, "Well, the odds are getting better and better. It's now seven to nine. I wonder if this Herb of yours will even the odds for us."

Suddenly there was another thumping on the hull. After a cursory glance at the monitor Ching activated the transporter and another couple materialized in the room.

This Clark was dressed in a charcoal gray suit with a black shirt and a tie that almost shined with an inner light it was so bright.

Lori was wearing her short black chiffon dress with black stilettos. Her hair was loose and flowing around her shoulders. Incongruously, she had a quiver of arrows on her back and a golden colored bow in her hand.

Lori looked around at all of the others and said, "Hi Zara. Hello Ching. Does New Krypton have a problem again? You know, Clark won't be able to do much. Looking at the group again she said, "It will be up to us girls to help out."

Zara and Ching exchanged mystified glances while the other Clark and Lois couples stared at her with open mouths.

Zara was the first to regain speech and asked, "Can you identify yourself please?"

Clark spoke up, "I'm Clark, but I guess you already knew that. This is Lori."

Local Clark asked, "Lori? Where do you come from?"

Clark said, "It probably isn't so much where we come from as when that's important. I think we're all from Metropolis. We are from 2091."

Zara shook her head in amazement and then turned to Ching. "Ching, we are getting a little crowded in here. Please increase the size of the pod."

Ching went quickly to the control panel again and made a separating gesture with two fingers of each hand. Abruptly the walls of the conference chamber they were in moved away as the diameter of the pod increased.

Zara smiled to herself at the startled reaction of the couples. Technology was handy for getting messages across at times.

Twenty five minutes had passed and Local Lois suddenly appeared on Ching's view screen. He operated the control and she appeared in the pod next to her Clark. Local Clark smiled to himself. Technology indeed. "Welcome back," he said softly. "Everything okay?"

Local Lois smiled serenely and said, "Just fine. She's doing

well and Martha and Jonathan are helping a lot. Who are the new people? Who's the chick with the bow?"

2091 Clark spoke up, "Me, I'm from 2091 and this is Lori." Lois raised her eyebrow. Clark continued, "A different time and a different universe. In our universe, Lori is the next Lois like Lady Loisetette and Lulu Kent were before Lois."

Local Lois smiled and relaxed.

Zara thought it was time to get back to the main purpose of the meeting and summarized the problem for the newcomers.

The group divided up at this point. The girls gathered at one side while the guys gathered on the other.

Chapter 16 — When Universes Collide pt 2

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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When they split up, Lori recognized her old Ultra Woman uniform and said, "Hi, Ultra Woman."

2013 Lois was startled and asked, "You know me?"

Smiling, Lori replied, "I used to be you. I still call myself Ultra Woman even if I do wear a different uniform now."

Flabbergasted, 2013 Lois asked, "You used to be me?"

Lori replied, "Yes, you see, like Clark said, we're from 2091. In a previous life I was Ultra Woman for a short time before we succeeded in transferring the powers back to Clark. I remember Martha making the suit. A non-super version of you died of old age on your birthday, September 23, 2063 which also happened to be my birthday. As had been the case with Lady Loisetette and Lulu Kent and several others I might add, her soul essence was transferred to me. That's when Herb stepped in and rigged the game. He gave me a Clarkie bear with a soul tracker device inside of it to restore all of the memories of my past lives. He gave me that bear when I was six months old. How is it that you are super powered?"

"In a word — Herb. In 2010, on my birthday, Herb showed up on our doorstep with a birthday present from the Clark that had helped us a couple of times." She pulled out her pendant.

Lori recognized it as a duplicate of hers and pulled hers out to display it.

1993 Lois said, "Herb got that to you already? We just gave it to him. Duh! Time traveler! What year did he pluck you from?"

2013 Lois replied, "2013."

"And he gave you the pendant when?"

"2010, when did you give him the pendant?"

"1993, that's the year we are from."

"Thank you for the gift. It has been a godsend." Turning back to Lori she asked, "You have a pendant, so you are super powered, right?"

Lori answered, "Yes, I am."

Local Lois asked "Then why the bow and arrows?"

Lori replied, "Frankly, I don't know. Herb seemed to think it would come in handy. He also gave me this for you." Lori handed 2013 Lois another pendant.

As soon as it was in her hand 2013 Lois felt her powers surge. She said, "Wow, thanks for the boost."

Lori said, "I have one more." Looking around she was curious, "I don't know why, but he only gave me two extra pendants. Who uses the pendant for powers?"

The Lois from 1993, the wife of the Superman that 2013 Lois had just been speaking with, put up her hand and Lori handed it to her.

Looking apologetically at local Lois, Lori said, "I'm sorry, I don't have a pendant for you. Herb obviously made a mistake."

Local Lois said, "No, he was quite correct. I don't need a pendant."

Lori turned to local Lois and asked, “Why don’t you need a pendant?”

Local Lois replied, “I’m fully Kryptonian. The short story is that Clark was on a rescue at the wishing well and he was hit with a laser beam. That laser transferred his powers to me.”

2013 Lois said, “I remember that incident! That was how I first became Ultra Woman, but we used the laser to transfer Clark’s powers back to him.”

Lori said, “Me too.”

“In our case it wasn’t just a transfer of his powers. It was a complete transfer of his Kryptonian physiology. We tried to use the laser to return it, but it didn’t work. I’m every bit as Kryptonian as Clark is.”

Lori said, “Wow, I guess you guys won’t have to wait three years to have a baby.”

With a smile local Lois replied, “As a matter of fact, that’s what this is all about. We just had a baby.”

Lori went, “Oooooo,” and asked, “Boy or girl? We just had a little boy. We call him CJ.”

2013 Lois let out a gasp. She almost shouted, “CJ! CJ, is your son?”

“Yes, he is, and I want to thank you for taking care of him for us.” Lori could see tears forming in Lois’ eyes so she moved over and gave 2013 Lois a hug. “Herb just brought him back yesterday.” With a conspiratorial grin and tone she added, “Herb gave me a prescription to start my milk again.”

Her incipient tears forgotten, 2013 Lois barked out a laugh. She said, “Yeah, he surprised us with that when he dropped him off. It turned out to be a lot of fun.”

Lori smiled as she replied, “I remember and I look forward to it. I don’t want to wean him yet.”

With a sad smile, 2013 Lois said, “We really loved him.”

With a serious look, Lori said, “I know. I also know how hard it was for you to give him up. I ... I really appreciate all that you did for him ... and us.” In an attempt to lighten the mood somewhat she turned back to local Lois and repeated her question, “Boy or girl?”

Laughing, local Lois replied, “Girl. We decided to name her Penelope Ann. We’re gonna call her Penny.”

1993 Lois said, “We don’t know yet what we’re going to have.”

Local Lois replied, “Clark was the second to know. Martha performed the delivery so she was first. When Clark cut the cord he found out. Carrie was going to tell us some time ago what it was going to be, but we told her that we wanted it to be a surprise. I would have found out the first time I changed a diaper. I’m flying out every 4 hours to feed and change her, but I can’t stay long each time so Martha is doing everything else. Carrie is so cute, she wants to help so much.”

Lori asked, “Carrie? Who’s ... Carrie?”

Local Lois replied, “Carrie is our adopted daughter. That’s a long story. We can fill everyone in on that later.”

Lori pressed, “You said that Carrie was going to tell you ... some time ago. How did she know?”

“Carrie has started to demonstrate psychic powers. We don’t know the extent of them yet, they just started to manifest.”

Turning back to the other Loises, Lori said, “Okay, we have found that we girls, because we started out as Earth human, even though our physiology has been modified by the Kryptonian aura and we derive powers from the pendant, we are immune to green Kryptonite. The only problem is in the case of pregnancy. The baby is affected. I’ve been through it and believe me, it’s no picnic.”

1993 Lois said, “I’m pregnant.”

Lori replied, “All I can say is, as long as you are, avoid green K.”

“Got it. Could be easier said than done.”

Zara explained the rules of combat for the group. “The ritual combat is limited to family groups.”

2013 Clark interrupted, “That’s funny, when I fought Nor it was supposed to be one-on-one. Of course, he cheated and had a couple of cronies help.”

Zara replied, “In our tradition it is family groups.”

Local Lois suggested, “Like the Scottish clan wars.”

Zara replied, “If I understand the history of your world that I read, then I would say that is a valid comparison. It looks like this Herb of yours has done us a big favor. The numbers are now equal.”

2013 Clark asked, “Equal for what exactly? Herb didn’t tell us much, just that we were needed.”

Zara said, “Good! All right, let’s all sit down and I’ll go over this again, now that we’re apparently all here.”

2013 Lois turned to Zara and asked, “Since Kal-El is already married, where does that leave you?”

“Well, you see that’s a potential problem,” Zara, with a look of chagrin said, “I’m potentially one of the prizes in this conflict. As the child of the hereditary ruler of Krypton I should, along with my husband, be on the throne of New Krypton. It is known that Kal-El was designated by Gee-Ra to be the next High Lord, but since Kal-El is no longer available then whoever the council selects as my bond mate will be on the throne as long as there is no one from the house of El that is. I hadn’t mentioned it, but that is the second problem that we face.”

“The child that carries the essence of Kal-El is a threat to Nor’s acquisition of the rule of New Krypton. He can secure his rule by eliminating that threat. He can also secure it by forcing me into a life bond with him as my bond mate. He would need to do both to secure his claim. If he presents a strong enough claim to the Council of Elders he could force me into a life bond.”

2013 Lois replied, “That is a situation like what we faced when Nor and his minions did something similar in our universe. Zara, you actually love Ching, don’t you?”

Lori turned to Zara and said, “Zara, you can be honest with us. Clark and I just returned from New Krypton. Our Zara and Ching have been happily married, uh, I mean in a life bond for some time.”

2013 Lois said, “Yeah, we could see it was headed in that direction when you guys left. The Earth military used Kryptonite laced poison gas to kill Nor and several of his henchmen, Jen-Mai was among them. The problem was that they almost killed Clark along with them. That gas didn’t discriminate between good guys and bad guys.”

2091 Clark asked, “Is it possible to win this conflict without killing the combatants?”

Zara replied, “It should be possible. If we win and it is proved that Nor was attempting to usurp the rule of New Krypton then he could be sentenced to the Phantom Zone. But, we would have to win first and then try him for treason. Only if he is convicted of treason could he be so sentenced.”

2013 Clark said, “Let’s worry about one thing at a time.”

Looking at the Clark that had just been speaking he said, “We know just where or when Herb recruited each of us. I see a lot of similarities in memories. I remember that incident as happening just the same way. We’ve seen some differences in the way some things have happened, but that is identical. I wonder ... After this is all over we will all need to get together and compare notes. See if there are more commonalities.”

Ching had reentered the room as Clark had finished speaking. He had moved over next to Zara and referring back to the earlier conversation said, “Lady Zara, it would seem that there is hope for us yet.”

Zara replied, “Ching, we must concentrate on the here and now. We must keep our focus on the upcoming conflict.”

“You are correct, My Lady.” Turning to the Clarks, Ching

said, “I need to train you in the use of the Drei. It is a formidable although a primitive weapon. It dates back to our more warlike time.”

Lori interrupted. Holding up her bow she asked, “Zara, you said that the women were barred from using the Drei. Can I use this?”

Zara answered, “Since it is a non-energy weapon then it will be allowed, however against super powered, invulnerable beings its efficacy could be in question.”

Lori replied, “Herb had me bring it for a reason. He didn’t tell me why. He gave me that ‘Too much information too soon’ line. I really hate it when he does that.”

2013 Lois joined in, “I’ll second that. Every time he does that I just want to tear my hair out. It is so *frustrating*!”

1993 Lois said, “He hasn’t done that to us. I wonder why.”

2013 Lois responded with a question, “Has he ever recruited you to do something that you asked for an explanation on?”

1993 Lois replied, “Well, this is the first time he has recruited us to help and as soon as he said that there was another couple that needed help, since Clark had helped before, we just said, sure and came along. We really didn’t question it.”

Lori said, “There’s your answer. You just went along with him. I bet if you had questioned him, he would have given you the same line. Anyway, I have my bow. By the way, Zara, this bow was built for me by the engineers of New Krypton.”

Local Superwoman asked, “How did you get interested in archery?”

“Oh, it’s just a sport I picked up as a teen.” Looking at her Clark, with a smirking smile, she said, “It’s come in handy a few times.” She snickered and then continued, “The papers started calling me the ‘Emerald Archer’ because I dressed up like Robin Hood in a Lincoln green costume. I used some trick arrows to subdue a robot and to get the drop on the crooks behind it.”

With his arm around her waist, pulling her in tight, Clark added, “More recently she looked like the Greek Goddess — Artemis, as we dealt with a new space faring race for New Krypton. She saved my life by sending an arrow through a weapon that was being used against me. She really knows how to use that thing, trust me.”

Lori continued, “One of our sons-in-law is also an archer. That’s a funny story. He wore a Robin Hood costume to a party in Smallville one year. He was a little embarrassed that he couldn’t use a bow so after that he started practicing and discovered he enjoyed it. He became quite good. In fact he just left to become the resident superhero of New Krypton.”

2013 Lois gasped out, “Mike Lee? Mike became an archer? For us that Halloween party was last weekend.”

Zara asked, “Were our counterparts in your universe able to establish themselves on a planet?”

“Yes, a planet circling Arcturus. It is a giant world circling a red giant star. It is very similar to Krypton.”

With a look of stunned disbelief, Zara said, “Yes, as a matter of fact, that is where we settled. This voyage took its toll on our people and our efforts to Kryptoform have required a lot of effort. That is one of the reasons we need a new High Lord. We need a decision maker.”

Chapter 17 — To Kill or Not to Kill — That is the Question

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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Ching and the four Clarks left the confines of the pod and flew to a park like area away from the city. Each of the Clarks and Ching carried Dreis. Ching had had to prepare additional

weapons because originally it was only going to be him teaching one Clark. The Drei looked like a quarterstaff from Robin Hood’s time with the exception that on each end was a conical sphere which looked like an inverted snow cone with the cone itself being shortened so that it was more sphere than cone.

As they landed, 2091 Clark and the 2013 Clark, moved over to a clear area. They each twirled the Dreis around demonstrating their familiarity with the weapons.

Observing this Ching asked, “Are you, in fact, familiar with these weapons?”

2013 Clark answered, “I used one of these to fight Nor just about sixteen years ago.”

2091 Clark said, “It’s been a lot longer for me. Oh, about ninety-four years. I’m probably rusty”

2013 Clark asked, “What year did you say you were from?”

“When Herb picked us up it was 2091. Say, that puts us at the same point in time.”

2013 Clark asked, “Do you think we ... we share the same history?”

Ching interrupted, “We really need to work on this now. Can you talk about that later?”

2091 Clark said, “Right, Ching, first things, by definition must come before other things. It would probably help if we split up. This Clark and I can work with the other two. It should reduce the time they need to learn. That way you don’t have to teach all of us.”

Looking around, 2013 Clark commented, “This is a much better location than the last time. That time we practically demolished Lois’ apartment.”

2091 Clark just stood there and gawked at him.

2013 Clark saw his look and asked, “Is there a problem?”

2091 Clark finally he said, “I have that same memory. It just seems so odd that we should share a memory as specific as that.”

After giving it some thought, 2013 Clark said, “I’m sure Herb would have a logical explanation.”

Voicing his frustration, 2091 Clark said, “Yeah, It always comes back to Herb. Sometimes I just wish he would leave well enough alone. We just returned from New Krypton. He just dropped off CJ ... from where he had taken him ... in the past.”

With a stricken look, 2013 Clark asked, “Did you say, CJ?”

2091 Clark replied, “Yes, before we went to New Krypton, Herb picked up four month old CJ and took him to us in the past, by us I mean mine and Lori’s earlier selves, me and Lois.”

2013 Clark put both hands on 2091 Clark’s shoulders and said, “We had CJ. He was with us a little over eight months. You said that Herb took him to your earlier selves?”

Awe in his voice, 2091 Clark said, “Yes, our earlier selves. In 1997 we were married, but had no children. That was before we found out we would eventually have children. After that we had eight. My Lois died of old age in 2063. Twenty-three years later I married Lori.”

2013 Clark said, “We have eight children. My Lois discovered that because she had been Ultra Woman her body was sensitized to the Kryptonian aura and her life was extended. As long as she was pregnant or within close proximity of a Kryptonian aura she didn’t age like an Earth human. Eventually Herb brought her the pendant.”

“That would appear to be the difference, my Lois had been Ultra Woman but it didn’t extend her life. I hadn’t known it but Herb had set it up so that Lori had all of Lois’ memories. It made it a lot easier for us to get together when the time came.”

Ching interrupted, “Again, I hate to interrupt, but we have to get these guys up to speed using this weapon.”

2013 Clark said, “Understood.” He turned to the other Clarks and said, “Okay, this is a Kryptonian weapon. It is a staff of power...”

The two Clarks paired off with the other two and started

teaching them how to handle the Drei.

Ching said, "We cannot know just how effective the Drei will be against a superpowered individual. The Drei draws its power from the wielder. In order to make full use of it you must possess the killer instinct. I assure you that Nor and his family do possess that instinct. In order to win you will all need to possess that same instinct."

2013 Clark said, "Let's see if I really remember how to use this thing." He started to twirl it around, moving it in a figure eight. Slowly the Drei started to glow as did the 'S' crest on his uniform. When he had built up sufficient power he pointed the Drei at a rock nearby and it exploded.

Imitating the move, the other Clarks began to twirl their Dreis and with varying levels of success were able to build up the energy charge.

After a time Ching was becoming frustrated with the lack of progress on the part of his pupils. He selected 2013 Clark as the one with the most recent experience and said, "I think we need to demonstrate with a live target. Attack me."

"Ching, do you really want that? I mean, I got pretty good with this thing when I was fighting Nor the last time."

"I want to demonstrate how effective it is."

Clark shook his head and said, "Okay, it's your funeral."

Clark started slowly to twirl the Drei around. Gradually he sped up the movement and as he did the sphere began to glow in concert with the 'S' crest on his Suit. Suddenly he stopped and pointed the sphere at Ching. An energy bolt leapt from the sphere striking Ching in the chest.

Ching had been expecting it and was prepared thus the bolt didn't even move him a fraction of an inch. He shouted at Clark, "Come on, you can do better than that!"

"I don't want to hurt you!"

Ching let one of the spheres of his Drei rest on the ground and stood there looking like a farmer leaning on a pitchfork. Exasperation was evident in his voice as he said, "That is exactly the problem!" He looked at each of the Supermen in turn as he said, "That is precisely the problem. You don't want to hurt me! You don't want to hurt anyone, none of you do. 'Can we subdue them without killing them?' Don't you hear yourselves? Nor will have no such scruples! If he *can* kill you that is *exactly* what he will do! You need to get that into your heads! If the risk of him killing you isn't enough motivation for you then think about that innocent baby at the farm. What has that child done to deserve death? Nothing! But, that won't stop Nor. He is after world dominion and now that he knows about Earth ... he won't stop until he has subdued both planets."

2091 Clark spoke up, "Ching's right. When Nor and his minions attacked us he enslaved the population of Smallville as his first step in world domination. He killed a number of the residents and he even threatened to kill my parents if I didn't give myself up. We need to take him out to keep that from happening here."

With renewed determination each of the Clarks picked up the Dreis and started practicing. Eventually each reached the point where they could generate the power needed to power the Drei such that there was no boulder around that was safe.

Finally in Ching's estimation they could be ready for different targets.

Ching chose 2013 Clark again and said, "Attack me."

Again Clark demurred. "Ching, I really don't want to hurt you. I think I could Nor, but not you."

Ching started to twirl his Drei. Clark could see the power building. Ching shouted, "Defend yourself!" The energy bolt leapt from the pod and struck Clark in the chest.

Clark was thrown back thirty feet before he fell to the ground. When he did, he was limp.

After a few seconds he raised his head and shook it. Slowly he climbed to his feet. He said, "Okay, Ching, that's enough fooling around."

As Clark was picking himself up Ching started twirling his Drei again. When he was on his feet again he saw the charge that the Drei was building up and he braced himself for another bolt.

Seconds later the bolt came and even though he was braced and expecting it, the force of the bolt still knocked him backwards although this time it didn't knock him down, but that was only because he was knocked back into one of the few surviving boulders and that one was cracked by the impact.

Clark saw Ching preparing another bolt and started twirling his Drei at superspeed, loosing a bolt at Ching seconds before he would have hit Clark with his third bolt.

Ching was staggered, but since Clark hadn't built up sufficient charge the bolt was less effective than his had been. He started twirling his Drei again.

Clark shouted, "Isn't that enough?"

In answer, Ching loosed yet another bolt at him.

This time, Clark managed to be elsewhere when the bolt passed through the space he had formerly occupied and shattered the boulder.

Undeterred, Ching continued to twirl his Drei. This time he caught Clark again, sending him flying, but not under his own power.

This continued attack was starting to anger Clark and this time when he recovered he had a grim expression on his face. As he twirled his Drei the glow of the Drei and the crest on his chest drowned out the light of the sun and when he loosed the bolt it hit Ching square in the chest, sending him a hundred feet. It took almost a minute for Ching to regain his feet.

He leaned on his Drei for support and said, "Lord Kal-El, you almost had the power that you will need to defeat Nor in combat. I congratulate you."

Chagrined that he had lost his temper, Clark said, "Why did you do that? I might have killed you!"

Ching rubbed his chest and said, "You almost did, but that is what you will have to do in order to defeat Nor."

"But, we don't want to kill!"

"You may have to, in order to protect the baby and each other."

Zara, Lori and the Loises remained in the travel pod with the exception of local Lois. She was commuting to Smallville just about every four hours to feed the baby.

Local Lois, on one of her trips out to feed the baby had purchased the necessary supplies so that 2013 Lois could take that time to express her milk into bottles that she was going to donate to local Lois for her baby. She needed to maintain her flow so that she would be able to continue to feed Sam when they returned to their home universe. It had been strongly impressed on her when they'd had CJ that her breast milk was necessary for her children to survive and thrive. Also, if she didn't she would be in agony from the pressure.

Lori asked, "Zara, you said that energy weapons were prohibited. What weapons can we use?"

Zara replied, "The men can use the Drei, which technically is and yet isn't an energy weapon. The Drei is powered by the strength of will of the user and the power is directly proportional to that will. In the hands of a master it can emit a lethal blast. Powered by a super powered individual the force could be incalculable. Using it against an invulnerable, super powered individual though could have questionable efficacy."

2013 Lois spoke up, "Trust me, it packs a wallop. Clark had to fight with one before. He didn't receive a lethal blow, but it knocked him around some."

Lori added, "Yeah, they really did some damage when they

fought in downtown Metropolis. Clark got banged around a bit, but it really wasn't anything serious, until Nor's cohorts stepped in and changed the parameters of the conflict."

2013 Lois asked, "Where is Jen-Mai in all of this?"

Zara was startled, "Jen-Mai, the Elder? What does he have to do with this?"

"When Clark fought with Nor, Jen-Mai was Nor's mole in the Elder Council. He wasn't happy with just being on the Council of Elders, he wanted to be the Chief Elder and sold out to Nor. The deal was that when Nor took over, Trey would be deposed and Jen-Mai put in his place."

Zara had a stricken look as she said, "That is very enlightening. I've had a bad feeling about Jen-Mai for a long time, but I have not had any proof. He could very well be behind Nor's attempt to force me into a life bond. As a member of the council he would be in a position to do that."

Lori said, "I think we need to get the goods on Jen-Mai, get him booted from the Council and remove that threat to Zara and Ching."

2013 Lois said, "When Clark fought Nor that was all taken care of by the Army. Jen-Mai and Nor's two main henchmen were all with Nor when they launched the Kryptonite gas attack on them."

Local Lois returned at this point and joined the conversation. Zara looked mystified as she asked, "Kryptonite, what's Kryptonite?"

Lori replied, "That's right, you had stepped away a few minutes earlier when we were discussing it. If you don't know anything about Kryptonite, then we have an ace in the hole."

2013 Lois added, "Zara, Kryptonite is fragments of Krypton that were caught in the FTL field of Kal-El's ship and pulled along with it on its trip to Earth. It is radioactive and has several forms. The green form can be deadly."

Lori continued, "In that particular case it sure was. It was only the fact that Clark had been overwhelmed by Nor and his henchmen that protected Clark. When they collapsed, their bodies protected Clark. Nor, Jen-Mai and both of his henchmen died."

2013 Lois added, "It's a good thing too. Nor was, how shall I say it, less than honorable. It was supposed to be just Nor and Clark, but when it looked like Clark would win, Nor's cronies stepped in to help making it three or four, really three since Jen-Mai was too much of a coward to actually take a hand, to one."

1993 Lois asked, "You said that non-energy weapons were allowed?"

Zara replied, "Yes. Krypton had a rather bloody history of clan warfare and this challenge is a carryover from that time. As a result bladed weapons and some projectile weapons are allowed."

1993 Lois replied, "All of which would be largely ineffective against super powered individuals. You said that if we could subdue them and keep them subdued then we win?"

"That is correct. We have a supply of manacles produced on Krypton that may be used to keep those captured, subdued."

2013 Lois asked, "How can you be sure that they will be effective?"

"They were manufactured on Krypton."

"You're from Krypton, but here, on Earth, under this yellow sun, things can be quite different. I think we need to test these shackles." 2013 Lois said.

Zara stepped into an adjoining compartment, returning moments later with the shackles.

Local Lois held out her hands so that they could be applied. Once Zara had snapped them on her wrists Lois pulled her hands apart separating the links of the chain joining the shackles, stretching the links like so much taffy before they broke. "Just as I thought. Totally ineffective against a super powered individual. The yellow sun doesn't affect the alloys the same way it does a Kryptonian body."

"This means that we will be required to physically restrain each individual. It will have to be a brute force battle. At least all things are equal." Zara said with a dispirited air.

Lori said, "I don't think so. Herb gave us at least a little edge. 1993 Lois, 2013 Lois and I each have double strength pendants. That should give us at least a little advantage when we go up against the other women. We should have the same strength as our husbands."

"How can we capitalize on that advantage?" Zara asked.

Lori suggested, "Perhaps one of us could subdue one of them and then one of the others could keep her restrained while we deal with the rest of them."

"We'd have to isolate one, but if we did that then they'd have a chance to double team one of us. This is shaping up as an impossibility." Zara's dispirited tone was obvious to all of the women.

1993 Lois spoke up, "I think that we should stick together as much as possible. That way we can defend each other. If we work together, we can win."

Local Lois spoke up, "There is one added problem ... we not only have to work together to protect each other, we have to protect the baby. We decided to leave the baby in Smallville with Jonathan, Martha and Carrie."

Her curiosity evident, Lori spoke up, "You've mentioned Carrie a few times. Can you tell us more about her?"

The pride was obvious in her voice as Local Lois replied, "Carrie is our adopted daughter. She joined our family a few months ago. Clark had saved her from a fire. Afterwards we learned that she had an inoperable brain tumor. Well, Clark figured out a way to perform the operation and we cured her. We became close friends of her Mom and Dad. They had left her with us for an overnight so that they could celebrate their anniversary when they were both killed in an auto accident. They had figured out who we were and stipulated in their will that we be Carrie's guardians until we could adopt her." Lois pulled out some pictures of Carrie and Scrappy to show around. "Carrie was suffering from a supposedly inoperable brain tumor when we met her. Scrappy was her service dog. Scrappy alerted her parents when Carrie was about to suffer a seizure. He is a highly trained animal and is her devoted companion."

Everyone commented on how much she looked like a little Lois.

Lois went on to explain about how Carrie was starting to display psychic powers, having predicted Clark finding Luthor and warning them about the Kryptonite and also the date of the baby's birth. Lois finished up with, "She is just starting to show these powers. We have no idea to what extent or what direction they will go. We can only wait and see."

Lori said, "Wow, now if it were one of our children we would know exactly what powers to expect, but this ... This is coming right out of left field! How do you plan to handle it?"

"We are just going to take it as it comes and try to guide her in the use of her powers. Even before this started to happen to her she said she wanted to do what she could to help people. That was what she told Clark the night he rescued her from the fire. She wanted to help people the same way he did. She is such a sweet girl with a sunny, happy disposition. We just love her to pieces. If her parents had not made that provision in their will, we would have fought to adopt her anyhow. She had almost become part of the family already. What really blew us away was when she figured out who we were, the very first day. Of course she had Scrappy's help, but she had us dead to rights as Superman and Superwoman."

Chapter 18 — Practice Makes Perfect

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2
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Local Lois and Zara went over strategy with the two other Loises and Lori.

Zara said, “In order to win this conflict, we need to incapacitate Nor and all of his family. The numbers, thanks to your friend, Herb, are equal; however, in some way we must overcome and keep all of Nor’s family captive in order to be the victors of the combat. We have a supply of manacles made of an alloy produced on Krypton. But they have proven completely ineffective against a super powered Kryptonian under a yellow sun.”

Zara continued, “I only say capture in deference to Clark’s stated desire of avoiding killing anyone. Rest assured, Nor does not suffer from similar scruples. If he can, he will kill you and he would not hesitate to kill a woman, either, so don’t think that your sex provides you with any immunity. Nor is a vile, unscrupulous, treacherous ... well, you get the picture. If we lose, I could be forced into a life bond with him and I really don’t want that.”

1993 Lois said, “In essence we are participating in a trial by combat, New Krypton rules.”

Lori asked, “What if neither side succeeds in subduing everyone on the other side?”

“The combat continues, until there is a clear victor.” Zara replied.

1993 Lois said, “With all of us having super powers, that is going to be hard to do. I still think that our best chance is to stay together. At least that way we can prevent them from overcoming all of us.”

2013 Lois said, “When Nor and his minions arrived they planned to enslave the entire world. They started off by creating a force field around Smallville and enslaving the population. If we allow them to win this combat that will be the eventual outcome.”

Lori nodded her head in agreement and said, “One fundamental problem is that Nor has no morals. He cares little or nothing for non-Kryptonians and there are even some of them he wants to eliminate. I am concerned for you. You say that this all started because of the baby, but you and Clark can have more children. That would present a continued threat to his rule which means he would have to not only kill the baby, but you as well.”

Zara said, “Lady Lori is quite correct. Your continued existence would add an element of insecurity.”

2013 Lois said, “In our universe, when Clark fought Nor, Nor cheated. As I said before, he had some followers that were willing to break the rules of the combat to make sure that Nor won. How likely is that to happen here?”

Zara replied, “As I said, Nor is unscrupulous. He is capable of doing anything to further his ends. If that means breaking custom and violating the rules of the combat — he is quite capable of doing so. I would put nothing past him in that regard.”

Lori said, “You said that right now the numbers are even. There are nine of us and nine of them. If Nor does cheat and bring in additional troops, then we will be outnumbered. At that point staying together could be the best strategy. We could defend each other.”

Musingly Zara said, “The key to the conflict could be Nor himself. If we could capture him and keep him subdued he may not be able to rally his supporters.”

“What are we up against? What is the makeup of his family?”

Zara said, “He has two sisters and a brother. The brother is in a life bond. Nor also has two cousins, both with bond mates. As had been common on Krypton, his two male cousins are brothers and their bondmates are sisters. That makes it four men and five women, the same mix as we have on our side.”

1993 Lois asked, “What if we each had an assigned person

that we had to deal with?”

Zara replied, “That could be risky. If you think you are dealing with one individual another could join in and turn the tables.”

1993 Lois persisted, “Not if we stick close to our assigned opponent. As long as we stick with them, we should be there to prevent anything like that happening.”

After thinking for a few seconds, Zara replied, “Actually, that is a good point, but still, we are looking at a standoff, with the most likely outcome being a stalemate.”

2013 Lois added, “What are we going to do about natural disasters, crime and accidents while all of this combat is going on?”

Local Lois added in a worried tone, “I hadn’t thought of that. I need to at least notify MPD that we will be unavailable.”

Zara added, “While any of you are dealing with an emergency, they will have a numerical advantage. Is there any way to avoid being distracted?”

Local Lois said, “I don’t see any way. We are pledged to protect the people of Earth. They are my people after all. I might be fully Kryptonian now, but I started off as Earth human. I was born in Metropolis, for heaven’s sake.”

Zara conceded the point. “Okay, if you have to handle emergencies, it will have to be at least two of you together whenever you go out. We can’t afford for one of you to go out and be captured by Nor’s family. If there are two of you, you can protect one another. There is an old axiom on Krypton, ‘When you are lost in the woods, it is better to have a friend with you.’”

“We have a similar saying, ‘There’s safety in numbers.’”

“Essentially the same thing.”

“Okay, no solo rescues, but that could give them a numerical advantage over the rest.”

“You will need to deal with any emergency quickly and return to the group.”

“That could be easier said than done. A major landslide or mudslide, an earthquake or avalanche could be time consuming. There could be many lives at stake. We can’t just abandon them. That would make us no better than Nor.”

“I will concede the point. You will have to do what you feel is needed. I would simply caution you that in your absence, your fellows will be at a numerical disadvantage.”

“We will endeavor to spend a minimum of time on any rescue.”

“That is all that I ask.”

After a time, Ching and the Clarks rejoined the women.

The women were appalled at their appearance. The guys looked like they had already been through a war. Their Suits were smudged with dirt and so were their faces.

Zara quizzed Ching on the results of the training.

Ching replied, “I’m not sure if this will work or not. The reluctance to take life exhibited by all of the individuals on this side could be our undoing. Nor will have no compunctions killing any or all of the combatants involved, whereas none of the people on this side of the conflict are willing to go that far.”

2013 Clark said in reply, “Ching, there has to be another way. We have all spent our entire lives preserving life. That respect for life is not something easily discarded. All the time I was growing up, my parents trained me that to help others was a goal that all should aspire to and me especially. With great power comes even greater responsibility. You’re asking us to go against years of training. I don’t see how we can do that.”

Ching started pacing back and forth in front of the Clarks as he spoke, “I know I’m asking that and I know that it doesn’t sit well, but that is where we are. You have to get past that training if you plan to win this war. I know, we dress it up in nice terms like combat, trial by combat, but make no mistake, this is a war, a war

of the most fundamental kind. This is a war of right against wrong. This is not some game to decide who gets the bragging rights! The fate of two worlds, not just New Krypton, but New Krypton and Earth hangs in the balance and the way you prosecute this war will determine the fate of *both* planets! Do you wish to see the entire population of Earth enslaved by a handful of super powered Kryptonians? If you don't rise to the occasion, that is exactly what will happen. It is up to you to stop them and if you don't it will be on you."

Ching stopped pacing and simply stood facing them, "I realize that most of you will be returning to your own realities, so this really won't affect you. You can leave and it is all behind you, but will you be able to live with yourselves afterwards?"

Local Clark stepped forward and turned to face the rest. After a few seconds of collecting his thoughts he said, "Ching is right. This all actually falls on us, me and Lois and Zara. We really don't have the right to ask you to risk your lives for us and this universe. If you all want to simply return, we'll understand."

2091 Clark looked around at the rest of the superheroes gathered there and received nods from each. He turned to Ching and local Clark and said, "We weren't forced to be here. When Herb picked us up, he told us that there was a Lois and Clark couple that needed our help. None of us even asked if it would be dangerous, I guess we all knew that it would be, without asking. The danger doesn't enter into the calculation. We all face danger every day. None of us are about to leave, so we need to stop all of this defeatist talk and decide how best to handle the situation so that we win."

1993 Clark added, "Nor wants a war, let's give him a war that he'll remember for a long time to come."

Local Lois moved over and hugged her husband. Each of the other women moved over and did the same with their spouses.

Lori said, "Okay, now that that's settled, what is the best way to handle this situation?"

Local Lois said, "We have been discussing emergencies and the conclusion is that they will need to be attended to, but that a minimum of time will be spent on any one so that the team can maintain its integrity."

The next day was a repeat of the previous. The Clarks and Ching went to the practice area to work with the Dreis.

Ching gathered them together and said, "We do not know if the Drei can actually damage a super powered individual. We do know that it can knock them down and perhaps knock them out, temporarily. If we could assure ourselves that the Drei is not lethal to a super powered individual, would you be more inclined to utilize the weapon the way it is supposed to be used?"

2013 Clark said, "When I fought Nor before, I took some pretty strong hits. They were as strong as those you gave me yesterday, maybe a little stronger and I walked away from them."

"That's just what I mean. I'm sure that Nor wasn't pulling his punches. He probably hit you with his best shots and he didn't kill you. It is very possible that an invulnerable, super powered Kryptonian cannot be killed by this weapon. That being the case, perhaps we could use it to its greatest advantage by using it to temporarily disable your opponents long enough to restrain them."

Local Clark said, "I think we can all go along with that idea."

Ching replied, "I hope so. That being the case, let's work toward that end. You need to generate enough energy in the bolt to disable, at least temporarily, your opponents. Pair up and see if you can knock each other out long enough to restrain him."

When they paired off 2013 Clark paired with 2091 Clark and they traded bolts. Slowly the power of the bolts increased. At first they were barely moved. After a time they were knocked off of their feet. Finally, 2091 Clark hit 2013 Clark with a bolt that not only knocked him off of his feet, but shook him up enough that

2091 Clark was able to superspeed over and pull his arms behind his back to restrain him before he was able to recover consciousness.

2013 Clark returned to consciousness and started to struggle to free himself to no avail.

Ching applauded. He said, "There, you see, it can be done. That's what we need to do. It doesn't have to be a long period. As long as it can be done and there are numerically similar numbers you can subdue them. If each of you can incapacitate your opponent in this way, as long as the women are similarly successful this war can be won."

The Clarks kept practicing through the day and by the end of the day, each was able to generate a bolt of sufficient potency that they were consistently able to knock out their opponent.

With each successful discharge their confidence grew and by the time they were ready to head back they were in high spirits.

A privacy field had been installed at 348 Hyperion Ave. so that the travel pod would no longer be required and the women were gathered there.

Zara was saying, "Since women are prohibited from the use of the Drei we will need to develop alternative weapons. There is a selection of bladed weapons ..."

Lori interrupted, "Blades are going to be ineffective against us. Perhaps we should concentrate of what we can do rather than what we can use. Personally, I'm a black belt in Tae Kwan Do."

Each of the Loises said, "Same here."

Zara asked, "What is this ... Tae Kwan Do?"

2013 Lois said, "It is a form of unarmed combat which uses kicks and strikes. It is a very powerful form of the martial arts. I've had to use it a number of times."

"I am unfamiliar with this martial art, but it does sound similar to a fighting style from Krypton. It was developed by peasants as a means of defense against armed and armored warriors who were oppressing them."

"The history of karate is similar. The samurai were oppressing the peasants at the behest of the local warlord. The samurai had swords and bamboo armor. The blows in karate are powerful enough to break the armor and injure the wearer."

"On Krypton the practice of these arts fell out of popularity many centuries ago and I simply know about it because I have read our history. Perhaps you could show me some of these blows that you speak of."

Lori picked 2013 Lois and said, "Want to spar a bit?"

2013 Lois replied in the affirmative and they moved to the center of the living room floor.

After the formal bow they each took up a ready stance. 1993 Lois stood off to a side and held out her arm between them. When she jerked her hand up, she shouted "Hajimi," meaning 'begin'.

Lori and Lois circled for a few seconds looking for an opening and suddenly closed. Each performed a series of strikes and blocks at superspeed. 2013 Lois finally got in a solid punch and Lori was sent flying into 1993 Lois who caught her.

Zara was smiling as she watched. When Lori was back on her feet, Zara said, "Excellent! I do not believe that fighting of that type has been seen on Krypton for centuries! It is very possible that you will be able to use this Tae Kwan Do in the conflict and successfully subdue your opponents with it. Could you teach me some of those moves?"

Lori was still rubbing her chest where she had been struck and said, "I think that since you are superpowered and superfast we can probably teach you in a few hours what it took each of us years to learn as normal Earth humans. What do you say, Lois?"

2013 Lois nodded in agreement. "I agree, at superspeed we can compress years into a few hours. Let's get started."

Chapter 19 — Reinforcements

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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The day for the start of the combat had arrived. The meeting place was a field on the outskirts of Metropolis. The four Clarks were all armed with Dreis while the three Loises, Lori and Zara were apparently unarmed; however, appearances can be deceiving. Zara had now received the equivalent of ten years of training in Tae Kwan Do and would outclass any Kryptonian in hand to hand combat in the same way all of the three Loises and Lori would.

Jen-Mai was there, ostensibly as an observer for the council of Elders.

Lord Nor and his family members flew in and landed across the field from the El family members.

While the members of the El family were distracted by the arrival of Nor and his family, a group of Nor's adherents came in at superspeed, each and sometimes more than one, grabbing a member of the El family and restraining them.

Smugly, Lord Nor said, "Well, it looks like this has been easier than I had expected. I hadn't expected it to be an equal combat, but this has made it so much simpler." A smile of evil satisfaction was on his face.

Zara yelled, "I should have known that you wouldn't respect tradition and the rules of the combat! Lord Jen-Mai, I object to this! Order them to release us!"

Sneeringly, Nor said, "Yes, My Lord, Jen-Mai, render your verdict on the combat."

Jen-Mai simply looked amused.

It looked like the combat would never occur, that Nor had come up with a strategy to win by disabling the El family before the combat could even start.

Just as Jen-Mai started to speak and proclaim the victory another pair of superheroes appeared and wrestled with the men holding 2091 Superman. They were dressed in superhero uniforms; however the suits were black instead of blue.

With the superman who was wearing a Superman uniform in black and red was a superwoman. She was a blonde wearing a black uniform that looked like a Speedo swimsuit with a pleated mini-skirt in red that ended short of mid-thigh and showed off her shapely legs, a cape the same color as the skirt, mid-calf boots and elbow length gloves both in black. Her mask was black and left her hair free flowing. On the front of her uniform was an El family crest; however, it had a circle below making it look like the crest was a jewel in a ring. She assisted her husband with his capture.

Kam-El, (Jon Kent, for that was who the black-clad superman was), shouted, "Thanks for the help, Jewel."

The blond super heroine, Jewel, (Jon's wife, Jennifer Kent, an elementary school teacher) (*A/N — picture in your mind Kate Upton*) smiled and replied, "No problem, Honey. That's what wives are supposed to do — help their husbands."

As soon as 2091 Superman was free, the terms of the combat required that victory could not be declared and Nor started to shout in anger.

That Clark turned to Kam-El and said, "Thanks, son and you too, Jewel."

Ran-Na, Nor's brother, flew to the assistance of those being held by Kam-El, Jewel and the now free 2091 Superman. While Kam-El and Jewel held the strangers, 2091 Superman intercepted Ran-Na and in a one-on-one scuffle was able to hold him off as they grappled.

In the next second a super heroine wearing a full length uniform in turquoise with a pink cape, the reverse of the colors of

Ultra Woman's uniform, flew in and tackled the woman holding Lori, pulling her off. She was assisted by a superhero dressed in an all turquoise uniform. They freed Lori and the two restrained Lori's assailant. Lori said, "Thanks, Ultra Woman 2 and Torque! Welcome to the party!"

Ultra Woman 2 (Lara Kent Lee) was startled and asked, "You know us?"

"I should, you're my daughter and son-in-law. Glad you could join us."

Torque (Mike Lee, her lawyer husband) replied, "I'm glad that Mr. Wells invited us. Happy we didn't miss out on this."

Seeing this Rena, Nor's sister flew to the assistance of that member of Nor's contingent. Lori intercepted her in mid-flight and stopped her. Lori used a super karate kick to send her skyward.

In rapid succession Dan-El (Sean Kent) and his wife Red Thistle (Heather MacLeod Kent, the former Scottish highlands lass), swooped in and grabbed the ones holding 1997 Supermen. Dan-El wore a blue suit with a Scottish plaid cape and trunks. His blue boots blended in with his suit. Red Thistle wore a blue swim suit with a plaid kilt of traditional length. In place of a cape she wore a Scottish plaid sash over her right shoulder, crossing to the left hip. The El family crest was modified on their uniforms to have a clan badge superimposed on it.

<http://www.folcsite.com/misc/kenscotspaid.jpg>

Red Thistle's sash was pinned with a Clan pin. In place of boots she wore dancer's shoes that laced up her ankle. Both wore masks in the tartan; her red hair flowed freely.

As soon as 1997 Superman was freed he saw Col-Re, Nor's cousin, flying toward him and he flew to intercept. He grappled with him, eventually breaking free and delivering a strong uppercut, which sent Col-Re skyward.

Noel (Celeste Kent Davidson) and her husband Shield (Wild Bill Davidson, the former MPD detective) arrived at the same time. They both wore green and red. Noel wore a green swim suit with a red cape, pleated mini skirt, boots and elbow length gloves. Shield wore a green suit with red trunks and cape. The symbol on his chest was a modified El crest. He had changed the shape of the shield. They tackled the woman that was holding 2013 Lois.

<http://www.folcsite.com/misc/willbillshield.jpg>

As soon as she was freed, 2013 Lois headed for the Nor family and intercepted Fina, Nor's sister, as she was headed into the melee. At the last instant Lois flipped over and hit Fina feet first which sent Fina cart-wheeling back out of control into Nor himself.

Next on the scene were Hazel (Jessica Kent Stuart) and her husband Quicksilver (Richard Stuart, an archeologist) who freed the 1997 Superwoman, local Lois. Hazel wore a golden-brown suit with a forest green skirt, cape, calf boots, elbow length gloves and mask. The El crest on her chest was in the same color scheme. Quicksilver wore a uniform of golden-brown with forest green shorts, silver calf boots, cape and mask. On his chest was the El crest with the 'S' and border in silver and a green background. His mask was in the shape of that used by The Lone Ranger in the movies and on TV.

As soon as Local Lois was freed she saw Bela Gam-Re, Nor's cousin's wife, headed for Hazel. Lois flew straight at Bela and grabbing her, began to spin her around at superspeed. When she let go Bela went flying and crashed into Noga, her sister.

Zar-El (James Perry Kent) and his wife Megawoman (Margaret Dennis Kent), zoomed in and tackled those that were assailing 2013 Clark. They were dressed in matching suits of full-length black with black boots, white shorts, white capes and masks. The El crest in black and white was displayed on their chests. Jimmy and Peg were both computer experts and their black and white uniforms symbolized the zero and one

understood by computers.

Seeing Noga recover and head for him, 2013 Clark took off to intercept her. Even though their superstrength was too much to measure, Clark still was stronger than Noga and he easily subdued her.

Leave it to Angel (Lucy Kent Jackson) to make a flamboyant entry. She and her husband Lightning (Rob Jackson, a biochemist) struck like his name. They both powered in and tackled the guy restraining 1993 Superman. Angel wore a two piece uniform of white, a white sports bra type top with micro shorts with a white cape that came to her waist and white boots that came to her knees. The El crest on her chest was silver on white with a silver border and silver angel wings sprouting from the sides. Her husband, Lightning wore a suit of sky blue at the legs, mottled gray at the hips shading to black at the shoulders. A lightning bolt in white originated at his left shoulder and took a jagged path diagonally to his right hip. At his left shoulder, where the bolt originated, was an El crest.

As soon as 1993 Superman was freed he checked to see if anyone else was going to attack, but it looked like Nor's family was losing the desire to continue the conflict as the numbers on both sides became more even.

Ben-El (Samuel Kent) and his wife Wondergirl (Alice, the auburn-haired beauty from New Krypton) zoomed in and released 1993 Lois. Their uniforms were red suits with red capes boots and masks. Ben-El's suit was a red top with blue shorts. Wondergirl's suit was a red swimsuit with a pleated mini skirt in blue, red boots, cape and mask.

Saint and his wife Blaze arrived and took out the one holding Zara. Saint wore a royal blue suit with black trunks and a black cape. On his chest was an El crest with a halo over it at a jaunty angle. His mask was blue to match his suit and covered only his face, allowing his flame red hair to be seen. His wife wore a royal blue sports bra type top with sleeves and black micro shorts like Angel's which showed off her voluptuous figure to perfection. Her cape came to her waist while her black boots reached her knees. Her mask was the same color as her top and allowed her flame red hair to flow freely. On her chest was the El crest with the flames of a fire as a background.

Four more figures arrived, a young guy and a young woman, both wearing blue, red and yellow Super Suits that had red shorts in place of the briefs and no leggings, red capes and boots that came to mid-calf.

With them were two young girls, one about seventeen and the other about eleven and both with the promise of being strikingly beautiful, just like all of the Kent children. Dark hair floated around their shoulders and they looked like they could be twins if not for the age difference. They both wore outfits of a royal purple and blue. The younger wore a purple halter top and blue shorts, while the older girl wore the opposite colors. In both cases the El crest was worn as a pin connecting the halter top. They both had blue boots, purple capes and a mask the same color as their halter tops.

None of the heroes already gathered recognized these new arrivals. The young guy and the woman with him landed between Lori and Zara.

Since he was standing next to her, Lori turned to the young guy and asked, "Who might you be?"

He replied, "I call myself Superman Junior."

Lori was stunned and blurted out, "CJ?"

Putting his arms around her and giving her a kiss on the cheek he said, "Right the first time. Hi Mom." Then he turned to 2013 Lois and said, "Hi Momma."

2013 Lois was staring at him in stunned recognition. Moving over close to him, she reached for him and asked, "You remember me?"

Stepping up to her he gave her a kiss on the cheek, just as he

had his mother and said, "I could never forget *you*."

Both Lori and Lois turned to the woman with him and asked, "Who are you?"

Smiling, she turned away from them, faced Zara and placing her closed fist over her heart, gave a slight bow from the waist in her direction and said, "Grandmother, I honor you."

Zara was speechless. Finally she sputtered out, "Grandmother?"

"I am Elka wife of Ka-El daughter of Tel-Ka son of Ching-Ka and Zara Ching-Ka. I honor you, Grandmother and yet — not Grandmother for you see we are from another universe. Perhaps 'Grandmother that might be' would be best. In my universe I am the granddaughter of that Zara."

Zara returned her closed fist bow while tears fell from her eyes. Then she reached out with both hands and clasped the hands of her 'granddaughter'.

The younger girl with the purple top landed delicately next to Local Lois and said, "Well, I guess better late than never," as her older companion floated down like a feather floating on the air currents.

Lois asked, "Do I know you?"

The girls both smiled and nodding to each other said, "Yes, Mom," in unison.

Once it was evident that Nor's family had no more stomach for the conflict, Nor's followers were released and they joined Nor at his side of the field. Nor said, "Well, I hadn't expected this. We will have to confer. Lord Jen-Mai, I think they have not followed the rules of the combat. Look into it!" With that the entire group left.

Once they were out of sight, Zara addressed Jen-Mai, "Why didn't you interfere in that ... that farce! They violated the customs of the combat. Those were not Nor's family members that attacked us."

Jen-Mai said, "As if these are!" He flung his hands out to indicate the new arrivals.

2091 Clark spoke up and said, "As a matter of fact, they are! All except possibly those two the rest are accounted for. I don't know who they are." He indicated Blaze and Saint.

Saint removed his mask and suddenly 2013 Lois recognized him. She blurted out, "JJ! Wow, you lost some weight!"

Blaze removed her mask and 2013 Lois was shocked, "Hattie?!?!?! How???" (*A/N — picture a red haired Scarlet Johansen*)

"Long story, Aunt Lois. Uncle Clark and Cousin Lara each helped. Kam-El, Uncle Clark and you got really tired of saving me and JJ so much. Then we were both shot up in an ambush as we were on our way home from the rehearsal dinner the night before the wedding. We almost died, but Uncle Clark remembered about Dr. Gretchen Kelly and her machine. Well, you can guess the rest."

Lois replied, "You and JJ?"

Hooking her arm around JJ's, Hattie said, proudly, "Married."

Turning to the last two, local Lois said, "You called me Mom?"

Nodding at each other they removed their masks. Lois was shocked and blurted out, "Carrie?"

The older girl with the blue top nodded and said, "Yes, Mom. Carrie. I call myself Protector."

Lois threw her arms around her and started to cry, "Carrie, you're all grown up, but who is this?"

Her answer was simply a single word, "Sister."

Lois was flabbergasted and said, in awe, "Sister? Penny? My baby?"

The young girl stepped up and put her arms around her mom's waist and said, "I'm not a baby now, I'm eleven years old and I call myself Supergirl. I understand that I'm still a baby at the farm, though."

Lois was hugging her two daughters and was so wrapped up in them that she didn't see anything else.

Turning to Lord Jen-Mai, Clark said, "Okay, there you go, our children, their spouses, a nephew and his wife. All family, every last one which is more than you can say for those that attacked us."

Jon spoke up, "Please allow me to add that we have all been married by Earth law, but we also have all been committed to a life bond by the laws and customs of New Krypton. We all participated in the ceremony so that we could honor the traditions of New Krypton. It was important to us that we do so. It is our heritage and it was our privilege to do so."

Zara shouted, "Lord Jen-Mai, I must protest. I claim that Nor has violated the customs and therefore has forfeited the combat. In view of this testimony you cannot deny that these are all members of the family 'El' and honorably joined in life bonds with their bond mates as decreed by Kryptonian law and custom. You must declare Lord Kal-El and his family victors. Nor must be banished!"

Lord Jen-Mai held up his hands and said, "How has he violated the rules of combat?"

"By bringing in non-family members to help!"

"Non-family? I don't see anyone." He said as he looked around laughing and then flew off.

Zara was fit to be tied, she shouted, "Jen-Mai has to be on Nor's side in this. I didn't want to believe it, but you were correct, we can't trust him."

Since he was not a family member, Ching had remained on the outside of the conflict even though, seeing Nor's supporters attack he felt more than a little frustrated in doing so. He moved closer and said, "I haven't trusted him for a while."

2013 Lois said, "It was the same when they attacked us in our universe. Jen-Mai was a traitor. Nor had promised to make him chief elder and he couldn't throw over Zara and Kal-El fast enough."

Everyone gathered around the newcomers to be introduced.

Local Lois asked, "Carrie, how do you have super powers?"

Carrie said, "I don't ... really. At least not like yours and sisters." She floated up a few feet and looked around. Spotting her dad holding a Drei, she held out her hand toward him and the Drei was ripped from his grasp and flew through the air into her hand.

Lois said, in awe, "Telekinesis?"

Suddenly the Drei disappeared from Carrie's hand and reappeared in Clark's.

Carrie replied, "And a few other things, such as telepathy, empathy and teleportation." Suddenly a transparent bubble shimmered into existence around her and Lois 'heard' / "Try to touch me, Mom."/

Lois reached out. Her hand touched the bubble, but could proceed no farther. The bubble was transparent, but was like a very solid wall. She pushed on it and saw that it moved an inch or so. The earth beneath Carrie's feet was enclosed in the globe and moved a fraction with the bubble.

Just as suddenly as it had come into existence the bubble vanished and Carrie floated back to the ground. She said, "If I had expanded the field to enclose some bedrock or even set an anchor in Earth's core you couldn't have moved me without moving the entire planet." As she finished speaking Carrie suddenly disappeared.

Lois shouted, "Carrie?"

Apparently from the thin air in front of her Lois heard, "Right here, Mom," and Carrie popped back into view.

Lois was amazed, "How did you do that?"

Carrie laughed and said, "I started reading some old comic books. There was this hero called 'The Shadow'. He had the ability to make himself invisible by 'clouding the mind' of those

he was fighting so that they couldn't see him. That sounded like a neat trick so I tried it. Works, huh?"

"I'll say. I thought you had teleported away."

Turning to Supergirl, Lois asked, "You're eleven and you're super powered?"

"Yes, mom, I've been super powered from birth. We figure that because both you and Pop are fully super powered my powers were charged in the womb."

"Wow, something for me to look forward to."

Carrie spoke up, "Don't worry, Mom. I'll be there to help although sometimes it took all of our combined powers to make her behave."

Penelope Ann Kent, for that was her name said, "Aww Sis, I wasn't that bad!"

"Nah Squirt, you really weren't. I just couldn't help teasing you a little. Really, Mom, you don't have anything to worry about. She's a really good kid."

Chapter 20 — Nor

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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When Nor, his family and his followers left the field of the conflict he was placing all of his hopes on Lord Jen-Mai. If Jen-Mai could go to the council and convince them that the El family had broken the rules of the conflict, the El family could be declared losers and banished either to the Phantom Zone or wherever else it had been that they had come from.

He had been somewhat shaken when he had arrived and found not just Zara, the woman with Kal-El's essence, and the imposter, but six other individuals. All of the men looked alike as did the women. The question was, where had they originated? As it was, with this showing the numbers would have been equal, supposedly. Fortunately, he hadn't taken any chances. There was no telling how things would go, even with three to one odds so he had taken steps to improve even those odds.

Because of that, Nor had been confident of winning. Jen-Mai would back up his claim that he and his family, and his family alone had won the combat. He would ignore the presence of his followers and simply report the win, but then a number of other costumed figures had arrived. They were all super powered and they all wore the El family crest in one form or another displaying their familial association. Where had they all come from?

Nor left his brother in command and flew back to the throne ship. He went immediately to an information terminal and did a search for a listing of the members of the El family. The screen went blank briefly as the search was conducted. The archives were searched and then the sensor array was activated and patched into the information matrix. The bioelectromagnetic signatures of those on the planet were compared to those recorded of Kal-El and other members of the El family. After a thorough analysis the display indicated Zara by name and sixteen other signatures that were within the zone of statistical probability for deviations within a family group. That included the woman that carried the essence of Kal-El. All together he had counted 31 individuals; that meant that fourteen were in all probability spouses and therefore entitled to participate. That would not be the way to go. If he could do such a search against his opponents the same could be done against those fighting on his side and those results would be counterproductive for his cause. Better to leave that sleeping calot lie.

Realizing that he wasn't going to be able to discredit his opponents on that basis, Nor would need to simply add to his forces so that he had a sufficient numerical advantage. The

problem with that was that he had called in almost all of the people he could count on. Even with all of his followers, numerically the sides were essentially equal.

Shutting down the data terminal, Nor retired to his audience chamber and spent the next hours reviewing his options, the names of individuals not committed to the El family and those whom he believed he could bribe, cajole or threaten into supporting his cause.

While he was going over his options several of those who had followed him had returned to the ship and informed him that they no longer wished to defy custom and were withdrawing from having an active part in the conflict. If he didn't take steps, and soon, his side would be too weakened to successfully prosecute the combat.

Some hours had passed and fortunately the number of followers leaving Nor's banner had been low.

Lord Jen-Mai interrupted his musings by entering his audience chamber. "Lord Nor, I have attempted to present a most favorable case to the council, but since neither side has been subdued they refused to make a ruling on the outcome of the conflict. They require that the losers be presented, bound to the council. They will then determine the validity of the combat and render their decision. They will not simply accept my word on this even though they will on almost everything else."

Nor railed at him, "If you had made the pronouncement when you were supposed to, we could have avoided this situation."

"It is obvious that you were not listening. It was *not* my failure to declare a winner that created this situation. It is your family's failure to secure a clear victory, even with the aid of your auxiliaries that has created this impasse. It is up to you, however you can manage it, to overcome your adversaries and keep them confined long enough for the council to render their decision. I am doing as much as I can to live up to my side of the bargain, but I can only do so much. The rest is up to you. I was able to cover your use of non-family auxiliaries, but I don't know how long I will be able to do so. You need to bring a rapid end to this conflict."

As Jen-Mai finished speaking he turned on his heel and slunk out of the room. He was fearful that he had pushed Nor too far. He knew that Nor could be a dangerous adversary. Nor had many people loyal to him and some of them didn't care what they would be called on to do for him. Jen-Mai was starting to wonder if he had been correct in climbing into bed with this particular devil. The problem was that he was now in too deep to back out easily.

After Lord Jen-Mai left, Nor sat thinking over the situation. Since that first encounter, when his plot to use his followers to capture Kal-El and his allies had failed, Nor had been struggling to keep his followers in line. If only they had carried the day in that first assault! If only Jen-Mai had been quicker to declare the victor! It had been hard enough to convince his followers to go against custom and enter into a conflict that was supposed to be limited to family groups as it was. Now that they had been handed so sound a defeat a number of them had lost their desire to assist him. 'It was easy to follow a leader when he had all of the advantages, but 'When the going starts to get tough, only the tough will continue to follow.' — old Kryptonian proverb.

He had been calling his remaining supporters and those he thought he could recruit to him a few at a time and using all of his powers of persuasion, cajoling and even at times using threats to keep them in line and bring new ones into the conflict.

Mostly it was the greedy ones that he had the easiest time with. Like Jen-Mai, those who wanted position (and he could promise just such a boon as they desired), would be loyal to him, or so he thought.

Ran-Na was proving to be an able lieutenant. He was keeping

his followers busy so that most of them didn't think of exactly what they were doing or why. When Nor had told him that he was returning to the ship to use its technology to find out just who they were dealing with, he had directed Ran-Na to think of things to occupy their followers.

When Nor finished his research he had tuned in on the live broadcasts from the surface. He was pleased with how inventive his brother was proving to be. There were reports coming in from around the globe of his followers creating emergencies, burning buildings, starting landslides and the like which were keeping the El family auxiliaries busy, very busy indeed.

If it weren't for the fact that the numbers were equal, Nor might have considered taking his family members against the El family directly.

After a time his brother Ran-Na entered the room. The room he entered bears some description. This was one of the largest rooms on the throne ship which had been used as the conveyance to Earth's space. The bare utilitarian walls of a space vessel had been overhung with rich tapestries, some of which appeared to be newly acquired and of Earth origin. Opposite the door was a very ornate chair which had been gilt with gold and placed on a dais which elevated it a good eighteen inches off the floor. From the door to the dais was a cleared aisle with a red runner reaching from the door to the dais.

On the dais, one on one side and two on the other of Nor's pseudo throne were three chairs. Ran-Na, after passing through the door crossed to the dais and climbed into the chair that sat alone on one side. The chairs on the other side were reserved for Rena and Fina, the two sisters of Nor.

Once seated and after assuring himself that they were indeed alone, Ran-Na addressed Nor. "Brother, I'm not sure that we should put as much trust in Jen-Mai's loyalty as you seem to think we can."

Nor leaned on the arm of the chair on that side, physically closing the distance between himself and his only brother before he asked, "What makes you say that, brother?"

"It has been my experience that anyone that can be bought for a price will sell out if someone offers more."

"What more could Jen-Mai be offered? We have offered to make him the head elder in the new Council of Elders. What other position could he aspire to?"

"High Lord."

Nor was shocked. He hadn't considered that Jen-Mai might have higher aspirations. He asked, "Have you heard anything to substantiate this contention?"

"Nothing overt, just rumors. Rumors that he might not be satisfied with the position you have offered."

The door slid open and Rena and Fina entered and took their places on the dais.

Nor acknowledged them and leaned in their direction. Nodding in Ran-Na's direction he said, "Our brother has put forth a disturbing proposition. He thinks that Jen-Mai may have aspirations of being High Lord in my place."

Looking around before speaking, Rena said, "I have never trusted Lord Jen-Mai. If he can be bought for a price, who's to say he won't sell out the one that has bought him in favor of another who will offer more?"

Fina said, "I agree. One should not reside a lot of trust in one who is motivated by greed alone whereas one who is motivated by idealism can be thoroughly trusted. They will continue to fight for their ideals where a mercenary will falter."

Nor sat back in his makeshift throne and mused for a time. Finally he spoke, "I think we need to take steps to ensure Lord Jen-Mai's fidelity. Does he not have family on board?"

Ran-Na spoke, "I believe that he has a granddaughter on board."

"Perhaps, to ensure that Lord Jen-Mai remains loyal to our

cause, a threat could be made against his granddaughter.”

“That could be self-defeating.” Rena said, “A threat is no good if you are not willing to carry it out and if you did carry it out it would turn an ally into a strong adversary. If you threaten to kill his granddaughter, you have to be willing and able to carry through on your threat. If he complies, then all is well and good. If he doesn’t comply and you don’t have the ability or the will to carry through on the threat, he will know that it was a bluff, an empty threat and he will have no further reason to comply. If you do follow through, then you have damaged his family, will have eliminated the only leverage you had in the first place and he will turn on you. He could use his influence with the Council to turn them against you. That would be an end to any possibility of you becoming High Lord.”

Nor looked at his sister in disbelief, “You present an impossible conundrum. If we cannot use loyalty to one’s family to force his compliance, what can we use?”

Fina had been listening, attentively as Rena had been speaking and finally spoke, “Perhaps, if you can’t threaten his granddaughter, you could threaten him, himself. He aspires to be the head of the Council of Elders, but that will only happen if he is alive. If he tries to turn against you, you kill him. If he tries to depose you and become High Lord, you kill him, through an intermediary, of course. It wouldn’t do for the High Lord to be accused of assassination, now would it?”

Nor turned to Ran-Na and said, “Brother, I’m depending on you to keep our followers in line. Keep them so busy that they don’t have time to think about what they are really doing.”

Turning to Rena and Fina he said, “Please help Ran-Na keep them busy. If you can, capture some of our opponents.”

All three stood and Rena said, “As you wish,,,,,,,,,,,,, brother, but I am not sanguine as to our success in this matter.”

“While you are on the surface dealing with them I will be attempting to garner more support.”

His siblings exited and the door closed behind them.

While Nor was trying to drum up additional support the El family had problems of its own. They were spread out around the globe fighting disasters and rescuing people from danger. The problem was that there were not enough of them to really go around.

The determination had been made to keep couples together, thus each of the children and their spouses were patrolling together. Carrie and Penny stayed with local Lois and Clark, even when Lois had to go to the farm to feed baby Penny. Local Clark, Penny and Carrie would in essence stand guard while she went in to breast feed.

When they landed in the yard Martha came out and addressed Lois and Clark, “Well, who do we have here?”

Before either had a chance to answer, out through the door bounded Scrappy. Seeing strangers he moved over and sniffed Carrie. Immediately he sat and his tail started to wag energetically.

Carrie knelt and put her arms around the dog’s neck and hugged him as tears streamed down her face. She said, “You know me, don’t you, boy?”

He wagged his tail just that much harder in reply.

Protector stood then she and Supergirl both ran to Martha and put their arms around her shouting, “Grammy!”

Scrappy started leaping into the air exhibiting his joy until Carrie gave the hand signal to sit.

Martha returned the hugs and with a mystified tone in her voice asked, “Carrie?”

The older girl said, “Yep, that’s me. It’s good to see you.”

Martha put both hands on the shoulders of Supergirl and asked, “If you’re Carrie, then who is this?”

“I’m Penny, Grammy.”

Even though she was shocked at this revelation she still managed to pull both girls into a hug as she started weeping. Finally she said, “My grandchildren. You’re my granddaughters. My special girls.”

Lois said, “I need to go feed Penny. Uh, the other Penny. The younger Penny.”

Supergirl laughed and said, “We understand, Mom. Go ahead. We’ll be okay out here.”

Martha looked around taking in Protector, Supergirl and Superman. She asked, “Anyone want some iced tea?”

Protector and Supergirl chorused, “We do!” Clark nodded.

Martha said, “I’ll be right out.” She returned to the kitchen; put the pitcher and glasses on a tray before bringing them outside. She sat on the glider with a granddaughter on each side as they talked and sipped their tea.

At this point they were observed and their presence was reported back to Nor.

Nor was puzzling this information, out loud, “Why would they be visiting a residence in the middle of nowhere?”

Rena answered his question, “It must have something to do with the child. If she just gave birth then she must need to feed the child. We can place a watcher there and if she is there at regular intervals, then that has to be the answer.”

Nor replied, “See to it. If we can identify the location of the child we can eliminate that problem. That would only leave the current vessel of Kal-El’s essence. She could have additional children and they would in turn be a threat to my rule.”

“Why would that be? I am not sanguine about killing the child and I really don’t know why it has to be so, but if you are to kill the child, you will be able to force Zara into a life bond. Why could you not force Zara into a life bond without killing the child? If you did, wouldn’t that end the threat? She is the one in direct line of succession.”

“It is because of Gee-Ra’s directives. Unless Lord Jen-Mai can convince the council that such should be the case, they could hold out for future offspring. If this is a male heir then it would only be a matter of time before Zara could complete a life bond with that child. If it is female then there is the possibility of future male offspring.

“No, we must destroy this child and defeat the El family in this combat and kill them or have them banished. That is the only way we can be sure that I will be the undisputed ruler of New Krypton. As ruler of New Krypton we can then conquer this miserable planet and enslave all of the inhabitants. You, Fina, Ran-Na, Gam-Re and Col-Re will each have a kingdom here. We can use these super powers to completely subjugate the entire population and submit them to our will.”

Rena was somewhat pragmatic as she replied, “Before we start building castles in the air, we need to end this conflict and be the winners. If we fail, we are the ones that will be banished to the Phantom Zone. If it becomes known that we violated custom and used non-family members in the ritual combat it will go doubly hard on us. In fact, they could decide that banishment to the Phantom Zone is not sufficient punishment. We could have our atoms scattered across the galaxy. I for one do not want that to happen to me.”

“All the more reason to do what needs to be done to successfully prosecute this combat.”

Rena stood up to leave and as she did, she turned to her brother and said, “If we fail, rest assured, I will do what is necessary to avoid having my atoms spread across the galaxy. I will gladly accept banishment to that alternative. I would venture to say that any of your followers, if they even think that is a possibility will turn on you in a heartbeat. You could very likely find yourself all alone at the end and I would not shed a tear over what happens to you because you are the author of your own fate.

I will not allow you to drag me down with you.”

Rena left and when she did, Nor sat for a time thinking. He realized that in order for him to even survive he needed every one of his followers to do their best and in fact needed more in order to be sure of a victory. There could be no half measures. He would kill the child and he would kill the woman that had the essence of Kal-El and had given it birth.

Nor had managed to ‘stop the bleeding’ after he had lost only three supporters. He had started off with 25 non-family supporters. The loss of three made the numbers exactly equal on both sides. Somehow he needed to increase his numbers if he was to assure a win. His options were very limited. Indeed he had more followers, however they were back on New Krypton and even if he were able to summon them it would take a month for the ship to get there to pick them up and another month for them to arrive. There was no way that this conflict could be drawn out for two full months. He was cursing his fate and how things had turned out.

Nor called Jen-Mai to himself.

When Jen-Mai entered Nor’s ‘throne room’ he moved to the foot of the dais and placed his closed fist over his heart while giving a small bow. “You called me, Lord Nor.”

“Yes, Jen-Mai. What are you doing to move the council in the direction of awarding the combat victory to me and my family?”

“Lord Nor, it is very difficult to do that in view of the fact that the members of the El family are in fact not subdued. You and I both know that they are in fact family, but I have successfully kept that information from the Council of Elders and will continue to so for as long as I can. Now, of course, your family has not lost in that you are in fact free also. I don’t know what more I can do on your behalf. You need to subdue them in order to win.”

“If you had been somewhat quicker in declaring a victor at the time that we had them all subdued it would have been finished then.”

“It all happened so quickly! Before I had a clear view of all of them restrained, one of them was free and by the rules of the combat a victor could not be declared.”

“Lord Jen-Mai, if you want to be the head of the Council of Elders, you will have to do better than that. Perhaps they could be discredited. You could make them out to be criminals unworthy of the rule of New Krypton.” Nor thought for a second before continuing. “Yes, that’s it. We must paint the house of El as a house corrupt and seeking world domination at all costs, even going to the extent of violating custom to do so. See to it.”

“I will do as you say. It will be difficult, but I will endeavor to remain the only liaison between the council and the planet.”

“Good, that should forward our ends nicely. You may go.”

Jen-Mai backed out of the audience chamber.

Nor chuckled to himself and thought, <Gullible fool. He thinks that once he is head of the council that he will depose me and assume the rule himself. Who does he think he is? The right to rule rests with me and me alone. I will brook no interference in that. I will use him to win this conflict and then I will dispose of him before he becomes troublesome.>

As Jen-Mai was retreating down the hallway he was thinking, <Arrogant fool! Just who does he think he is? Just because his aunt was the wife of Gee-Ra that does not put him in the royal line. He would be a usurper at best. We would be better off with someone not related to either the house of Na or Ra. Time will tell.>

Chapter 21 — Conflicts

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2
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It was later in the day and Nor found that there was to be another formal challenge, this time by the imposter. He was worried. He could not be sure of marshaling his forces on such short notice.

He sent out a mental call, /”This is Lord Nor. I demand that all of my followers gather and prepare for another conflict.”/

Immediately after Nor sent out his summons, Local Clark sent a broadcast thought, /”Nor, I’m waiting for you. I’m in the combat area. It’s just my family and me. Come meet us in fair combat.”/

Nor was with his brother Ran-Na when that thought came to him. Nor asked Ran, “How did you get away from your opponent?”

“I damaged a populated structure. That weak fool along with some more of his family stopped to rescue the Earthlings that were in the structure. Perhaps that is a weakness that we can use to our advantage. These ‘supermen’ and ‘superwomen’ care overly much for these people. They wish to preserve their lives. What are a few slaves, more or less?”

“Yes, we could lose half of the population of this world and there would still be enough slaves to serve us adequately. Perhaps you are correct and we could use that to our advantage. However, the combat area was selected because of its limited population.”

“We could use the others to create diversions around the globe of this pitiful planet to draw away his family then at least the numbers would be closer to equal. Where did all of these people come from anyhow? We were told that they didn’t have any other family.”

“Fortunately, the Council of Elders hasn’t verified that they are all of the house of El. I don’t know how there are four of each of them, but unquestionably there are four Kal-El’s and each has a wife. The rest have all proven to be family, either children and their bond mates or a nephew and his bond mate. There has to be some way to get them out of the picture,” Nor mused.

“Perhaps we could lure them into a trap. Get them underground where it’s dark and their powers won’t regenerate.” Ran-Na suggested.

With a pitying look, Nor said in a tone usually reserved for a not so bright child, “That would presuppose that we had a way to strip them of their powers to begin with, which we don’t and that the same thing would not affect us at the same time. You forget that we have the same weaknesses as they have.”

Ran-Na persisted, “But, that is the only way we can end this conflict. One side has to kill or at least subdue the other. The Drei has proven itself to be ineffective against Kryptonians in this environment. Even when powered by a super powered individual it is ineffective against an invulnerable body. There just has to be something we can use.”

Nor and his brother left the ship and headed for the surface. They found the rest of the family with their followers. After Nor and Ran-Na landed they all gathered as Nor addressed them. “We have found that these weak fools will do anything to protect the inhabitants of this planet. We will use this weakness against them. By creating emergencies around this globe we will keep them too busy to protect one another. We will isolate them and kill them, one by one.”

One of his followers spoke up, “Lord Nor, how are we to do that? If they are as super as us, how can we kill them?”

Nor’s tone was imperious as he addressed them, “Find a way, I command you. If it takes a dozen of you using the full force off your heat vision then use two dozen to make sure, but you must kill them. It is worth your lives and the lives of your relatives on New Krypton. If you fail me, they will all be forfeit! Do you understand me?”

The one he had been speaking directly to replied, “Yes, My Lord Nor. I understand.”

The speaker turned to some of the others and as a group they took off and flew away.

All who remained behind were Nor’s direct family. He said, “Let us go. Perhaps the odds will be in our favor.” He nodded in the direction of his departed followers, “Perhaps they will be able to distract enough of them so that we will have an advantage.”

They flew to the combat area and landing they saw the El family lined up against them. Each of the men had a Drei in his hands. The women were all unarmed.

Nor checked and all of the women on his side bore Kryptonian forged blades while he and the other men all bore the Drei.

One of the Kal-El’s strode forward. Nor couldn’t tell which one it was because they all looked alike. He was twirling his Drei in an offhand manner as if baiting Nor to use his. Nor issued a command, “Col-Re, destroy the interloper.”

In obedience to the command, Col-Re stepped forward and began to spin his Drei.

2013 Clark watched and saw the energy build up. He was not worried. He could see the glow as the power built and compared it to what he and the other Clarks had generated in their practice sessions and realized that he had taken stronger hits from them.

In order to intimidate this relative of Nor, he stopped twirling his weapon and waited for Col-Re to take his shot.

2013 Clark was braced and when the bolt came it staggered him, but only forced him back several paces.

2013 Clark then taunted Col-Re, “Is that the best you can do? That was disappointing! I thought you could do better than that.” While he had been speaking he had started twirling his Drei around. The glow both of the sphere on the Drei and the emblem on his chest was easily twice as bright as Col-Re’s staff when he released his bolt. A few seconds later the bolt had struck and Col-Re was twenty feet away and lying on his back.

Nor’s anger was boundless. He railed at Col-Re for his failure as the latter was picking himself up and shaking his head to clear it. When Col-Re was finally on his feet Nor could see that he was unsteady. He knew that the bolt Col-Re had received would have killed a non-super powered individual and that in itself was cause for concern. He had researched the journal archives of the planet and had discovered that Kal-El in his persona as Superman did not at any time take a life. In fact, there was evidence which suggested that he took any loss of life by these Earthlings as a personal affront. As if it was through his personal failure that they had died. Thus, the power behind that bolt was a surprise.

Local Clark challenged, “Nor! What are you waiting for? I thought you came here to fight! Well, I’m waiting for you. Why don’t you quit hiding behind the other members of your family? What are you going to do, send one of your sisters out next?” As he spoke the Drei was in motion and Nor could see the power building as the glow of the Drei brightened.

Nor was actually shaking both with rage and with fear. This was the imposter. He had not grown up on New Krypton and yet he handled the Drei with skill and power. How could this be? The period allowed for practice had been severely limited, by design to give his family another advantage yet the imposter handled the weapon like a master. Nor was very happy that at this time his followers were not here to witness his humiliation, yet he longed to have them there for the numerical advantage they afforded.

He knew that sooner or later this could devolve into a personal, one-on-one battle and even though he had won many tournaments with the Drei he was actually afraid to go up against this man.

It occurred to him that the reason for the difference was twofold. In the first place he, Nor, was fighting for position and his desire to rule over a subservient population. A simple and yet,

to his mind, adequate motivation while his opponent was fighting for the life of a child, his child and on top of that the freedom of his adopted world. Those two motivations trumped his dramatically.

This realization coming suddenly gave Nor reason to fear and that fear was compounded. Now that the die was cast he had to win because if he didn’t, the Council of Elders would hear of his use of non-family auxiliaries and he would be branded a rogue and cheat. His family honor would be destroyed and the least sentence he could hope for would be hard labor in the fields like a common farmer. Then there was banishment to the Phantom Zone or execution. Yes, the die had been cast and now he needed to do whatever he could to make sure that he won.

Instinctively Nor knew that if he engaged personally and failed he would lose a lot of his followers. They only followed him because of his strength and a lot of that was a result of his braggadocio. He was able to claim clean tournament victories when actually there had been unscrupulous practices involved that he had seen to it never came to light. If the truth ever became known even his own family might not follow him.

Bringing in non-family auxiliaries had been a chance he’d had to take and telling his followers that he’d had reports that their opponents were going to use non-family members in an attempt to achieve an unjust win had brought them in to support him to make it fair. If word got out that they were in fact family he would be deserted by any honorable Kryptonian.

He sent a thought to Ran-Ga, “Let’s attack simultaneously.”/ Nor saw out of the corner of his eye that his brother was powering his Drei. Nor put his into motion.

Local Clark received the warning from Ching, “Kal-El, they mean to both attack you at the same time.”/

He replied, “Let them. Their combined power still can’t do any serious damage to me. Just make sure that they don’t succeed with everyone.”/

“As you wish.”/

Local Clark braced himself. Fortunately it is very difficult to coordinate a burst of energy. The bolts actually came one right after the other. Clark was staggered by the first and as a result the second came as only a glancing blow, but he was still staggered enough to go down on one knee. When he stood he looked at 2091 Clark and got a nod. As he and 2091 Clark both spun their Dreis he said, “Two can play at that game.” Realizing what had saved him from a serious hit he sent, “You take the brother, I’ll take Nor.”/

“You got it. On three. One ... Two ... Three.”/

At three twin bolts of energy lanced out. One caught Nor and sent him sprawling while the other knocked Ran-Na ten feet and dropped him to the ground.

The remaining members of Nor’s family gathered around to prevent the El family members from capitalizing on their advantage.

Noga, Ran-Na’s wife pulled her Kryptonian sword and flew at local Lois. She aimed a blow at her head. Superwoman stood her ground and simply waited. Not wishing to take a chance as the blade fell, Superwoman brought up her arms, crossed at the forearms and caught Noga’s forearm in the ‘V’ that was formed, arresting its downward movement. Spinning her arms she grabbed Noga’s arm and twisted. This resulted in Noga’s sword flying from her grip and her arm being twisted up behind her back in a hammerlock. Freeing one of her hands from gripping Noga’s arm, Superwoman succeeded in grabbing Noga’s free arm and twisted it behind her back in a double hammerlock, effectively subduing her.

Fina, seeing her sister-in-law defeated so easily, pulled her sword and flew to her aid.

Before she was able to strike a blow however, 2013 Lois — Ultra Woman attacked her from the side. The impact took her by

surprise and she lost her grip on her sword. They tumbled over and over grappling, trying to subdue one another. 2013 Lois had a distinct advantage though. Herb had given her an extra pendant. Her strength was the equal of her husband's and superior to that of Fina. Once Lois was able to get a good grip on one of Fina's arms she easily twisted it around behind her the same way that local Lois had subdued Noga. That fight was over in seconds and at the end the El family had two of the Na family captive.

Nor was recovering as this was all happening. He saw the woman that he needed to kill restraining Noga and saw an opportunity. He started to twirl his Drei. Local Clark saw his action and assumed that he would be the target, but at the last second Nor changed his target. The bolt struck local Lois, throwing her ten feet and knocking her to the ground.

Local Clark literally saw red and roared in rage. He saw Lori fly to local Lois' aid and he took off at Nor. Nor was twirling his Drei again but he had not built up sufficient charge before Clark hit him. Nor's family were surrounding him, but Clark knocked them aside like so many bowling pins. He barreled into Nor at full speed, catching him with a one-two left cross followed by a right uppercut. Nor was unconscious as he flew into the air under the power of Clark's fist. Clark followed him airborne, grabbing his leg to pull him back down. Nor was regaining consciousness as he felt himself being dragged down, and started to flail his arms around.

Clark unleashed his full strength in a punch to Nor's midsection causing the air to leave Nor's lungs in a rush. As Nor bent over from that blow his guard was down and Clark sent his other fist into Nor's face. Clark had the satisfaction of feeling a solid contact and thinking that in a normal human fight it would have resulted in the one on the receiving end having a black eye. He followed up on his advantage with another fist to the face, this time feeling the flesh of Nor's face crushed under his crashing rock hard fist. Nor's teeth shifted under the onslaught. If not for his invulnerability his jaw might have been broken by that blow.

That was the last blow that Clark was able to strike because Gam-Re and Col-Re, Nor's cousins, each grabbed an arm to restrain him. Before they were able to subdue him, 2013 Clark and 2091 Clark were both at his side pulling Nor's cousins away. The distraction afforded Rena and Bela an opportunity to grab Nor and fly away.

When local Clark turned around he saw his Lois standing with Lori by her side. His anger was abated somewhat and the three Clarks flew back to their side of the field.

2013 Lois still retained her hold on Fina and the rest of the family closed in around her.

Local Clark turned back to the Na family and asked, "Where is your sense of honor?" He hooked a toe under the shaft of a Drei and flipped it into the air where he grabbed it and held it aloft. His visage was very grim as he continued, "This weapon is restricted to the men! When Nor used this on my wife, my bond mate, he violated the traditions of this combat! I demand satisfaction! Where is the coward Nor? He isn't man enough to fight man to man! He has to use a weapon against a woman. He is beyond contempt!"

The remaining members of the Na family were all looking very uneasy. They all knew that yet another sacred tradition had been broken. It was another demonstration of just how low Nor would sink in order to achieve his ends. It had weighed on them that Nor had recruited non-family auxiliaries, but this act reached a new low, even for Nor. They each were shamed by his action, but none of them were willing to admit it.

Ran-Na finally spoke up, "You have Fina, but unless you can subdue all of us you do not secure the victory and rest assured that Fina will escape if at all possible. I, personally, regret Nor's actions."

There were nods of assent from the other members of the Na

family.

Local Clark turned to 2013 Lois and said, "Please release her."

2013 Lois replied, "Whatever you say. It's your show."

As soon as 2013 Lois released her, Fina turned to her and placing her closed fist over her heart and giving a small bow, said, "Thank you. You have displayed more honor than my brother. You have been a most honorable combatant and I honor you." She then flew back to her family.

Ran-Na said, "I do not know how we can make this up to you, but you have my word that this atrocity will not be repeated. I will inform my brother that if he ever tries something like that again he will be alone in this fight. We are not all like him. You have my word."

Local Clark nodded his acknowledgment of Ran-Na's statement and the members of the Na family took off and returned to their ship.

Local Clark moved over and put his arms around his wife as he asked, "How are you?"

She replied, "Oh, just shook up a little. I wasn't expecting it, that's all." She looked at Zara and asked, "What are the consequences for his action?"

"If the elders had seen it he would have been declared in default, but since none of them were here, not even Jen-Mai, that won't happen. It might not have happened even if Jen-Mai had been present, given that he is supporting Nor."

Lt. Ching, who had been standing off to one side observing, flew over and said, "The council needs to be made aware of what is going on down here. I can't believe that they are listening to Jen-Mai and taking it for granted that he is telling them the truth."

Zara replied, "So far there has been no harm done."

Ching was angry and it could be heard in his voice as he said, "Only through good luck and the intervention of their friend Herb. If not for him bringing the additional family members this conflict would have been lost in the first second."

Zara replied, "Let's just thank Rao that he did." She turned to 2013 Clark and said, "You will need to warn your family members of what has occurred. They will need to be alert to tricks of this sort in their interactions with Nor's supporters. We can't assume that they will be as dishonorable as their leader, however, we should not discount it as a possibility."

"Agreed. I'll see to it that the word is passed along."

Local Lois said, "It's time for me to go feed the baby. Why don't we meet back at our house?"

Local Lois and Clark along with Protector and Supergirl took off for Smallville while the rest headed for Metropolis.

Since Carrie was flying by using her telekinesis she couldn't match the superspeed of her parents or sister and they accommodated their speed to hers which enabled them to talk as they traveled.

Since they were traveling somewhat slower it was easier for them to be observed and followed by an adherent of Nor who did just that. He followed them all the way to Smallville and observed as Lois went into the house while Clark and the kids remained outside. He saw an older woman leave the house and bring what appeared to be refreshments to them on a tray. They all interacted on a most friendly basis. He thought, <I must report this back to a member of the family. It could be important.> He had no idea as to how important this information would actually be.

Chapter 22 — Three to one odds still aren't good enough

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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Since the war had started the minions of Nor's family had been creating emergencies all over the globe.

Because of Lois's need to feed the baby at regular intervals, the local couple had elected to stay in North America. Lois had requested that Supergirl and Protector stay with them. Supergirl, being the youngest and therefore the weakest, would be in need of extra protection. The actual range of Carrie's powers was not yet known and Lois was loath to take any chances with the welfare of either of them.

They had been returning from the farm where Lois had been feeding baby Penny when they spotted a structure fire in Wichita. It was an elementary school and as a group they zoomed in to deal with it. As they approached, Clark spotted Nor hovering nearby.

They operated like a well oiled machine. While Clark dealt with the flames, Lois, Supergirl and Protector moved into the school and started evacuating the students and teachers.

The students were particularly taken with Supergirl and Protector. Supergirl was not bothered by the smoke because of her super powers. Carrie created a shield around her body which allowed air, but no particulate matter to pass, preventing the smoke from penetrating. Her shield also protected her from the flames. Between them they managed to evacuate a majority of the classrooms. There were several teachers and children that had been overcome by the smoke.

At first, Carrie was somewhat uneasy because of the flames and the memory of what had happened to her when she was six, but that uneasiness didn't last long because the memory of her rescue by Superman and her confidence in her shield was able to banish the fear. She found two young girls passed out in a classroom and using her telekinetic power picked them up and floated them out of the room, down the corridor over the heads of the children and outside, laying them on the grass of the yard. She immediately returned to continue the search.

Supergirl flew from room to room above the heads of the children that crowded the hallways. Entering a room she found a third grade boy who was coughing from the smoke, but refusing to leave because he was trying to grab up some comic books that he had stashed in his desk. Supergirl landed next to him and said, "Those aren't worth dying for." At superspeed she gathered up all of the comics, thrust them into his hands and said, "Come on, I'll get you out of here." She picked him up and flew him out of the building.

While the girls were doing all of this, Lois dealt with the teachers that had been overcome by the smoke. There were three that she found and carried outside.

By this time the ambulances had started to arrive and Superwoman was able to turn the teachers over directly to the paramedics.

There were three children that needed more extensive treatment, so Superwoman, Supergirl and Protector each took one and flew them to the hospital.

Lois and the girls had just left with the children and Clark was finishing up on the fire as he realized that Nor must have started. Too late it occurred to him that it might be a trap.

Nor had been waiting for the time when he would have a single opponent and as soon as he saw all of the others fly off with the injured Earthlings he was ready to pounce. He had already summoned his brother and they had been waiting together for the right time. Nor and Ran-Na approached Clark at superspeed from behind so that he had no warning. Together they barreled into him, knocking him out of the air. Each grabbed one of Clark's arms and twisted it behind his back, effectively subduing him.

When they struck Clark, it reminded him of being sacked as a quarterback when he'd played football. They hit him so hard that

even though his was an invulnerable body, the air was knocked out of him. Belatedly he thought, <Makes sense; we're all equally super powered.>

He found himself on the ground with his opponents on top of him. He could feel super powered blows being rained on the back of his head. The speed and force of the blows were actually having an effect on him.

He mustered enough control to send a directed thought, /"Lois, help ... Nor."/

A second later, as suddenly as it had started, half of the pummeling he had been experiencing stopped and his left side was free. He twisted out of the remaining grasp and flew up facing his antagonist. The one remaining was Nor and out of the corner of his eye he saw Lois tangling with Ran-Na. While he watched, Ran-Na closed with Lois and tried to use his superior strength to subdue her.

Clark found himself feeling a little sorry for Ran-Na. He didn't know just who he was tangling with. Lori and every Lois were black belts in Tae Kwan Do.

Clark was surprised and worried when she allowed Ran-Na to actually close with her and put his hands on her. However, he needn't have worried because it had suited her purpose to let Nor in close. When he was exactly where she wanted him. At superspeed, she brought her super powerful knee up directly into his groin. Clark found himself wincing in sympathy and feeling sorry for Ran-Na. Even though he did, the look of surprise and pain on Ran-Na's face brought a smile to Clark's lips. Invulnerable or not, just as he had felt it when the super powered brothers had tackled him, it was obvious that even a super powered man was vulnerable to a super powered woman kneeling him in that most vulnerable spot. Ran-Na immediately curled up into a ball of pain and Lois kicked him in the head which left Ran-Na unconscious.

Nor screamed and at superspeed flew to Ran-Na and scooping him up took off for the ship, the one place that the members of the El family were not following.

"Thanks. I don't know how much of that I could have taken. Much more and I would have lost consciousness. Where are the girls?"

"I left them at the hospital when I got your call."

Just then Supergirl and Protector arrived and hovered in the air next to their parents.

Lois gave Carrie a look and said, "I don't know how safe it is for you to go around by yourselves."

Carrie floated over to her and said, "If they had tried to attack us they would have found it impossible to even touch us. I'd throw a bubble around both of us and anchored it firmly. We wouldn't have been going anywhere with them and they couldn't have gotten to us, no matter what they tried. Don't worry about us, Mom. We can take care of ourselves."

Lois put her arms around her and said, "I guess I just have to get used to my little girl being all grown up." She kissed her cheek.

Ran-Na woke up while they were in route and was mostly recovered by the time he was in their quarters. Even though he was awake, he was still bent over and in considerable pain.

Rena was there when they arrived. She gave Nor and Ran-Na a questioning look as they entered. Rena noted the way that Ran-Na was walking and raised an eyebrow. Finally, she spoke, "I think our brother was overconfident. Was he pitted against a female?"

"Yes, the one holding the essence of Kal-El. She surprised him with an ... unusual style of ... attack. I just hope he will recover soon. Why are you here?"

Just then Noga, Ran-Na's wife entered. Spotting Ran-Na and his obvious distress she addressed Nor, "What has happened to

my husband?”

His reply didn't satisfy her, “He was attacked by the woman with the essence of Kal-El.”

“How did she do this to him?”

“She used ... an ... unorthodox fighting technique.”

Noga lost her temper, “Where is she? I'll tear her eyes out!”

Nor tried to calm her down by saying, “Noga, it would be better if you tended to your husband. I need him back in action. He is my chief lieutenant and I need him directing our efforts. Once he has recovered, you may do as you wish, however, I would caution you that she has skills such as we have never seen on Krypton.”

Rena, who had been standing by with a smirk on her lips at what had happened to her brother, finally was able to make her report, “I've had a report back from my watcher. He has confirmed that the woman is in fact arriving at the remote residence on a regular schedule. A schedule which, not too surprisingly, would correspond to the feeding schedule of an infant. I believe that it is safe to assume that the child you are after is being concealed at that residence.”

Nor was jubilant. This news could signal a significant gain in the conflict. If he could eliminate the child it could signal his followers that they were winning. “All right. Rena, I want you to go to that residence and terminate the existence of that baby.”

For once in her life, Rena stood up to her brother. “If you want that child dead, you are going to have to do it yourself. Do not ask a woman to kill a baby. I have done a lot of things for you, but that is where I draw the line. When I pair bond, I will want children and I know how I would feel if that child were threatened. I have supported you up to this point, but now I am beginning to have serious doubts as to what is right and wrong. If this were right, would we have to break tradition this way and bring in non-family members to help us?”

Nor tried to argue her down, “Look at all of the help that they have. There was only supposed to be three of them against our family. This conflict should have been ended within minutes of its start. Those others don't belong here.”

Rena rebutted, “Nor, quit lying to yourself and us. I'm not a stupid blind fool like so many of your followers. I did the same thing that I assume you did. I checked and there are enough of them with bioelectromagnetic signatures within the range of standard deviational error to indicate that they are in fact family members. Those that do not logically are their bond mates. The evidence is conclusive. It's just a good thing that the council has not been curious and has simply taken Jen-Mai's word about the situation because the sensor array would also reveal the presence of your non-family followers involved in the combat.”

Nor was taken aback by this tirade. He had never expected anything like this and had never experienced its like before, especially from his sister. She could see the effect of what she was saying in his expression.

She added, “Don't worry, brother. I'm not about to say anything, because if I did it would implicate me and I would be considered an accessory, before or after the fact, I don't know, but an accessory none the less.” She pinned him with a look as she said, “You've started this and you've put the continued existence of our family on the line. I just hope it is worth it. Frankly, I'm beginning to have my doubts. I am also starting to doubt that we will finally succeed. The trial by combat was created to determine right from wrong. I'm starting to see the wisdom of our ancestors who set up the system and also how ultimately it will work to our ruin. We are in the wrong and you know it, deep down I'm sure you do. How can you really expect to win in ritual combat when you blatantly flout the custom?”

Nor didn't deign to reply to her comments. He simply asked, “Where is the child?”

“I saw where you were when Ran-Na got what he deserved

for underestimating the woman. His disdain for women and their abilities is well known. It's about time he learned that lesson. The child is hidden within just a short distance of where you just had your encounter. Fly west from that location and seek out Van-Ta. He is watching and will point out the residence.”

“Why don't you show me which one it is?”

“With Ran-Na incapacitated, who is going to direct your followers?”

Nor thought to himself, <I need to end this conflict and it looks like to only way is to eliminate the child. I have to distract this Kal-El so that I can finish this. Rena is correct, I need her directing the others.>

“Ah, yes, you are quite right. Please do. I will go with you to stir up the troops and let them know that you are in charge.”

After exiting the ship Nor and Rena traveled around the globe encouraging their followers in their activities and personally taking a hand in creating some disasters. The technique that they had decided to use was this. They would initiate a disaster and as soon as members of the El family would show up, they would flee the scene leaving the El family members tied up, dealing with the emergency. If they could gather additional members of Nor's followers they would try to capture or kill the El family members.

In this particular instance Nor and Rena were floating in the air over South Dakota. They were using their heat vision to undermine the structure of Mount Rushmore.

Park Rangers saw what was happening and put out an emergency call for Superman and Superwoman.

The call went out over the radio and was heard by Saint and Blaze who responded as fast as they could fly. As they arrived on the scene, Blaze flew into Rena and Saint flew into Nor. Both were thrown for some distance and their depredations stopped. Nor sent out a call, /”We have two of them isolated. Come north.”/

Suddenly Blaze and Saint found themselves surrounded by four additional New Kryptonians.

Nor offered, “You are outnumbered, surrender and we will not kill you.” <At least not right away.>

Blaze looked around. Suddenly to Nor's surprise she started to laugh.

Nor couldn't believe what he was hearing. He challenged, “You think I jest?”

Blaze stopped laughing long enough to say, “Three to one odds? You've GOT to be kidding. You want us to surrender based on those odds? Tell you what, I'll give you the chance right now to surrender. Do that and we'll go easy on you.”

Nor still could not believe the audacity of her statements. No woman had ever defied him in this fashion before. He sputtered out, “You are calling on us to surrender? How can you even think that we would surrender when we have you outnumbered three to one?”

“Because those aren't great enough odds for you to win. One last chance, surrender now or suffer the consequences.”

This ‘female’ was not going to get away with mocking him in this fashion. Nor bellowed in rage and flew to the attack.

Blaze waited for him to close and at the last instant shifted to the side and up then performed a snap kick to the side of Nor's head. He instantly started falling from the sky. Two of his followers closed with her. They each grabbed an arm while a third came at her. Using the two holding her for support she lashed out with her feet again and kicked the third assailant. One foot hit him in the stomach and the other caught him under the chin, snapping his head back. As he started to fall out of the sky she zoomed backwards suddenly and as she did she brought her arms together so that the two holding her arms flew into each other, their heads crashing together. Their grips relaxed and they followed Nor and the other toward the ground.

While this was happening Rena and one of Nor's followers flew at Saint. He allowed them to come within range and then he grabbed Rena's arm and spun her around at superspeed, using her as a club to attack his other assailant. Both fell out of the sky.

They had both finished with their opponents at about the same time so Blaze asked, "You okay, JJ?"

With a smirk he replied, "They never laid a glove on me."

"I think we will need some help to restrain them." /"Lara and Mike, Cele and Bill, we need help! Come to Mount Rushmore."/

Within a minute Ultra Woman 2, Torque, Noel and Shield were on the scene. They all headed for the ground where their opponents were just regaining their bearings, but as they landed the Nor contingent were on their feet and seeing like numbers, lost all of their motivation for the conflict and flew off as a group.

Lara turned to Hattie and asked, "You guys took all of them out?"

Hattie smiled and said, "Yeah, they thought they had an advantage, 3 to 1," she looked over at JJ and said, "I guess we taught them a lesson, didn't we, honey?"

JJ added, "I don't think they'll be so confident with those odds again."

Lara said, "I guess we need to go back on patrol. Call if you need us again."

Hattie stopped her, "Remember what Aunt Lois said?"

Lara laughed and asked, "Which one?"

Hattie also laughed and said, "Yeah, it is confusing, isn't it. The local one. The one that is all Kryptonian. She said that karate was unknown on New Krypton. You guys have all studied Tae Kwan Do. I've studied the softer styles and I've had JJ take classes with me. That was what gave us the edge. They couldn't cope with the moves."

Torque said, "If that's the case maybe you should show us some moves."

"I think Lara will have to show you."

Bill spoke up, "I learned self-defense as a cop. Do you think that will be enough?"

"We can only hope. I'm a black belt and JJ is the equivalent of a brown belt in Ishon Ru and Jeet Kun Do. We were able to wipe the floor with them."

Patting his cheek, Cele said, "I'll teach you, honey. What they teach you as a policeman just isn't up to what we have to do. It will be better than nothing, but we'll work on it when we finish up here and get home. She looked over at Wild Bill and said, "Maybe we'll have a group class."

Mike said, "Sounds like fun. Lawyers don't have much call for knowledge of the martial arts."

Lara looked him up and down and said, "For a lawyer you sure have a good build."

Mike laughed and said, "Is that what attracted you, my body?"

Lara floated over and kissed him, "You were a skinny kid when I fell for you."

"Ahhh, young love. There's nothing like it."

"Don't let it go to your head."

Mike reached for Lara's hand and waving to the others, said, "We'll see you guys later," and they took off.

Cele laughed and said, "I guess they're right. We've spent enough time gabbing. Time to get back to work." She and Bill took off closely followed by Hattie and JJ.

After a period of time Nor found Rena again and asked her to accompany him in yet another attempt to distract the parents so that he could finally have a clear field for an attempt on the child.

Outside of Metropolis they started a fire at a refinery. 2013 Lois — Ultra Woman and 2013 Clark — Superman responded. Seeing just how big a job this was going to be they sent out a call, /"Jimmy and Peg, Lucy and Rob, we need help! The Metropolis refinery — fire!"/

/ "Be right there, Mom!"/

Seconds later the four superheroes swooped in and started assisting with the fire.

Seeing that the kids could handle the blaze, UW and Superman took off after Nor and Rena. Nor was nowhere to be seen, but Rena taunted the pair into following her. When they did she led them a merry chase.

Chapter 23 — Dissension Within the Ranks

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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Six year old Carrie was on her way to the baby's room. She knew something was about to happen and she knew that she had to protect the baby.

She entered the baby's room and closed the door. She hadn't said anything to Grammy or Grandpa because she didn't want them to be hurt. She stood just inside the door and waited.

Suddenly there was the sound of shattering glass and there was another presence in the room. Carrie saw a figure materialize next to the cradle.

She said, "Bad mans leave baby alone!"

Lord Nor looked at Carrie as if seeing her for the first time and smiled an evil smile. He said, "Just who are you?"

"I'm Carrie! Carrie Harris Kent."

Nor was taken aback, "Kent? Are you another child of *them*?"

"You try to hurt Mommy and Daddy. I will not let you hurt baby. Go away!"

"First I will deal with this child, and then I will deal with you."

Nor started to reach into the cradle to remove the sleeping child.

In a dangerous tone, Carrie said, "I said leave baby *alone*!" Her eyes started to glow with a bright light as she said, "Go away!"

When she said this Nor was suddenly seized by a power to strong for him to resist. It hurled him back out through the window and dropped to the ground. When he hit the ground he actually felt the impact as if somehow his powers had deserted him temporarily.

He picked himself up from the ground and brushed off the dust and, taking off at superspeed, headed for the window to the baby's room. When he arrived he crashed into a barrier and the impact stunned him. In surprise he fell to the ground again.

This time it took him longer to arise and when he did he was shaking his head trying to recover his equilibrium. He looked up at the open window. He could see the curtain flapping outside of the frame and decided that whatever barrier had been there must now be gone. He took off again and accelerated away in an attempt to give himself enough room to build up some speed. When he was at a distance he reversed course and flew as fast as he could at the window again. When it was too late for him to stop or even turn he saw the curtain suddenly stop fluttering and hang limply. A second later he hit that impenetrable barrier with so much force that there was an audible crash as irresistible force met the immovable barrier. This time it was several minutes before Nor recovered his senses as he lay unconscious on the ground.

His sister Rena was the one who found him. He was just starting to open his eyes. She knelt next to him and assisted him in sitting up. She asked, "What happened?"

He replied, "I'm not sure. There was a child. She told me to leave the baby alone then I was out here and ... I couldn't get back in. Why are you here? You were supposed to be keeping that

Superwoman and Superman busy so that I could get the baby.”

“They were becoming too much for me. I managed to elude them and decided to see how you had fared. Who is this child that you were talking about?”

“Another child of Kal-El’s somehow. I don’t know how it is possible, but she called him Daddy.”

Suddenly, standing between Nor and the Kent farm house was 2013 Lois in her Ultra Woman uniform, her cape blowing in the wind. A second later Superman appeared by her side. Ultra Woman had her hands fisted and on her hips while Superman folded his arms across his chest.

2013 Lois — Ultra Woman asked, “Just what do you think you are doing?”

With all of the arrogance he could muster, Nor replied, “I’m eliminating a threat.”

Ultra Woman looked back over her shoulder and seeing the broken window said, “It doesn’t look like you’ve had much luck doing that.”

Nor grumbled, “If it hadn’t been for the other child. I wasn’t expecting her.”

Ultra Woman and Superman looked at one another and nodded. Together they took off and flew into Nor and his sister. Ultra Woman supersped in and delivered a series of punches, one to the solar plexus which forced all of the air from Rena’s lungs and two rapid blows, one which actually bloodied her nose, and another to her left eye. Rena was staggered and she stumbled back. Ultra Woman pursued her and delivered a wheel kick combination to the outside of her left knee and the ribs on her left side. Rena collapsed in a heap as Lois stood over her. Lois looked away to see how Clark was faring. When she did, Rena seized the opportunity to take off at what speed she was able to muster.

Since they were both unarmed, Superman closed with Nor and simply used his closed fist to deliver a super powered uppercut which did more than lift him off of his feet, sending him airborne after his sister.

As they watched, both Nor and his sister recovered, thanks to the sunlight, and streaked off in the direction of Metropolis where the rest of the combatants were.

Superman said, “I don’t think Rena is going to want to tangle with you again.”

Ultra Woman turned to Superman and said, “Against anyone else that shot you gave Nor would have been a knockout punch. We make a pretty good team, lover.”

She moved into his arms and gave him a kiss. “We have always worked well together. Even before I got the pendant from Herb. Remember the time ... Oh, what am I doing? We’ve got a war to fight and here I am reminiscing. Come on, Clark, there’s work to do. It looks like things are okay here. We need to win this thing so that we can get home.”

Looking around Clark said, “I agree, it looks like it will be quiet here for a time. Shall we head back?”

Lois nodded and they took off side by side and headed for Metropolis following Nor and Rena.

They weren’t looking in that direction as they flew away so they didn’t see Carrie looking out the window and smiling as they flew away.

Rena headed for the ship rather than Metropolis. When she arrived she went to the audience chamber. She found Fina already there. She moved to her chair and sat, nursing her injuries.

Fina was shocked. She asked, “What happened to you? There’s blood on your upper lip and your left eye is going black and blue.”

“I had an encounter with the one in the pink suit. Don’t let the color of the suit throw you off, she’s no prissy female. She’s a hellcat. She uses a style of fighting that I’ve only read about in history books. It is impossible to defend against. I was lucky to

get away when I did and that was only because she was distracted by Kal-El’s fight with Nor.”

Shocked, Fina blurted out, “Nor was fighting one-on-one with Kal-El? How did that happen?”

In a sardonic tone, Rena replied, “It wasn’t by choice, I assure you. You know our brother better than that. His preferred odds are usually something in excess of ten to one with the ten being on his side. I’m really having doubts as to his suitability to be High Lord. Not only is he arrogant, domineering and cruel, but he is also a coward. Too much of a coward to allow this to be a fair fight the way it is supposed to be. I have a bad feeling about this whole thing. I’m almost to the point of going to the council.”

Fina gasped, “Don’t let Nor hear you say that. I’m afraid of what he would do to you.”

Rena gave a very unladylike snort of derision. “Nor won’t do anything. Doing something would require courage, something that he is sorely lacking in. I’m not going to go along with this much longer. If you have any smarts, you won’t either. No, I don’t think you’ll bow out. You’re too afraid of Nor. Ever since we were kids he has bullied us all around, you especially. What did he do to you? Why do you put up with all his crap?”

“I’m just afraid of him, that’s all.”

Rena was becoming more and more concerned about her sister. She grabbed her shoulders and forced her to look at her. Fina looked down. Rena knew that her face had not completely recovered as yet, but that did not explain Fina’s reaction. Fina’s reaction was one of ... shame.

Rena shook her sister and said, “What *did* Nor do to you? *Tell me!*”

Fina’s reply was almost so quiet that Rena couldn’t hear. “We were perhaps closer than most brothers and sisters.”

Rena burst out, “Nor *abused* you?”

Fina simply nodded her head slightly. “You can’t let on that I told you. Please Rena, He’d do something awful.”

“He should have been denounced. Why did you not tell mother and father?”

“He threatened me. He said that if I told anyone that it would kill mom and dad and that he would be in charge. That if that happened, he’d be able to do whatever he wanted to do with me.”

Rena was fighting mad at this point. “Fina, that was an empty threat! You should have told someone.”

“I was only ten at the time and he was so much older. He convinced me that what he said was true. I worried about mom and dad. I didn’t want them to go away and I was afraid that if I went to them that was what would happen.”

“What about when you were older?”

“By then we were on the ship and when we woke up we found out that mom and dad hadn’t made it. Nor told me that he had arranged it and since he was now the head of the family I had to do what he told me to do.”

“And that meant that you had to go to his bed when he summoned you?”

With her head hanging down she almost whispered, “Yes.”

Rena spat, “That despicable ...”

Fina said, “Rena, don’t be too mad at him. It didn’t hurt, at least not all of the time and he hasn’t bothered me too much recently.”

“Fina, he shouldn’t have been bothering you at all. Did he ever tell you why he was doing it?”

“He said that I would need to know how to respond when he arranged for my bonding.”

Rena placed her hands on Fina’s shoulders and forced her to look at her as she said, “Fina, Nor will never lay a hand on you again, I promise you that on the graves of our mother and father. Fina, do you believe that Nor is worthy to sit in the chair of the High Lord?”

Rena could feel Fina shiver as she contemplated this. Finally

she found her voice and said, “No, I do not. When I was captured, even though Nor had committed that unforgivable breach in protocol, Kal-El had his wife release me. When I compare the honor displayed by their family and the dishonor displayed by ours, I can see why they were chosen by Gee-Ra as his successors. Even as a prisoner, I was treated with honor and respect which is more than I could say for anyone that Nor captures. They would be lucky to escape with their life. I almost wish I was of family El.”

Rena replied, “As do I sister. We have both seen their family and how they interact. They are a most honorable family. The relationships displayed between the parents and children and between the children are examples of what family relationships should be.”

“I too have seen that and I weep for what should have been, but I am weak and fearful.”

Rena said, “You no longer need to fear Nor. I will not allow him to bother you again. Personally, I will no longer follow him. As far as I am concerned he has lost the right to lead our family.”

Fina looked down and said, “I wish I had your strength, but I don’t. I know that if Nor summons me, I will go. It has been that way for too many years for me to deny the summons so easily.”

“Fina, I am going to confront Nor and tell him that he is to leave you alone and also that I will no longer follow his banner. I wish that I were in a life bond so that I could claim loyalty to my bond mate’s family. I am going to actively seek a bond mate, assuming we survive this combat and the repercussions of Nor’s actions.”

With a parting admonition to Fina to remain aboard the ship Rena took off for the planet’s surface to find Nor.

When she found him, he was with a number of his followers who had created a situation which Hazel and Quicksilver had responded to.

There were ten New Kryptonians, counting Nor, surrounding the colorfully clad superheroes. Nor’s minions were attempting to use their heat vision to destroy them.

As she approached she saw another pair of the local heroes arrive. They both wore red tops and blue bottoms and the El family crest was prominently displayed on their chests. As they came in they each tackled one of Nor’s supporters.

Seconds later a pair wearing black and white themed suits arrived and tackled another pair.

They were quickly followed by a woman in white and a man dressed up to look like a thunder cloud.

Finally a pair arrived wearing the same colors as Kal-El and all but one of the women, however they were younger. They wore blue tops with red shorts. These attacked Nor and his last supporter.

Rena heard, /”This is Nor. We need help!”/

Rena sent, /”Do not respond to this summons.”/

/”Who sent that?”/

/”It was I, Rena”/

/”How dare you! My commands are to be obeyed!”/

/”Do not expect me to obey any more of your commands.

From now on you can fight your own battles.”/

Nor could see his followers, one by one breaking away from their opponents and flying away. He flew to Rena and tried to intimidate her with a look.

Rena looked at him with disgust, “You can save those glares for your followers. You haven’t been able to intimidate me that way for a while now. I haven’t liked what you have been doing for a long time and now that I know what you have been doing to Fina I can say that you disgust me.”

Nor lashed out and backhanded Rena across the face. He growled, “Do not cross me or try to thwart my designs or you will regret you even thought to.”

Rena looked daggers at him as she rubbed her cheek where

he had struck her. She felt her teeth with her tongue and finding a couple loose, lashed out and raked her nails across his cheek, drawing blood.

He was too startled to respond. He brought his hand up to his cheek and brought it away bloody and he was shocked. He stuttered, “Bu .. but ... but, we are invulnerable. How could this happen?”

Rena smirked, “Think about what happened to Ran-Na when he fought Lady Lois. We are equally super powered therefore I can affect you. Just as you loosened my teeth I can tear at you.”

“What are you going to do?”

“I could go to the council; however I will spare you that. I will no longer support you in this, but that is as far as I will go at this time. Know this, ‘brother’, if you once more lay a finger of Fina, I will not be responsible for what I do and you had better hope that you die quickly, because right now I want you to live a long time and suffer. You may be our brother, but she is my sister and I will protect her from you and I will do whatever I need to do in order to do so. Beware, brother.”

Nor stared after her as Rena took off and flew back to the ship. He thought, <My sister has outlived her usefulness. She will have to be dealt with, permanently. Fina may still afford some pleasure so she will be spared, for now.>

Chapter 24 — Lori Has a Plan

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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The Superwomen, Ultra Women, both Lois and Lori along with Zara were gathered at the Hyperion Ave. house. They had all been casting about for a definite method of disabling Nor and his family and no one had come up with an answer.

2013 Lois and Lori were talking. 2013 Lois said, “You and I seem to have a lot of common memories. Maybe we can come up with an answer if we put our heads together. What do you remember?”

Lori replied, “I remember Clark and Nor slugging it out in the middle of Metropolis. They wrecked buildings and vehicles. The Drei was mostly ineffective against their invulnerable bodies although it was what was used in the knocking around part.”

2013 Lois snapped her fingers and said, “Then the American military stepped in. They got the Kryptonite from STAR Labs and used the Kryptonite to create a poison gas. When they used it Clark almost died.”

Lori said, “That’s right! Well, the military isn’t involved at this point, but we could use that same solution.”

2013 Lois said, “Kryptonite gas could be a problem. It almost killed Clark along with Nor. We have to have something that we can control better than that, besides we have a lot more combatants in this. But first off we need a source of Kryptonite.”

Local Lois who had been an interested listener said, “I just may have a source of Kryptonite. We recently bagged Luthor and along with him his stash of Kryptonite. Bill Henderson has it under lock and key. Bill knows who we are and he’s our source inside the police department. He was keeping it for us until we had time to dispose of it all. I’m not sure how much there is, but we can call and find out.” Local Lois picked up the phone and dialed.

“Twelfth Precinct, Sgt. Tartaglia. How may I be of assistance?”

“Hi, Gino, Lois Lane.”

“Ms. Lane! You know I was speaking with Mrs. Tartaglia just this morning about you. I had told her how much you liked her cannoli and she asked if she should maybe make some and send them to you at the Planet.”

"Gino, that is so sweet of your wife to offer to do that. Please tell her thank you for me and tell her I would love some."

"Your wish is my command. I will relay that message to Mrs. Tartaglia tonight."

"Thanks Gino. Is Bill Henderson around? I need to speak with him."

"Coming right up!"

"Thanks Gino."

After a few clicks she heard, "Henderson."

"Bill, Lois Lane."

"Hi Lois. What can you tell me about all of these superpowered villains that have been terrorizing the world?"

"That's what I'm calling about, Bill. You know that stash of Kryptonite you found in Luthor's lair?"

"What about it? I've got it sealed up in a lead box, locked in a safe deep in the bowels of the evidence room."

"I need it. Just how much was there?"

"I'd guess there was about four pounds. Some of it was crystals and some was more rocklike."

"Can I come over and pick it up?"

"I think it would be better if you sent Superwoman, you know, why would Lois Lane need Kryptonite? Now, Superwoman, there would be no question."

"Right, Bill, I understand. I'll see if I can get hold of her and send her in." She turned to 1993 Lois Superwoman and putting her hand over the phone pick-up said, "Why don't you go get it?"

1993 Lois, whose uniform most closely resembled local Lois's, nodded her head and took off at superspeed.

Local Lois pulled her hand away from the phone and said, "I think that Superwoman should be there shortly."

Suddenly she heard a gasp from Henderson and she started to snicker. She asked, "Is she there yet?"

"Lois, that is you still on the line, isn't it?"

"Yes, Bill, I'm still here."

"If you're there and I'm speaking with you, who is this, here in my office?"

"Why, Bill, that's Superwoman. Don't you recognize her?"

"Well, she seems to have changed her uniform, slightly, but yeah, it has to be her. She just flew in at superspeed."

"Can you give her the Kryptonite?"

"Right away. You're going to have to tell me how you're doing this later."

Lois was laughing and he could hear it as he hung up the phone. Henderson turned to the Superwoman that was standing in front of him and said, "Right this way, 'Superwoman'."

He was even more startled when she spoke and it was definitely Lois Lane's voice, "Thanks, Bill. We really appreciate this."

Bill just shook his head and led her to the evidence room. When they got there he signed out the box and handed it to Superwoman.

She said, "Pleasure doing business with you, Bill. We owe you one."

Bill led her out of the evidence locker and into a dark corner. When he was sure that there was no one around he said, "You are obviously Superwoman, but are you the Superwoman that I know? You know, Lois?"

"Why yes, Bill." She shifted to a whisper, "I'm Lois."

"But, how? Two places at the same time? I had you on the phone and ..."

"Yes, you did. You were speaking to Lois."

"And you?"

"I'm Lois ... another Lois."

He had a mystified tone in his voice as he said, "Another Lois, from another universe, Like Clark?"

"Exactly."

"Whew, I thought for a minute, I was losing it."

"No, Bill, you're doing just fine. It even confuses us at times. Right now there are four of each of us here fighting this war against a very evil man named Nor and his followers. The bad guys are all from Clark's home planet and custom required that the combat be limited to family, but the bad guys, being bad guys, cheated. We needed a way to end this war," she held up the box, "and this is it."

"Well, good luck. Just be careful and by all means — win the war."

"Thanks, Bill. We sure intend to try." Lois took off to return to the Hyperion Ave house.

Naga, sister of Noga, bond mate of Ran-Na, and her husband, Col-As, were hovering over Metropolis hoping to spot one of their adversaries alone and when they saw a superwoman leave the MPD precinct they thought that fortune had smiled on them. Together they dove on her, taking her unawares.

Unexpectedly, as she was on the way 1993 Lois was intercepted by two of Nor's minions who tackled her as she was flying. They became a swirl of colors. 1993 Lois sent out a cry for help, "Ultra Woman! Help!" She sent this specifically to Lori and 2013 Lois because she knew that if the box opened, they would not be affected.

Receiving the call for help Lori and 2013 Lois took off and headed toward the twelfth precinct assuming that they would find 1993 Lois somewhere in route.

When they found her, she and her two assailants were on the ground. The lead box had come open either accidentally or deliberately and some of the Kryptonite lay on the ground. Her two assailants were both unconscious and 1993 Lois was rolling on the ground clutching her abdomen, weeping with the incapacitating pain.

Super speedily the two Ultra Women picked up the offending crystals and put them back in the box. When the lid was finally closed 1993 Lois released a relieved sigh and relaxed into unconsciousness from her ordeal. Lori — Ultra Woman picked her up while 2013 Lois — Ultra Woman picked up the box.

Lori said, "I hope the baby will be okay. Local Lois should have sent me instead."

2013 Lois said, "Her uniform more closely resembles local Lois' uniform. Everyone would have seen the differences in your uniforms."

Lori asked, "Do you really think anyone would have paid that close attention to the details of the uniform when I flew in? I don't."

"What should we do with them?" 2013 Lois asked, indicating the unconscious New Kryptonians.

Lori said, "We can't let them get back to Nor. Zara didn't know anything about green Kryptonite so most likely neither did they. If we let them recover and go back to report we could lose our ace in the hole." She thought for a few seconds, before she continued, "I've got an idea," and sent a summons, "Jon and Jen, we need you! Ultra Woman and I are downtown."/>

Seconds later Kam-El and Jewel appeared and Lori said, "These two need to be secured. Jon, I'd like you stay here and watch them. They should be out for a while. Jen, please come with us. I'll give you a small piece of green K in a lead pouch. Let's use the barn in Smallville as a holding facility. Once you take them there you can use the green K to keep them subdued. Since the green K won't affect the spouses, you could take turns being their guard. Jon will have to stay clear." She smiled at an afterthought, "It'll give each of you a chance to visit with Grandma and Grandpa Kent while you are there."

Nodding, Jewel said, "I understand. Good plan. Oh, I just remembered! Jimmy's wife, Peg, Megawoman, can't stand guard."

"Why?"

"She may be pregnant. They just announced it at the party."
 "Okay, if there's any possibility, she needs to stay clear.
 Anyone else?"

"Not right now. I just had a baby a few months ago, but I don't think anyone else is expecting right now." Turning back to Jon she said, "Be right back, honey."

With a smile, Jon said, "Don't take too long. I'll miss you."

Matching his smile with one of her own, Jewel said, "Wild horses couldn't keep me away a second longer than necessary. Back in a flash. Oh, wait, that's someone else." She snickered at her own joke.

The three women, with Lori carrying 1993 Lois, took off for the Hyperion Ave. house.

Once back at the house, Lori quickly transferred a chunk of green K to a lead lined film pouch, making sure that lead shielding was between the green K and the others in the house the entire time.

As she finished handing the pouch to Jewel, Lori checked over the rest of the contents of the box and said, "I'm not sure this will be enough for what I have in mind. We'll need to find more."

Since most of the kids and their spouses were scattered around the globe dealing with emergencies being created by Nor's minions, Lori asked 2013 Lois and Carrie to accompany her, "Since none of us are vulnerable to Kryptonite, we have a job to do. Let's all fly to Smallville. She sent, /"Jon, when you finish helping Jen, why don't you go to STAR Labs. You know how they do things. See if they have any Kryptonite. Get all that they have."/

He replied, /"No problem! It'll be a pleasure to see Bernie again."/

1993 Lois was coming around and Lori asked, "What happened, Lois?"

1993 Lois replied, "I was on my way back with the Kryptonite when I was attacked. I immediately called you. There was more than one and as they grabbed me they forced me to the ground. I had a hard time defending myself since I was encumbered with the box. They started hitting me and I felt that I might lose consciousness so I opened the box. As soon as I did, the beating stopped, but I was in a lot of pain and I dropped the box. That's the last I know until just now when I woke up. You were right. Green K exposure when you're pregnant is no fun. What happened? What did you do with them?"

Lori put her hand on 1993 Lois' arm and stroked it in a comforting gesture as she said, "I'm sorry you had to go through that. I hope the baby wasn't harmed. Even with that I think you did the best thing. You knocked both of them out. We have sent them to Smallville with one of the spouses to guard them."

With a look of concern, 1993 Lois said, "When they recover they will attack her and capture her."

Lori snickered and said, "Highly unlikely. She has some green K to keep them out. We couldn't let them get back to report that we had the means to knock them out. That's two less for us to worry about."

Lori said, "I checked over the supply in the box and I think that we will need more in order for this plan to work because of the numbers against us. I think we need to go to Smallville to get more." She turned to local Lois and asked, "Have you had to deal with Tempus?"

"No, who's Tempus?"

"Tell you later. Right now we need to see if we can find more Kryptonite at the landing site."

2013 Lois turned to local Lois and asked, "Can we take Carrie with us?"

Local Lois looked at Carrie with a questioning look and got a smile in return with the statement, "I'd like to help, Mom and Kryptonite can't hurt me."

Local Lois said, "Well I guess so, just be careful, okay?"

Carrie smiled broadly and said, "Nothing to worry about, Mom. Besides, I'll be with two more of you. I couldn't be any safer."

Nodding, 2013 Lois said, "We'll take care of her. You can count on us. We're with you Lori. Let's go."

They took to the air and headed for Smallville. Since Protector's flight ability was provided by her telekinetic power it was not as fast as the superheroes so 2013 Lois took her hand. While Carrie projected a field around herself, 2013 Lois pulled her along. Landing in the vicinity of Schuster's field, they started looking around.

Once on the ground 2013 Lois said, "Over this way." She headed off in the direction of a copse of trees. Once there they saw the gouge left by Kal-El's small ship when it landed there over twenty years previously. She said, "There were plenty of small chunks around that last time I saw this place. They could be buried by this time though." She turned to Carrie and continued, "When I was here before, it was in the past, when his ship had just landed and before he was found by the Kents. Tempus tried to use the Kryptonite to kill Kal-El as a baby."

Carrie was looking around and asked, "This is where my dad landed? When he was a baby?"

Lori said, "Yep, he was only about four months old when the Kents found him."

Carrie just said, "Wow. Just think, how brave Grammy and Gramps were to check it out."

2013 Lois said, "In our reality, they thought that they had seen a meteor." Smiling at the memory she continued, "What they actually saw was Superman streaking across the sky pretending to be a meteor so that he could attract their attention. He did that right after we beat Tempus and saved baby Clark from the Kryptonite. You see, the ship had landed some time earlier and Tempus had forced Herb to take him to the time right after he landed so that he could try to kill him. Now, let's see, the last time I was here, it was before the Kents showed up." Looking around she pointed and said, "I was hiding over there when they arrived."

Lori said, "Yeah, I'm remembering. That was after we stopped Tempus. Beat him in a fair fight."

Snickering, 2013 Lois said, "Yeah, he hit like a girl."

Lori smiled at the memory and said, "Yeah, I remember now. Without his gun he was pathetic. Okay, let's start looking." She looked around and it was apparent that she was searching her memory. She stepped over to where she remembered the ship had been and knelt. She looked off at an angle and said, "When I pulled the Kryptonite away from the baby I threw it in that direction. Let's start there and then work our way around."

They started using their super-vision to examine the ground. They started at that gouge in the earth and fanned out from there in the direction Lori had indicated.

In this particular job, Carrie's abilities didn't help a whole lot so she simply stood by. When one of the super spouses found a piece of Kryptonite she grabbed it and used her telekinesis to move it into the lead box that had been brought for that purpose.

While some of the super spouses were thus occupied, Nor's minions were keeping the rest occupied.

All across the globe, reports would come in of not so natural disasters. The collapse of a previously structurally stable bridge, an unexplained structural fire, a landslide in an area not known for slides or an earthquake in a non-earthquake prone zone were really keeping the superheroes busy.

Dan-El and Red Thistle were dealing with an emergency. The historic Edinburgh Castle on the heights overlooking Edinburgh, Scotland was threatening to collapse. A pair of Nor's adherents

were hovering in the air using their heat vision to blast away the hillside. Part of the south defensive wall had already fallen and the wall around the castle proper would be next to go.

Dan-El and Red Thistle flew in and placed themselves between them and the hillside.

Red Thistle shouted, “Wot do ye think ye’re doin’?”

Van-Ga and his wife Giwa shifted the focus of their heat beams so that the new targets were Dan-El and Red Thistle.

Dan-El and Red Thistle activated their heat vision and used it to counteract the ones attacking them. Slowly the point of intersection became more visible as a coruscation of energy in mid-air between them. That point of intersection slowly moved toward Van-Ga and Giwa. Even though Van-Ga and Giwa were fully Kryptonian they didn’t have the years of practice and experience in the use of their powers that Dan-El and Red Thistle had and that gave the latter pair an advantage.

Red Thistle mocked them, “Ye think I’ll let ye destroy sech a beautiful landmark and get away wi’ it? Well, I’ll no let I’ happen. Begone wi’ ye. Ye get away from me homeland.”

At that point, Van-Ga and Giwa realized that they had come up against a foe with a vested interest in what was happening and they realized that there was no more fierce defender than a mother defending her child or a person defending his homeland.

They were both shocked at this. These were both super powered adversaries. How could it be that this spouse claimed this as her homeland? Weren’t all super powered people from Krypton? They would have to report this finding back to Nor. First they needed to break off this particular conflict and remain free to do so. Somehow these members of the El family had managed to make Earthlings super. If that was possible then they potentially could turn the entire population super and there would be no chance of their success. Nor had to be notified of this finding.

Van-Ga sent, “Giwa — we must retreat. Break away now!”

At his command Giwa shut down her heat vision abruptly and flew off at superspeed along side Van-Ga.

After Van-Ga and Giwa left, Red Thistle turned to view the damage and said, “Ach, would ye look a tha’. The outer wall I’ gone. It’ll never be the same.”

Dan-El drifted over and put his arms around Red Thistle and said, “Look at it this way, honey, we stopped them before any more damage was done.”

“Aye, there’s that.”

“Let’s do a patrol around the isles and make sure there aren’t any more mischief makers.”

“Why couldn’t they ha’ burned down Windsor or the blasted Tower or even Big Ben. Why did they pick on Edinburgh Castle?”

“Perhaps because it represented a position of strength and indomitable will.”

“I’ would only ha’ been worse if they had attacked Culloden.”

“But, there’s no castle at Culloden.”

“Ach, I noo, it’s just the thought a tha’. Come on, let’s do tha’ patrol.”

Chapter 25 — Nor is Captured

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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Nor was alone in his audience chamber pondering his fate. Things had not been going well and the future was beginning to look quite bleak. He had been losing followers. When some people see that their side was losing, instead of fighting that much harder they decided to cut their losses and leave the losing side. Nor was just satisfied that they were not going over to the

other side. They were choosing to become neutral and await the results of the combat. He thought that at least he still had enough of a hold over them that they weren’t going to the Council of Elders. In reality those that had defected had been keeping quiet because they didn’t want their part in the travesty to become known. They didn’t want to suffer the same fate that would be in store for Nor and his family.

Nor was in his room on the throne ship when Van-Ga and Giwa returned. They approached and knelt on one knee with a closed fist over their heart until Nor acknowledged them. In a heated tone he said, “What are you doing here? You are supposed to be out creating diversions to keep the El family busy. That isn’t happening if you’re simpering here on the floor.”

Van-Ga spoke up, “My Lord Nor, we just found out something that we felt you needed to know. It became imperative to terminate a conflict that we had entered into in order to ensure that you were apprised of certain facts.”

Sneeringly, Nor asked, “What was it that you deemed it so important that you had to disobey my orders and return here, disturbing me as I plan?”

Van-Ga still did not even look up as he reported, “My Lord, Nor, we have discovered a disturbing fact. It appears that Earth could conceivably have an inexhaustible supply of superpowered defenders. We were destroying a historic strong point in order to display the futility of such fortifications against us when one of the El family couples interfered. After a brief struggle, the woman spoke in a strange dialect and claimed the territory that we were attacking as her homeland. Somehow, the woman, an Earthling, has become super powered like a Kryptonian.”

Nor was shaken by this information. “If that is true, why have they not created more super powered beings?” He considered for a few seconds before he continued, “Unless, perhaps they want to maintain a monopoly on the powers. I see it now, they want to be the only ones with super powers on this world. They want to be the undisputed rulers of this miserable planet. If it wasn’t for the child, I might be inclined to try and make a deal. We could find another planet like this where we could be super and we could rule and leave this one to them.”

“If they could do it, My Lord, why could we not? If we could find some Earthlings that would be loyal to you, we could make them super as well. We could increase our numbers in that way, just as they have.”

“Go back and see if you can find out how this is done.”

“As you command.” Van-Ga and Giwa arose and backed out of the room.

Nor looked at Ran-Na and asked, “Do you think there is anything to this?”

“With Van-Ga you can never be certain, but Giwa didn’t contradict him, so it could be correct.”

Van-Ga and Giwa left the presence and returned to the planet’s surface. Their plan was simple — find a pair, other than a Kal-El and Lois pair, and try to find out if one or the other was an Earthling.

The first pair they found were the royal blue clad pair — Blaze and Saint. Van-Ga and Giwa spotted a structure nearby which seemed to be populated. They zoomed in and used their heat vision to start a fire. Blaze quickly flew in and extinguished the flames with her super cold breath; then she and Saint placed themselves between the building and the Kryptonians.

Van-Ga challenged, “You are super powered. If you are Kryptonians why are you defending these weak Earthlings as you do?”

Blaze responded hotly, “Don’t call Earthlings weak. They can be every bit as strong as you. They have a strength of will that is second to none.”

“But, with your powers, you could be their rulers yet you

chose to serve them.”

“I came from them. I *am* one of them. Why would I chose to rule over them? It is my responsibility to protect them.”

Giwa addressed Saint, “That could be understood, from a woman, but you are a man. Why do you not chose to rule with her at your side?”

“As my wife said, we have a responsibility. These are our people. They are the stock we came from. We could no sooner turn against them than we could turn against ourselves.”

Van-Ga was astounded. Here was a pair that claimed Earth as their heritage yet they were both super powered. He looked at Giwa and they both nodded and took off at super speed.

Arriving over Chicago and looking around they saw two superheroes wearing red and blue outfits. Zooming down, Van-Ga and Giwa each grabbed an Earthling and held them hostage. The captives shouted for help.

Ben-El and his wife Wondergirl landed and accosted the Kryptonian captors. Ben-El commanded, “Release them or suffer the consequences.”

“Why should we release them? They are only Earthlings! They are of no value. Why should a Kryptonian care about the welfare of an Earthling?”

Wondergirl spoke up and said, “I am from New Krypton and I care. Now release them!”

Giwa said, “You are from New Krypton? I don’t recognize you! You lie.”

Alice replied, “It matters not if you believe me. The fact remains that I am from New Krypton and my husband is a son of Lord Kal-El and his wife, Ultra Woman.”

After this had had a few seconds to sink in, Alice continued, “You are not worthy of my contempt. You abuse the gift of extraordinary power that you have received on this planet. My grandfather is an elder of New Krypton. You should cease these senseless atrocities and return to your normal life before your crimes earn you a time in the Phantom Zone.”

“Your threats mean nothing to us. When Lord Nor is High Lord we will earn his praise.”

Releasing the hostages and flying away, Van-Ga and Giwa returned to the ship and entered Nor’s audience chamber. They both approached and knelt before him. With their closed fists covering their hearts, Van-Ga spoke up, “My Lord Nor, we have done as you commanded. We found a pair of our opponents and created a situation that drew them to us. When we spoke with them they both claim this planet as their heritage. They say that they were both Earthlings even though now they are unquestionably super powered. We have also found one that claim to be from New Krypton although we did not recognize her. She claimed to be the granddaughter of an elder of New Krypton. The El family auxiliaries appear to be composed of Kryptonians and Earthlings all possessing the same powers.”

Nor asked, “Did you find out how this was done?”

“No, Lord Nor. That is the limit of the information we were able to gather.”

“I need more information. Return to the surface and do not come back until you have solved this mystery.”

They backed out of the room and left.

Lori and 2013 Lois had been successful in their search. They had found numerous samples of green Kryptonite which with Carrie’s help they had placed in the lead box. Lori knew that there was more than enough to carry out her plan.

When they returned to Metropolis Lori went into the travel pod and turned on the privacy field. Once this was on she started working.

First she crushed the green Kryptonite into a fine powder. Next she mixed the powder with green paint. This paint she used to fill numerous glass balls which she attached to the heads of

arrows. As she finished each one she wrapped it in lead foil and placed it back in her quiver. When she had 40 arrows prepared in this way she put her quiver on her back. Grasping her bow, she exited the travel pod. She hit the switch and the bow collapsed onto itself into its compact form. She stowed it in its pouch in the quiver before she took off.

Most of the conflict at this point was being conducted in and around Smallville. Nor and his family were attempting to breach the shield that Carrie had erected around the Kent farm house.

Lori landed out of sight, in the copse where the graves of Clark and Lois were located. She pulled out her bow and hit the switch, causing the bow to unfold itself into useable form. Silently she pulled out an arrow. She removed the lead from the glass globe at the head and nocked the shaft. She was counting on the power of the bow and the fact that the shafts would be traveling at supersonic speed to keep her opponents from hearing their approach.

Van-Ga and Giwa had been following Angel and Lightning hoping for a chance to isolate them and try to find out how the Earthlings were given super powers.

Van-Ga and Giwa saw the superheroes land in the yard of a residence. They were in the middle of nowhere and they had no idea why the young ones were stopping here. The Kryptonians didn’t know that each of the children were taking turns visiting with the elder Kents because in their universe they had lost them while they were still children and they all desired to see their grandparents again.

When the superheroes landed, Van-Ga and Giwa landed behind them. Van-Ga asked, “How is it that Earthlings are able to have superpowers?”

Angel and Lightning turned to accost them. Angel received the message, /”Angel get back away from them! Kryptonite!”/ That final word galvanized her into motion.

Before either side had a chance to say anything there was the tinkle of broken glass twice within a second as arrows struck Van-Ga and Giwa in the center of their backs. Angel was prepared to defend the Kents but, when she received that communication she supersped back away from them.

Van-Ga suddenly felt excruciating pain in the center of his back. Reaching around he encountered a sticky substance that clung to his hand, burning it. He tried to wipe his hand on his trousers only to have his leg start to burn. Trying to fly away he found that his power of flight had fled. A few seconds later he was sprawled on the ground, unconscious, next to his wife who had experienced exactly the same problem.

Lori sent, /”Rob, carry them into the barn!”/

Rob immediately picked up both New Kryptonians and carried them away.

Lucy sent, /”Thanks for the warning, Mom.”/

/”Don’t mention it, Sweetheart.”/

/”I hear more coming, why don’t you and Rob go on into the house.”/

Lucy and Rob disappeared inside just in time because suddenly, out of the sky fell a whirling mass of colors, blue, red, yellow and shades of gray.

Lori sent a mental shout, /”Freeze!”/

Suddenly, as if startled into immobility by that mental shout, the two combatants stopped and looked around for the source of that communication. That was the opening that Lori was waiting for. She sighted and loosed. At a speed greater than that of sound so that its passage was totally silent, the arrow flew straight and true, impacting in the center of Col-Re’s back. The globe burst and splashed green paint all over his back onto the skin of his neck and into his hair. The Superman that he had been fighting jumped back to get some distance from the Kryptonite. Col-Re staggered a couple of paces, reaching back with his hands, trying to wipe off the offending substance and only succeeding in

smearing it all over his hands and broadening the stain before collapsing.

Torque had been monitoring what had been going on and had collected Col-Re and moved him to the barn. He sent, /"We're starting to have quite a collection in there,"/ as he returned to the house.

Lori sent a thought to Clark, /"You need to bring your opponents to the farm."/ She signaled to the one that was there to join her.

He supersped to her side. She said, "When the next one is brought in, you need to team up on him and hold him still so that I have a clear shot, but make sure you back away before I release and don't let any of the paint get onto you."

"Got it." Hearing the sounds of grunts and a whirling in the atmosphere he said, "Here comes the next one. Be ready."

"Count on it. You need to go so that I can prepare."

He took off and joined the melee in the air. Slowly he and the other Superman managed to bring Gam-Re, another one of Nor's cousins to ground. Eventually a Clark managed to grab either arm and held him still for the three seconds needed for Lori to aim, loose and have the arrow hit her target. An instant before impact they each released the arm they were holding and sped back. The time between when they let go and the impact of the shaft was insufficient for him to react. The effects were almost identical to those of his brother, Col-Re. In trying to clear the offending material Gam-Re only succeeded in increasing his exposure.

Suddenly, Rola, Col-Re's wife landed. As she approached her husband she started to feel the pain of the Kryptonite and looking accusingly at the two Clarks shouted, "What have you done?"

As she finished the last word there was the tinkle of shattering glass and within seconds Rola was sprawled out on the ground next to her husband.

Lori sent out a summons, /"Lois — Ultra Woman, You are needed at the farm!"/

She received back, /"I'm on my way. Rena just decided she had had enough for the time being and left."/

Less than a minute later, Lois landed next to Lori. Lori said, "We have to get those under cover. The rest may not come near here if they see them. The guys have to keep their distance."

Lois moved over and picked up one body while Torque came out and picked up the other.

After moving them to the barn, Lois rejoined Lori and asked, "How much Kryptonite is in each of those globes?"

"Enough to knock them out and remove their powers for a while. Before their life is threatened we can remove their blouses and put them in a lead container."

They picked up a thought transmission, /"Gam-Re! Gam-Re, where are you? Gam-Re, respond!"/

Lois replied, /"Gam-Re is at the farm. He needs your help."/ /"Is this Rena?"/

Lois didn't reply.

Less than a minute later Bela Gam-Re landed in the field facing the two Superman and demanded, "Where is my husband?"

As she finished speaking she felt an object hit her in the middle of the back and suddenly she was in tremendous pain. Pain such as she had never experienced before in her life and she had a hard time actually believing that it was happening. Reflexively she reached back and felt her back smearing the wet sticky substance around and coating her hand. Her hand began to burn furiously and then suddenly she no longer cared and slumped to the ground, unconscious.

Lois zipped out of their concealment and picking up Bela, moved her to the barn and laid her down next to her husband.

Lori sent out a taunting telepathic message, /"We've been pruning the limbs and are getting closer to the trunk."/

Having heard from Nor about the field that was preventing

him from getting to the baby, his brother Ran-Na thought to give his luck a try.

Those standing in the field and in the copse heard a sonic boom and saw a gray streak pass and head for the second floor window.

There was a tremendous crash and Ran-Na literally bounced off the barrier and fell to the ground. His wife Noga Ran-Na was there in an instant. She landed and knelt at her husband's side. As soon as her knee hit the ground an arrow hit her in the center of her back. She went down like a felled ox and sprawled across her husband. He had been so shaken by his impact it had taken a few seconds to recover his senses. When he did, he sat up. It took him several seconds more to realize that the weight across his body was actually his wife. He put his arms around her and when he did his hand and arm started to burn. A second later he felt a blow on his back and more pain. He fell back unconscious.

Lois flew over and Torque came out of the house. They picked up Ran-Na and his wife. They carried them into the barn and laid them side by side.

Unknown to them Nor was hovering overhead and watching this. He sent a summons, /"Fina, come to the farm. They have our cousins. I don't know how they have done it, but they have been captured. We have to free them."/

Less than a minute later Fina was hovering at his side. Nor said, "While you free our cousins I will make another attempt to destroy the child."

At superspeed Fina dove for the barn while Nor flew toward the farm house.

The barn doors were open so Fina flew in unobstructed and landed next to their cousins. As she did so she was suddenly accosted by the pain associated with Kryptonite exposure although she did not know what it was at the time. Instantly she was without her powers and unable to fly away. The amount of pain grew as did the feeling of weakness. It got to the point that she was so weak that she was unable to stand. Seconds later she was unconscious, lying next to her relatives.

Nor was unaware of his sister's predicament and made another try at breaching the field that surrounded the house. This time, instead of brute force he used his heat vision. If he couldn't physically breach that wall perhaps his vision would.

Focusing his heat vision on the window of the room that contained the infant he quickly ramped up the power. The heat beams had a visible manifestation where they hit the barrier. A coruscation of light broken down into a rainbow of colors emanated from the point of contact.

He hung in the air at a height of fifteen feet and twenty feet from the window. Suddenly there was the tinkle of broken glass and he felt unbearable pain in the center of his back. His powers started to fail, but before they did he tried to fly away. He managed to climb to fifty feet before he passed out and fell to the ground. His fall was cushioned by an invisible force that slowed his descent and then moved him into the barn and laid him next to his relatives.

Chapter 26 — Nor's Followers Are Desperate

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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Nor had commanded his auxiliaries to raise havoc around the globe to pull the supporters of the El family away so that the latter could, hopefully, be lured into a trap. Ran-Na and then Rena had been acting as his chief lieutenants in this effort, but the auxiliaries had lost contact with both of them in the last few hours.

Unknown to any of them, Rena had returned to the ship. After

confronting Nor about what he had done to Fina she had resolved to abandon her brother and his attempts to usurp the throne.

Ran-Na and Rena were not around and now even Nor had disappeared unexpectedly. Even though the auxiliaries were without leadership, they continued to follow those orders.

In the Italian Alps a pair of Nor's followers started an avalanche which threatened a large group of climbers. Hazel and Quicksilver showed up and while Quicksilver rapidly flew back and forth above the group knocking the snow and ice aside, Hazel used her heat vision to flash as much into water and steam as she could. The climbing team got very wet, but none of them were buried under twenty feet of snow and ice.

In the Pacific three of Nor's followers teamed up. By spacing themselves at a distance from one another and using their super breath, they created a Pacific cyclone also known as a typhoon, and headed it in the direction of Hawaii.

Noel and Shield, Zar-El and Megawoman heard the frantic reports on the news about the atmospheric phenomena and all four headed for the Pacific. When they arrived they found a strong circular wind that had sucked up a lot of moisture creating a cloud layer and in the very center was an actual water spout.

Noel sent, "Start flying in a direction counter to the wind!"

Each of the four superheroes took a different altitude and started flying at super speed, creating a counter flow which slowed and finally stopped the typhoon dead in its tracks.

In Egypt some of Nor's followers were in the act of shearing off the head of the Sphinx when Angel and Lightning zoomed in and disrupted what they were doing.

Nor's followers flew off, but the structure had been damaged and Lightning flew under the head to support it while Angel filled the gap that had been created with stone rubble. Once it was stable they flew to Cairo and notified the Department of Antiquities of what had happened. They were informed that a crew would be dispatched to perform a more permanent repair.

Four of Nor's followers were over Saudi Arabia. They saw the oil derricks and wondered just what their purpose was. After watching the process for some time they determined that the fluid that they were pumping was a valuable commodity. They went down the line in an entire field breaking the control heads off of existing wells. Once the wells were spouting oil they used their heat vision to ignite the oil turning it into giant fire spouts.

Ultra Woman 2 and Torque arrived on scene after there were ten well heads open and spouting fire. As soon as they arrived, Nor's minions left.

They went to the manager's office and asked what they could do. They were told that until they had replacement control heads ready to be put in place that it was best to leave them as they were. The chief hung up the phone he had been speaking into and said, "I'd rather let the professionals handle it. You might be super powered, but you don't know the oil business." This way they would have some control of the situation. Once they had replacement control heads in hand 'Hell Fighters, Inc' would extinguish the fires, one at a time and install the new control heads the right way.

Ultra Woman 2 suggested, "My partner Torque and I could go through and squeeze the pipes shut and stop the flow."

The answer was, "Thanks, but no thanks. It would cause more trouble for the final capping procedure if you did that. Just let them burn. I've already placed a call to Hell Fighters. They are marshaling their staff and equipment. They should have these fires out before a week has passed."

Ultra Woman 2 and Torque flew off, disappointed that there was nothing that they could do.

Several of Nor's followers had spaced themselves along the San Andreas fault and were using their super strength to move the tectonic plates apart.

An earthquake alert was issued and went out over the radio. News commentators were saying that this could possibly be 'The Big One' and that half of California could wind up in the Pacific.

Ben-El heard a radio broadcast and sent, "Earthquake in California! Everyone available come help!" He and Alice, Wondergirl, headed for the San Francisco area. Ultra Woman 2 and Torque left the oil field behind as they headed for California. Their home was in LA so they knew the area very well.

As she was flying, Lara had an idea and sent a call, "I think we can use Protector's talents in this emergency. We will need everyone!"

Local Lois replied, "We'll all be there when you arrive."

"Thanks! I don't know if she can handle it or not, but here's the idea ..."

When they arrived Nor's minions fled because the number of El family members responding was overwhelming. Lara surveyed the situation and sent a general call, "Spread out along the fault on the western side. When I give the word, push!" She then called Carrie over to her. When she arrived she said, "Carrie, if you can, I need you to use your telekinetic ability to close that slip as much as you can. Everybody will be helping by pushing it closed."

Carrie looked it over and said, "I think I have a better idea." She landed and simply stood there at the brink of a fissure for a minute. She raised her arms out from her sides and her hands clenched into fists as she started to concentrate. At least it looked like she was just standing there. Lara sent the command, "Push!" The entire super family were positioned at strong points, places where bedrock was above ground or else burrowed underground where they could contact bedrock and they all began to exert themselves on that signal. Lara was near Carrie pushing on some exposed granite and after a minute, she could see beads of perspiration on Carrie's forehead and that her eyes were closed as she slowly brought her fists together in front of herself.

Looking down she could see a very slow, almost imperceptible movement as the sides of the fissure slowly closed. It had almost closed all the way when Carrie passed out from the strain. Fortunately Lara was close enough to catch her.

A few seconds later the family arrived, one and two at a time.

After a few minutes Carrie came around. By the time she did, everyone was standing around literally holding their breath, waiting to see if Carrie was going to be all right. Finally, in a groggy tone she asked, "Did it work?"

"Yes, it did! What did you do?"

Lara helped her to a standing position. "I couldn't grab enough with my telekinetic ability at one time. It would have just torn off bits."

"So, what did you do?"

"I used my force field. I created a long field encompassing miles of bedrock on both sides and just, I don't know, moved them together."

Lara hugged her and said, "Well, however you did it, it worked." She pointed at the fissure which was no more than a crack now and said, "You did that. Good work."

Local Lois was standing next to her and pulled her into a hug. She was weeping as she said, "My girl. My special little girl. I'm so happy that you're ours."

Carrie returned the hug and said, "No more than I am. I love you, Mom."

Holding Carrie off slightly so that she could look at her Lois said, "You realize that you just did something that none of us could do, don't you? If it wasn't for you, that side of the state,"

she pointed to the west, “would have slid into the ocean. All of those people owe you their lives. You are a true hero.”

Going for another hug, Carrie said, “I just did what I thought you or Dad would do. I love you guys and want you to be proud of me.”

“We could not be more proud. We also couldn’t love you more.” Lois tightened the hug and kissed her daughter.

When Nor failed to return to the rendezvous as he had promised, his minions started becoming concerned.

The leader Ben-Ga said to the twenty followers that were with him, “The object of this conflict is the child in that farm house. We should go there and try to end this.” He took off and the rest followed him.

They flew to the Rocky Mountains and spacing themselves out around a mountain peak used their heat vision to shear off the top of the peak. Gathering around, they all grasped it and lifted. They started moving through the air toward Smallville.

“That field may have prevented Nor from piercing it, but surely it won’t be able to withstand the force of this mass dropped on it, at least not for very long.”

The Air Traffic Control center in Denver spotted the mass on its radar and put out a call to all ATCs across the US to track it.

Kam-El happened to be near the ATC in Metropolis when the call came in. He immediately sent out a telepathic summons, “They appear to be on the move! Gather in Smallville!”

Within seconds the family was gathering from the various points around the globe where they had been stationed. Seeing the mountain top approaching they all moved to intercept it.

Ben-Ga saw the superheroes approaching and sent, “We need to get this over the house and drop it.”

Seeing what they were doing, Jon sent, “We need to get under that mountain and keep it from falling on the house! Spread out!”

In response to Jon’s directive the kids all spread out, all but Carrie. Her power was not her strength and the mass of the mountain top was simply too much for her to handle. When the kids were all spread out under the peak, the Supermen, Superwomen and Ultra Women tackled the followers of Nor.

As Nor’s followers released it the kids started to fly away with it, to return it to its rightful place in the mountains.

As a result of this the majority of the Earth’s defenders were occupied leaving the rest outnumbered until the mountain top was returned.

Shega, Van-Ga’s sister and another follower of Nor, was flying toward Carrie when Carrie suddenly disappeared from sight. Startled, Shega started looking around as she continued to fly in the same direction. Suddenly she hit an invisible barrier in mid-air. Shocked, she was almost knocked unconscious by the impact. Recovering after falling twenty feet she looked around and saw Carrie, hovering in mid-air forty feet away. With a snarl of frustration she flew at Carrie again. This time just as she was about to seize her adversary, with a quiet pop, Carrie disappeared again and reappeared ten feet to the left. Shega changed direction and flew at Carrie once more. Once again, just as she was about to grab Carrie, the latter disappeared with a pop and reappeared twenty feet away to the right.

It took some seconds for Shega to realize that her quarry had evaded her once again. She stopped and hovered while she looked at Carrie very closely. Suddenly Carrie vanished, this time without a pop and she failed to reappear nearby. Shega tried to use her super-vision to find her and failed. Suddenly Shega felt the grip of a force like none she had ever experienced before. It shook her and tossed her to and fro for several seconds before sending her earthward only to stop abruptly ten feet in the air. Shega tried to fly back up and found that she was climbing, more

rapidly than she had intended and when she tried to slow down and stop she continued to ascend. It felt like she was in the jaws of a large raptor which was taking her back to its nest to consume her at its pleasure.

When Shega was on the fringes of outer space she stopped ascending and once again found herself headed earthward in an uncontrollable plunge. The conviction grew in her mind that if she were to hit at this speed it would mean the termination of her existence. The feeling of being so totally under the control of an outside force ripped a scream of terror from her lips. Again, her plunge was stopped ten feet above the ground. This time she didn’t try to ascend, but tried to fly off at a tangent, away from the scene of the conflict and the invisible force that’d had her at its mercy let her go and allowed her to flee the scene. She didn’t hear Carrie’s laughter as she fled.

Looking around Carrie saw her Mom beset by two adversaries. She moved in that direction and projected a field around Lois. The field conformed to the shape of Lois’s body at first and then began to swell and take the form of a globe pushing both attackers away. Lois ‘heard’, “Ready, Mom? As soon as I release the field, dive away. One ... two ... three ... NOW!”

Lois dove on cue and it was like she had simply disappeared until suddenly she was behind one of her attackers restraining her. The other tried to help her friend but when she did she found that she was enclosed in a spherical force field and she couldn’t move beyond its confines. Lois sent, “Carrie, can you send your globe down to the barn? If you release her there the Kryptonite will subdue her.”

The field with its prisoner started to move and Lois ‘heard’, “Sure thing Mom. Consider it done.” Carrie followed the globe down and when she saw that its occupant had passed out from the Kryptonite exposure she released the field and returned to the scene of the battle.

While all of this had been happening, Lori had been assaulted by two of Nor’s followers. When they had each grabbed one of her arms she had reason to thank Herb for the provision of the double strength pendant. She was able to simply pull her arms around and grasp both of her assailants. Then she started to fly them downward, but their combined flight power was too much for her to overcome and they kept her in the air. It was a stalemate, she couldn’t take them down, but they couldn’t get away either. This struggle continued for a time.

Carrie returned to local Lois and sent, “Let her go, Mom!”

Local Lois released her captive and immediately Carrie captured Nor’s minion in a force bubble and started her on her trip to the barn.

Local Lois saw Lori’s predicament and headed in that direction to help out. When she arrived she was able to use a front snap kick to knock one of Lori’s assailants out for the few seconds that would be required for Lori to release her so that local Lois could grab her and subdue her.

Lori’s opponents had taken her by surprise from behind while she had been distracted by the conflict that 2091 Clark had been involved in. She had been moving to help him when she had been attacked. Local Lois’ intervention had enabled Lori, because of her double strength pendant, to fly her remaining assailant down to the barn where after a few seconds she passed out allowing Lori to lay her among Nor’s supporters before returning to the conflict.

When Silva, her assailant, recovered consciousness, she was in local Lois’ grasp and unable to free herself. Lois called Carrie over and when Carrie nodded, released her. Silva found herself trapped in a force bubble, unable to escape as the bubble moved toward the barn.

Shiva, sister of Silva, had watched as Lori took her sister into the building. She was surprised when only Lori exited and knew that her sister was in trouble. She approached Lori as she exited

the barn and seeing her, Lori decided to end the conflict quickly. She closed the distance at superspeed and started raining reverse punches and chops which Shiva was unable to defend against. Each blow was telling. By the time that ten seconds had elapsed, Shiva had had the wind knocked out of her, her right arm rendered useless, her right knee almost broken and her level of consciousness reduced to just barely aware that she was alive.

Lori grabbed Shiva and quickly flew her down to the barn where exposure to the Kryptonite rendered her completely unconscious and out of the fight. Without realizing what she was doing, Lois laid Shiva right next to her sister Silva.

As Lori was exiting the barn she saw Zara as the latter acosted another of Nor's followers and Lori was able to watch.

Zara was putting into practice what Lori and the Loises had taught her. Her opponent was trying to fend off the blows that Zara was raining on her and failing miserably. Each blow that Zara landed brought her opponent closer to unconsciousness. By the time Lori arrived next to her, Zara's opponent was practically falling out of the sky, wobbling like a punchdrunk fighter. Smiling, Lori said, "Way to go, champ!" Lori took charge of Zara's opponent and flew her down to join the others in the barn.

2013 Clark was in a Drei duel with one of the few remaining members of Nor's family. They were trading bolts with the rapidity of a thunderstorm. Both were being affected, but it appeared as though 2013 Clark was taking the most punishment. Just as had happened in the practice sessions, suddenly it was like a switch had been thrown. Clark snapped out of it and his visage turned grim. His opponent saw this change and it shook him. He was unable to maintain his level of concentration and as a result his next bolt was weakened. Clark came up fighting mad and the bolt he discharged sent his opponent a hundred yards and falling out of the sky. When he hit the ground it was right in front of the doors to the barn and Red Thistle, whose turn it was to watch over the prisoners, sped out, collected him up and carried him inside, depositing him near his relatives. The El family had decided to keep the Nor family members separate from the followers that they captured.

Red Thistle sent a thought to Local Lois, "I think that there is only member of Nor's family not accounted for. I believe that it is Rena, his sister."/

Local Lois responded, "How are they? We don't want any of them to die while we hold them. We need to be careful that the amount of Kryptonite accumulated does not exceed the amount that could be lethal."/

"I have been removing the contaminated clothing. I have checked with Sean and he told me what to watch for. It is a shame that all of the doctors are children. The good thing is that Sean and I have been able to link so closely that it is like he is directing my hands in the exam. They will suffer no ill effects while under our control."/

"Thanks, Heather. That's a load off of my mind. Mind a question?"/

"Not at all. What is your question?"/

"Please don't be offended but, when we communicate this way, why don't you have an accent?"/

There was a mental chuckle as she responded, "Sean and I have discussed this. He says that telepathic communication is independent of cultural influences such as dialect or even language. If I had been born and raised in France it would be the same."/

Chapter 27 — Ching Interceeds With the Council of Elders

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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While the combat had been raging on Earth, Ching had been on the throne ship presenting the case to the Council of Elders.

"Lord Trey, as the head of the Council, I beg of you to personally look into what is happening in the Trial by Combat that is happening on Earth."

Trey replied, "Lord Jen-Mai has been keeping us informed as to the conduct of the combat and I must say that I am very disappointed in Lady Zara for allowing such a travesty to be perpetrated. The very idea that she would condone anyone other than family members to participate in the ritual combat is beyond me. Lord Jen-Mai has informed the Council of the duplicity of the house of El in this matter. Steps are to be taken. This cannot be allowed to proceed. It is making a mockery of our traditions.

"We have not acted as yet because we understand that Kal-El was not raised on Krypton and is therefore ignorant of our traditions. Lord Jen-Mai has been gracious enough to offer to educate him in this matter so that the conflict can be resolved by tradition."

"My Lord Trey, I am here as a representative of Lady Zara and Lord Kal-El to present evidence to the effect that it is not they who are going against tradition, but in fact it is Nor who is in violation. Lord Kal-El and Lady Zara attest to the fact that all of the individuals on their side of the combat are in very fact their children and their children's bond mates, with the most distant of relatives being a nephew and his spouse. The same cannot be said of those supporting Nor. We all know the extent of Nor's family on New Krypton. He has precisely one brother, two sisters and two cousins. Three of them are in life bonds."

Trey asked, "How are we to be sure that the supporters of Kal-El are what they say they are? Lord Jen-Mai has told us of the unprovoked assault before the combat had even been declared by these outsiders on the members of Nor's family and how a group of Kryptonians who were there as spectators had to intervene on behalf of Nor's family to prevent the travesty which was being perpetrated."

"My Lord Trey, with all due respect, Lord Jen-Mai is lying. It was Nor who caused the El family to be attacked by his adherents before the combat officially commenced. It was only through the intervention of Kal-El's children that the combat has been able to proceed as tradition requires. They have prevented Nor's minions from interfering."

Trey replied, "Lord Jen-Mai has been keeping us apprised of what has been occurring on the planet below. It is outrageous, the ends to which these minions of the El family have gone to force Nor into an unequal trial. They draw the observers away from the conflict by creating disasters which our people, out of the goodness on their hearts, help the locals, preserving life and preventing the destruction of property. Most commendable."

Ching was losing his patience. Jen-Mai had been twisting everything around and making the El family into the bad guys, which they most definitely were not. The problem that he now had was how to convince Trey and the others otherwise. After several minutes consideration he decided to speak to one of the council members on the side. Ching was a shrewd judge of character and had spotted one member that he thought could be reasoned with and didn't appear to be as completely taken in by Jen-Mai's lies as the rest.

Thus it came about that after the council meeting broke up that Ching approached Gan-Ce.

"Lord Gan-Ce I have a proposition for you. I propose that you accompany me to the planet. If you would only observe for yourself what is actually happening down there, you could then give a truthful report to the council. You know that Jen-Mai is lying. I could tell from your reaction in the council chamber. I ask you, why would the El family be doing the things that Jen-Mai

has reported? They live here and have been this planet's protectors for many years. Why would they suddenly become the enemies of those they have sworn to protect?"

Gan-Ce considered for a time before answering. When he finally did, the tone of his voice convinced Ching that he really didn't believe what he was saying. "In desperate times, desperate measures must be taken. If these minions of the El family are so desperate to win and feel that a fair and just conflict will be a losing one, who knows to what lengths they will go?"

"Lord Gan-Ce, you do not believe that any more than I do. That is what Jen-Mai has been feeding the council. You disparage those participating in this conflict on the side of the family, El by calling them minions. I assure you that each and every one is a member of the family, the most distant relation being a nephew and his wife. All others are children and their bond mates. They have a very interesting story to tell if you will only listen. Please accompany me to the surface and see for yourself just what is happening."

An hour later a travel pod landed and Gan-Ce and Ching stepped out. The sight that greeted them when they did was a general melee.

Super powered beings wearing uniforms of various colors were engaged in conflicts in small groups. Gan-Ce could not tell just who was who because most of the combatants were masked. He did recognize the crest of the family El displayed on the various uniforms which were a rainbow of color. Their opponents were wearing New Kryptonian style clothing and he thought he recognized at least a couple of them as members of Nor's family, but he could have been mistaken, as they were moving too fast to make an accurate ID.

Within seconds Lord Jen-Mai flew over and landed in front of him. "Lord Gan-Ce! What are you doing here? I have been designated as the representative of the council on planet. Your presence is not needed and I resent this intrusion on my authority."

Gan-Ce stared Jen-Mai down and in a stern voice asked, "Just what is going on here? Who are these people?"

Jen-Mai was realizing that as soon as Gan-Ce returned to the Council the deception he had been practicing would be revealed. He needed to prevent Gan-Ce from discovering the truth at all costs.

As he was about to add additional lies to those he had already told the council, one figure broke off from the melee and flew down, landing in front of Gan-Ce. The young woman was wearing a red and blue uniform and when she landed she placed her closed fist over her heart and gave a small bow as she said, "Grandfather, I honor you."

This shocked Jen-Mai when he heard this. How could this be Gan-Ce's granddaughter? He knew that his son was not in a life bond as yet.

Gan-Ce was speechless for a moment and then asked, "Why do you call me grandfather?"

Alice reached up and removed her mask and simply identified herself, "I am Alice," (she pronounced it Al'-i-Sea) "your granddaughter. It is so confusing. A short time ago, you and the members of the Council of Elders officiated at a Life Bond ceremony for me and my bond mate, Samuel Kent, Ben-El, and then you performed the same ceremony for all of my new brothers and sisters-in-law because they wished to honor the traditions of Krypton. I am Alice Ben-El. A member of the family of El and therefore entitled to fight on their side and for their honor." She turned and with a sweeping gesture indicated the members of the El family. "My family, the most honorable family El."

Gan-Ce was astounded and blurted out, "But, I have no granddaughter."

Alice explained, "I am from the year 2083. I am Alice daughter of Shiga and Lan-Ce son of Gan-Ce."

With a look of wonderment, Gan-Ce mused aloud, "Shiga is the birth wife of Lan-Ce, but they have not bonded as yet. You do bear a striking resemblance to Shiga. I can see Lan-Ce in some of your features as well. 2083. I find that I must accept your premise, granddaughter. If that is the case, how is it that you are on the side of those who would flout our customs?"

"Grandfather, it is NOT the El family which is flaunting the customs of New Krypton. If not for a friend of Lord Kal-El and Lady Lois-El this conflict would have been resolved to the detriment of the family El by the duplicity of Lord Jen-Mai in complicity with Lord Nor. It is Lord Nor who has flouted the customs of New Krypton by using non-family auxiliaries in the ritual combat."

"When we arrived on the scene an attempt was being made to confine the members of the El family on planet at that time by supporters of Lord Nor. The numbers at that time were supposed to be equal; however, a superior number of non-family combatants had surprised the El family and assaulted them. I with my brothers and sisters-in-law arrived just in time and routed them, preventing Lord Jen-Mai from declaring Nor the victor. If such declaration had been made, it would have been a fraud perpetrated by family Na."

"It was just seventy-two Earth hours, subjective, ago that you officiated at the life bond ceremony, however, I have known and lived with Lord Kal-El and Lady Lois for almost a full Earth year. I have never met a more just and honorable pair and their children are every bit as honorable as they. My father is an honorable man and I was raised in a good home. I recognize honor and good breeding when I see it. I know that love can be blind, but before I committed to life bond with Ben-El, I knew his heart and that of his entire family. Lord Kal-El would have been made First Lord of New Krypton. But that would have meant that he would have to leave the planet he had sworn to protect and the woman he loved. Honor demanded that he remain as Earth's protector rather than assume the rule of another planet."

Alice finished her statement with, "He chose the greater good, because honor demanded it."

"Granddaughter, in order for me to believe these things, then I must also believe," Gan-Ce turned to Jen-Mai and looked closely at him, "that Lord Jen-Mai has lied to the council ... repeatedly. Aye, that he is in fact a co-conspirator in this fraud."

Jen-Mai was looking very nervous under Gan-Ce's scrutiny.

He said, "Lord Gan-Ce, there is a very good explanation."

Gan-Ce crossed his arms across his chest as he replied, "I am prepared to listen to your explanation, but first, I will find out one truth." He sent a mental communication, "Lord Gen-Ta."/

"Yes, Lord Gan-Ce."/

"Gen-Ta, you are now the head of the Science Council. You were Jor-El's second in command. Can you focus the ship's sensors on me?"/

After a moment he received the reply, "I have them so focused."/

"There is a young woman standing within one meter of me. Question, what is the probability that she is related to me?"/

After some seconds he heard, "The bioelectromagnetic signature of the young woman is within ten standard deviational units of your signature. Prior testing has demonstrated that a variation of as much as twelve units can be demonstrated within family groups and that was for great-grand children. In my estimation, I would say that she could be your daughter or granddaughter Lord Gan-Ce."/

"Thank you. You have just confirmed her claim."/

Gan-Ce stepped to Alice and placed his hands on her shoulders and said, "My granddaughter, I greet you and I honor you."

While this conference had been proceeding, the non-family members of Nor's contingent seeing Lord Gan-Ce had one by one been breaking off the conflict and fleeing the scene.

Gan-Ce was distracted because as the conflicts came to an end the members of the El family were landing nearby and as they did the children all recognized Gan-Ce as one of the elders that had officiated at their bonding. Each upon landing placed a closed fist over their heart and bowed to him, staying in that position until he would acknowledge them.

Finally, when all conflict had ceased, he asked them, "How is it that you know me?"

Jon Kent, Kam-El, stepped forward and sweeping his arm to indicate the other members of the family said, "You, or actually the Gan-Ce from our universe, recently officiated at the bonding ceremony for each of us. We honor you, Gan-Ce, Elder of New Krypton and grandfather of Alice Ben-El our sister."

Gan-Ce returned the salute and when he straightened said, "Members of the family El, I greet you in the name of the Council of Elders of New Krypton." He turned to the group consisting of the three Lois Lanes, Lori and the Clarks. "Am I to assume that Kal-El is among you?"

Local Clark and Lois stepped forward.

Gan-Ce said, "We must talk. Please accompany me into the travel pod. Granddaughter, Lady Zara and Lt. Ching, please join us."

Jen-Mai spoke up, "Shall I join you?"

Gan-Ce turned on Jen-Mai and pinned him with a withering stare before replying, "Were I to be in your boots I would be deciding what to tell the council to mitigate your culpability in this matter."

Coward that he was, Jen-Mai shrank under his stare and when Gan-Ce turned away he fled, planning to return to the ship.

Before they were able to enter the travel pod Rena flew in and knelt before Lord Gan-Ce. She gave the closed fist salute as she said, "Lord Gan-Ce, I wish to speak with you."

Looking at her, Gan-Ce said, "You are Rena, sister of Nor-Na, are you not?"

"Yes, My Lord, I am ashamed to admit that I am. I believe that my testimony will help to clear up this matter. I beg your indulgence. I do have a story to tell."

Gan-Ce gestured for her to stand and said, "Please accompany us into the travel pod. I want to get to the bottom of this matter."

The party moved into the travel pod, and upon a switch being activated, a table and stools rose out of the floor. Gan-Ce took the seat at the head of the table and indicated the remaining seats for the rest of the party. He said to Alice, "Granddaughter, please sit here, on my right."

Gan-Ce addressed the group, "I wish to ascertain just what has been happening on this planet and how this combat has been conducted. I noted several individuals, all of whom could be you." He looked pointedly at Clark. "There are an equal number that could be you." This time he looked at Lois. The rest are obviously supporters at least, but by the testimony of my granddaughter they are all her brothers and sisters-in-law, the children and bond mates of Kal-El. I don't know how this could be. I also don't know how a granddaughter that hasn't been born yet can also be here, but the bioelectromagnetic signature doesn't lie."

Looking at Alice he said, "First, granddaughter, please explain how you are here."

"That is difficult, grandfather. There is a gentleman from the past who actually built a device which can travel through time and across the barriers between the parallel universes. As I said, in our universe, which is not this one, approximately seventy two hours ago you officiated at a life bonding ceremony for Ben-El and myself and then performed the same ceremony for the rest of

the family. As soon as that was finished and I was a member of family El, this gentleman appeared and told us that our help was needed elsewhere and that it was a matter of life or death for a Lord Kal-El and Lois—El couple. We all immediately volunteered to help and he brought us here. We came here from 2083. Once this is resolved, he will return us to our rightful universe and time."

Gan-Ce said, "Thank you, granddaughter for keeping your answer succinct. I will not question your veracity even though I have a lot of questions regarding this time and space travel."

Turning to Clark he asked, "Lord Kal-El, for that is who I perceive you to be, I had been informed that the Kal-El of this planet had died after passing his essence to his mate. How is it that I find you here?"

"Lord Gan-Ce, as Alice just told you, we have a friend who can travel through time and space. When the Kal-El of this universe died, he brought me here to take his place."

Gan-Ce was becoming more skeptical as time went on and it was obvious in his features.

Suddenly Lois had an idea, "Perhaps a small demonstration for Lord Gan-Ce's benefit would help. Clark, let's take Lord Gan-Ce on a little trip."

Clark smiled and said, "There you go again, reminding me why I married you."

Lois smiled in return at their little joke.

Turning back to Gan-Ce, Clark said, "Lord Gan-Ce if you will permit, I will fetch a device with which I will be able to convince you of the reality of time and space travel."

"What exactly is this device, a monitor of some sort?"

"Actually, it is the device that Lois and I use to travel back and forth between our two universes."

"Very well, Ching use the transporter to allow him to exit. In the mean time I will hear from Rena."

Ching sent Clark outside and he immediately took off for Metropolis where they had secured the TaDT.

"Rena, you said that you had a story to tell."

"Yes, My Lord Gan-Ce. It is a story of deceit, betrayal and abuse. I find myself in the unenviable position of having to expose the perfidy of a member of my own family. You must understand that it is only because certain facts were recently revealed to me of which I had no previous knowledge that I am coming forth. I freely admit that until this revelation, I was a supporter of my brother; however, now I choose to throw myself on the mercy of the council and am willing to accept any judgment handed down by them. I can no longer allow this fraud to be perpetrated by Nor, in his attempt to usurp the title of High Lord of New Krypton, a title that he has no right to and is not fit for."

"Lord Gan-Ce, Nor in his attempt to become High Lord was willing to stop at nothing, including the murder of a new born infant if it meant that the infant stood in his way. I have to admit that sickened me. I stopped being a supporter of my brother when I found out that he had abused our sister when she was younger. She has supported him because of fear; otherwise she would have abandoned him long ago as I now have. Lord Gan-Ce, you must declare the family El victors in the trial by combat."

"Nor is too much of a coward to face Lord Kal-El one-on-one. He felt confident when he thought that it would be nine of us against only Kal-El, Lois-El and Zara. Three to one against them. He was shaken when he discovered a like number. He is so cowardly that even three to one odds were not enough for him. He had also called in non-family auxiliaries making the odds, even with the elevated numbers, more than two to one in his favor. That is, until the rest of the El family members arrived. I will attest to the fact that both Nor and I were aware of the truth of their status as members of the El family. He and I both used the sensor array to evaluate their status as you did with your

granddaughter.

“There it is. I denounce Nor as a liar, cheat, usurper and abuser. One who is not fit to rule a family, let alone a planet.”

Clark had returned while Rena had been speaking. When she was finished he said, “Lord Gan-Ce I am prepared to take you on a journey to prove to you that time travel is possible.”

“How can I be assured that this is actually what we are doing?”

“Do you have a chronometer?”

“No.”

Clark turned to Ching and asked, “What can we do? We need to track the time away.”

Ching approached a panel and brought up a digital timer and started it.

Clark held up the TaDT and said, “This device will take us to another universe and return us five minutes from the time we depart. Please observe the timer. We will cross over at 1:00.”

Clark activated the TaDT and when the timer hit 1:00 they stepped through into the living room of the farm house in Smallville. Gan-Ce looked around at the changed environs.

Clark said, “We are now in my native universe. This house is our home. It is similar to that which you observed when you landed. If you would step outside, please.” Once outside Clark pointed out the differences between the houses. He showed the location that the travel pod had occupied when they had stepped through the portal. He took his time in showing the elder around. He put on the TV to show Gan-Ce that there were no reports of the super war on the news. When over a half an hour had elapsed Clark said, “Lord Gan-Ce, we have been gone for some time. We will now return and when we do only five minutes will have elapsed from our departure.” He triggered the TaDT. The portal opened and they stepped back through. As the portal closed behind them Gan-Ce looked at Ching’s digital timer. It indicated 6:00.

Gan-Ce looked at Clark and said, “Thank you for that demonstration. I feel certain that if this had been an elaborate hoax you would have had to enlist one of your enemies in it, with no advanced notice and that is something I believe would have been impossible. I am now thoroughly convinced and can report my findings to the council. I would request that you all accompany me in case the other council members have questions.”

After receiving unanimous consent Gan-Ce directed Ching, “Take us back to the throne ship.”

Chapter 28 — The Trial of Nor

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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The travel pod piloted by Lt. Ching bearing Gan-Ce, local Lois and Clark, Rena and Alice docked in the pod bay of the throne ship.

As they exited the travel pod they were greeted by Trey and the other members of the Council of Elders. Trey accosted Gan-Ce, “Lord Gan-Ce I have been informed by Lord Jen-Mai of your interference on the planet’s surface. The council had decided that a limited, a very limited presence on the surface was what was called for and that authority was given to Lord Jen-Mai. Your presence on the surface could be construed as lack of trust in his judgment. What do you have to say for yourself?”

Gan-Ce, knowing that he was in the right, did not reply in the same tone as he had been addressed, but calmly replied, “I went at the insistence of Lt. Ching who quite frankly has shown more wisdom than the entire Council of Elders. It is only through my personal reconnaissance that I have actually come to the truth of

the matter. I call for a full Council meeting and I demand that Jen-Mai attend.” At this point Gan-Ce turned to the Councilor security detachment and said, “Jen-Mai is still on the surface. Go down and bring him back with you. Use force if necessary. He is to stand trial.”

Hearing this Trey was stunned. He simply couldn’t believe what he was hearing. His chief of security addressed him, “Lord Trey, your wishes?”

He replied almost automatically, “Whatever he says. Go and bring him back.” Turning to Gan-Ce he asked, “Charges? What charges?”

“Conspiracy to commit High Treason.” Gan-Ce flatly replied.

Such charges had never in his memory been brought against any individual let alone a member of the Council of Elders. The shock was almost too much and he repeated in a hushed tone, “Conspiracy to commit High Treason.” Slowly Trey came out of his shock and said, “You had better have incontrovertible proof of such an accusation, Lord Gan-Ce.”

Gan-Ce replied with firmness, “My Lord Trey, I am sure you know me well enough to be certain I would not proffer such a charge without such proof. I ask that we adjourn to the council chamber where such proof as I have can be presented.”

They proceeded to the council chamber and then there was a pause until Jen-Mai arrived in the custody of two security guards who had an arm each.

Since the guard detachment had not been on the surface for any extended period they had not acquired the powers so Jen-Mai’s presence was simply a response to their authority, not as a result of any force that they could apply.

Once in the Council Chamber, Jen-Mai looked around and spotting both Kal-El and Lois as well as the others, he realized that he had lost whatever chance he might have had to escape because those super powered individuals could enforce the Council’s edict where the guards would fail.

Trey and the rest of the elders, all except Jen-Mai, seated themselves behind a long bench.

Along one side of the room was a gallery of seats. Once the elders were seated the other individuals also took seats.

Trey stood in place and started the proceedings. “Lord Jen-Mai you stand charged with the crime of conspiracy to commit high treason. How say you? Guilty or not guilty?”

Jen-Mai looked around fearfully. He knew that Gan-Ce had been on the surface and that he had seen for himself what was happening. Also at the side sat not only the imposter and the woman with the essence of Kal-El, but Zara, Lt. Ching, the woman who claimed to be Gan-Ce’s granddaughter and worst of all, Rena. How could he possibly get out of this bind that he found himself in? After thinking about it for several seconds his musings were interrupted by Trey, “Lord Jen-Mai, I ask you again, guilty or not guilty?”

Jen-Mai finally came to a decision and spoke, “Guilty ... provisionally.”

Trey didn’t know how to take this response. “Provisionally? How can your guilt be provisional? Either you are guilty or you are not.”

Jen-Mai was cheered by this response as it appeared that his ruse might just work. He finally spoke up, “Yes, I am guilty; however there are circumstances which can be proffered which may mitigate the sentence of the council.”

“What circumstances would those be?”

“Please allow the evidence to be presented and then I will offer my circumstances. It would also be preferable if Lord Nor-Na were present as the circumstances involve him.”

Trey looked to the side and asked, “Do you have knowledge of Nor’s location?”

Lois spoke up and said, “Yes, Lord Trey, we do. He is with

the others of his family that we captured and confined. I will have one of my children bring him to the ship. A travel pod will be required since he is currently without his super powers.” She turned to Lt. Ching and asked, “Do you know where the farm is?”

“Yes, I do.” He turned to Trey and said, “With your permission, I will take a travel pod down and pick him up.”

Trey replied, “Please do. We will wait until he is present to continue.”

Half an hour later Lt. Ching entered the council chamber. He was accompanied by Lightning and Quicksilver who were carrying an unconscious Nor

Lois said, “It could be some time before he recovers consciousness.”

Trey asked, “How did you render him unconscious?”

Clark answered, “Lord Trey, I feel that it were best not to reveal that particular secret. We may need to use it again, in self defense against other agents of Nor.”

Trey nodded his head and said, “I understand. Let us allow Nor time to recover. Guards, take charge of Nor, remove him to the infirmary and place a guard over him. I do not want him to escape.”

Clark said, “He is currently without his powers and he will not recover them until he has been exposed to the sun’s rays for a period of time. The shackles that you use on your prisoners should be adequate to hold him.”

Trey nodded to the guards and said, “See to it.”

Two guards assisted Lightning and Quicksilver as they lifted Nor and carried him out.

Trey announced, “We will recess and reconvene tomorrow at this time.”

Gan-Ce addressed Rena, “Rena, you may return to your quarters. You are to remain available.”

“Understood, Lord Gan-Ce. Thank you.”

Lightning and Quicksilver accompanied them when Lois, Clark, Zara, Alice and Lt. Ching returned to the surface. They found all of the members of the El family gathered at the farm. The first thing Lois did was go in to feed the baby.

While she was inside 2013 Clark reported to local Clark, “From the time that that travel pod arrived, it’s been quiet.”

Alice stepped up and said, “My brothers and sisters, you all know the elder that Lt. Ching brought to the surface. I do not think that Ching knew it, but as you all know, Lord Gan-Ce is my grandfather and a most honorable man. I think that we have no more to fear from the minions of Nor. He is now in custody and his sister is prepared to testify against him.”

Hattie shouted, “It’s Milla time,” which elicited a chuckle from almost everyone there. As a follow up she said, “You know, that’s one thing I think I would miss by being super, if I had been a drinker, that is, which I wasn’t anyhow, so just forget I said anything.” This elicited yet another round of laughter.

Jon said, “Hattie is right, though. I think this warrants a celebration. We won! Earth should now be safe from Nor and his family.”

Local Clark called 2013 Clark and 1993 Clark aside, “We have a number of captives in the barn. What should we do with them?”

2013 Clark called Lt. Ching over and asked, “What should we do with those we captured?”

“I have a supply of manacles. As long as they will not be able to break free we can apply them and send them back to the throne ship, under guard as we did Nor.”

2013 Clark called 2013 Lois over and said, “Okay, here’s the deal. We need to remove the green K from our prisoners and box it all up for disposal. Then we are going to shackle them and send them back to the ship. Can you organize the spouses to do that?”

“No sooner said than done.” 2013 Lois turned away and signaled the spouses and they all gathered around while she explained.

Local Clark called 2013 Lois aside and said, “Do not shackle Fina. From the evidence presented, I do not think she will be a problem and we can afford to show that courtesy.”

“She’s the one I had captured, isn’t she?”

“Yes, that was her.”

“In that case, I have no problem showing her that courtesy. She was an honorable opponent. She isn’t like her brother.”

Ching retrieved the shackles and handed them over. Once all of the green Kryptonite contaminated clothing had been removed and the captives were bound they were placed in the travel pod. Since they were all still unconscious they didn’t complain about the cramped quarters. Fina was placed in a seat of her own and strapped in.

While this was going on local Clark called over Lightning and Shield. “In the barn is a grill. Could you guys get it out and fire it up? I think it is time for a Bar-B-Q.”

Jonathan, seeing everyone gathered in the yard, had come out. Seeing the grill, he went back in the house and returned with his apron on and utensils in hand.

Local Clark flew to a market and bought franks, burgers and chicken along with sufficient buns and Jonathan started cooking.

Martha had seen what was happening and had started making iced tea and lemonade. She also put on potatoes to boil for potato salad.

Carrie came outside and was fussed over by all of the women. Protector kept her mask on, hoping that she would not be recognized by her younger self. Even so, she and Supergirl were also fussed over. The women had been too busy until now to take the time to get to know the children.

When local Lois was finished feeding the baby she brought her out so that everyone could see what or who they had been fighting to preserve. For a while they all played ‘pass the baby’. Even Protector had a chance to hold her.

Watching Protector with the baby, Supergirl said to local Lois, “I’m never going to live this down.”

Lois burst out in peals of laughter as she hugged her daughter.

The next day they returned to the council chamber. This time Nor was there, manacled and contrite.

In the seats at the side were Lt. Ching, Zara, Rena, Alice, local Clark and local Lois who held the baby. In addition to the others, Superman Junior and his wife Elka were present. All of the members of the El family were in uniform, the El family crest proudly displayed on their chests.

Trey opened the proceedings, “This meeting of the Council of Elders of New Krypton has been called to determine the truth of the matter before us. May Rao guide us to truth.”

“Lord Gan-Ce has brought a charge of conspiracy to commit high treason against Lord Jen-Mai. Lord Jen-Mai has pleaded guilty — provisionally. We will hear from Lord Jen-Mai first in order to determine if the circumstances he will put forward will mitigate his sentence. Jen-Mai.”

Jen-Mai was shackled, even though he was still super powered from being on the planet’s surface. Any attempt by him to break free and escape would be futile in view of the presence of several members of the super powered El family being present, also it would only result in his immediate condemnation and he knew it. His best chance was to brazen it out.

Jen-Mai stood and faced the assembled elders and pointed at an empty chair, “Elders of New Krypton, until this minute I could have been there, in that empty seat. The reason I am not is because I have been forced to do things which I never would have considered doing before.”

Trey interrupted, “Forced — how?”

“Lord Trey, you know that I am not a warrior. I never have been. I have always been a statesman. Violence is foreign to me and as such when violence is threatened against me I lack the skills to defend myself and that is exactly what happened. Lord Nor, who is here before you today, through the use of threats forced me to do his will in the matter of the trial by combat.”

At this point, Nor, who had been having trouble containing his composure burst out in loud guffaws.

Jen-Mai was startled and turned toward Nor as did the rest of the Council of Elders. In a flat, almost sarcastic tone, Lord Gan-Ce said, “I believe that Lord Nor would like to make a comment.”

Nor calmed himself sufficiently to speak, “Lord Gan-Ce is quite correct. I do have something to say. If you believe this tripe you are the doddering old fools that I always thought you were and justify my desire to abolish the council altogether.”

Jen-Mai stared at this and his jaw dropped. Before he thought of the consequences he spoke, “But, but you were going to make me chief elder in the new council.”

Trey looked long and hard at Jen-Mai before he spoke, “Lord Jen-Mai, your own words put the lie to your previous testimony. It was not threats which caused you to turn against your own people it was greed. Greed of position.”

Trey addressed Gan-Ce, “Lord Gan-Ce, it would appear that your trip to the surface was most justified. Please report your findings.”

Gan-Ce stepped out from behind the bench into the open space in front of the council before he started to speak, “Lord Trey and members of the council, when I landed on planet there was a conflict in progress. I observed a number of individuals in colorful costumes involved in altercations with New Kryptonians. Per the rules of the trial by combat, the ritual combat is to be limited to family groups. To my consternation I discovered that the New Kryptonians involved were not members of Nor’s family. We are all aware of the number of family members totals nine and I was confronted by almost twenty New Kryptonians fighting on his side.”

Nor interrupted, “They were only there because of the auxiliaries that the El family brought into the conflict. They were there to prevent them from causing damage to the planet and its people.”

Gan-Ce allowed Nor to finish before he replied, “Quite the contrary.” Gan-Ce gestured to Alice, bidding her to stand, “This is my granddaughter, Alice. She is bond mate to Ben son of Kal of the house of El. The auxiliaries that you claim were damaging the planet are the legitimate children and the children’s bond mates, all of the house of El. As children and bond mates of the children they were legitimately entitled to fight for the honor of house El. How do you now explain the presence of non-family members fighting for house Na in contravention of custom?”

“I didn’t know they were family.”

Rena jumped to her feet and shouted, “Liar! You knew as did I that they were all family.” She turned to the council and said, “I apologize for my outburst. If it please the council, I wish to speak.”

Trey replied, “You may proceed.”

“Thank you, Lord Trey. I Rena, sister of Nor of house Na, state for the record that Nor knew from the start that the auxiliaries assisting house El were in fact all family members. I also state that he knowingly recruited non-family auxiliaries to assist in the capture and possibly even the murder of the members of house El.” She pointed at the baby in Lois’ arms and said, “He even tried to order me to kill that baby. I had tried to stop assisting him completely, but my will was not strong enough. It wasn’t until I finally got the truth out of my sister that I found the strength to turn my back on him and his desires.”

Gan-Ce, in a soft tone enquired, “What was this truth that you heard from your sister that caused you to turn your back on your brother?”

Rena was weeping as she answered, “That as children, he ... abused her.” Strong passion entered her voice as she continued, “Nor is a monster. Just the thought of him sitting on the throne as High Lord convinced me that it would signal the end of society on New Krypton. He doesn’t deserve to live, let alone rule. It may have been too late, but I did wake up to just what a monster Nor is and I repudiate all that he stands for. I am ready to accept any punishment that the council determines I deserve.”

Gan-Ce asked, “When did you find this out?”

“A short time before the final battle.”

“Did you participate in that battle?”

“No, My Lord Gan-Ce, I did not. I stayed on the sidelines, frankly tempted to join family El in their efforts. I saw that family El was more than holding their own and that they had the means to capture and confine the family and supporters of Nor so I did not interfere. I had determined that if the combat were going against El that I would come to the council myself; however, before I had the chance, I saw the travel pod containing yourself and Lt. Ching land. I knew that justice would be done as a result of your intervention. That was when I presented myself to you.”

“That could have been too late.”

“I realize that, but this was my family that I was turning against. I would beg the council to take into consideration the fact that Fina lived in terror of our brother, even more than I. She should not be held responsible for her actions.”

“Your concern for your sister is commendable. What about your other brother and cousins?”

“They will have to speak for themselves. I speak for myself and Fina because she is too weak to speak for herself.”

Nor sneered at Rena, “You’ve killed us all.”

“No, brother, you have killed us all. Your hubris knew no bounds. Your desire for power clouded your reason and you were willing to go to any length to achieve your goal, the position of High Lord of New Krypton. I’m happy that you failed because no one would have been safe, not even your brother or sisters. We could be seen as a threat to your rule just as that baby was. You would have forced Zara into a life bond against her will to cement your claim. How long would she have survived the ceremony? A day, a week, a month, perhaps as much as a year? You would have eliminated her as well. You wouldn’t share the power with anyone.”

“What about your plans to subjugate the people on the planet below? You said that they would serve you or die. Is that how a ruler treats his people? No, that is how a vengeful god treats those who fail to worship him the way he wants them to. I have news for you, you are no Rao! Rao was kindness and love.”

Trey addressed Nor, “Nor-Na, how do you plead to the charge of high treason?”

Nor gave a sardonic laugh, “Not guilty.”

Gan-Ce said, “Your own words have put the lie to that statement. Lord Trey, I submit that Nor-Na stands convicted, by his own words.”

Trey nodded his agreement and then said, “The council will deliberate and return with a verdict.”

Nor stopped them, “Lord Trey, if it please the council. I would ask mercy for my family. My brother is a stupid, blind, weak fool who would follow me wherever I led him. His wife obeys her husband and would stay by his side simply to protect him. My cousins are the same. If any of them had any intelligence they would not have followed. Let the blame fall on me.”

“Your words will be taken into consideration.”

Trey nodded to the rest of the Council. They Council all stood and filed out of the room.

Chapter 29 — The New High Lord

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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Nor and Jen-Mai had both been led away to confinement and the Council had retired from the public audience chamber to their private meeting room.

Half an hour later the council returned to the chamber. Once they had returned they sent the guards for Nor and Jen-Mai.

Once they had been brought before the Council, Trey stood while the rest remained seated.

“Nor-Na, you have been found guilty of high treason. Your actions in the trial by combat have made a mockery of our laws and traditions. Your attempts to usurp the position of High Lord of New Krypton through the use of treachery, threats and bribery have been discovered. This Council repudiates your actions and therefore you are found to be guilty of high crimes and misdemeanors. The sentence is it that your atoms are to be scattered across the galaxy. This sentence is to be carried out immediately.”

“Jen-Mai, you have been found guilty of conspiracy to commit high treason. Your sentence is the same as that of Nor and may Rao have mercy on you both. Guards, you may remove the prisoners and place them in confinement until the sentence of this Council is ratified by the High Lord as is required by our laws.”

Nor sneered and said, “Then I look forward to a long life since there is no High Lord.”

Trey replied, “That remains to be seen. Guard, you will escort the prisoners to confinement.”

The guards led both prisoners out.

After they had passed through the door, Kal-El rose to his feet and Trey acknowledged him, “Lord Kal-El?”

Clark spoke, “Lord Trey, Jen-Mai has been on the surface for a period of time and as a result has acquired the power of invulnerability. Will your system be able to affect his structure?”

“I don’t know. Let me ask someone who should know.” Trey summoned Gen-Ta. When he arrived the question was posed.

Gen-Ta’s reply was not hopeful. “It is doubtful if the device will affect him. We may have to return him to New Krypton in order to perform the execution.”

Lois spoke up, “Lord Trey.”

“Lady Lois?”

“Lord Trey, we have the means to strip him of his powers and remove his invulnerability. If you will allow, one of my counterparts can bring it aboard. It will also assure that neither Nor or Jen-Mai will break free and escape to the surface.”

“Please proceed.”

Lois sent, /”Lori, please bring a sample of Kryptonite aboard. We need to strip Jen-Mai of his powers and make sure he and Nor do not escape their fates.”/

Lori replied, /”Be there in two shakes.”/

“It is on the way, Lord Trey.”

Trey asked, “Have the others that were transported aboard recovered as yet?”

The chief of the Councilor Guard reported, “They have, Lord Trey.”

“Send a detachment to the infirmary and have the members of the family Na brought here.”

While they waited, Trey said, “Rena, please stand.”

Rena steeled herself. She knew that her fate could easily be the same as that of her brother and Jen-Mai. Slowly she stood and moved to the center of the room in front of the Council. She turned to face her judges.

Once she was facing them Trey spoke, “Rena, the Council finds mitigating circumstances in your case. However, you are not absolved of all guilt so sentence must be passed. We find you guilty of assisting in violating the customs of ritual combat. For that you are sentenced to one year of menial labor in the fields of New Krypton. Similar sentences will be given to all those New Kryptonian currently in the infirmary as supporters of Nor-Na.”

Rena replied, “I thank the council for its mercy. There are additional individuals that I can name as those that assisted, however it should be noted that they were deceived by Nor into the belief that the El family auxiliaries were not family members as is required by ritual and were acting in that belief.”

Trey replied, “Noted. Please provide the list and we will investigate.”

“Gladly, Lord Trey,” was her reply.

Just then the members of family Na were brought in. Each was wearing manacles.

Trey addressed the guard, “Please, remove their shackles.”

Once they were all freed they turned to face the Council.

Trey addressed them, “This Council has investigated the circumstances of the conflict below.”

Ran-Na said, “Lord Trey.”

“You may speak, Ran-Na.”

“I have just been told that the auxiliaries helping the family El are in fact family members. Is this true?”

“Yes, it is.”

“But, how could this be? We were told that there were only three members of the El family present. We all thought that they were renegade New Kryptonians helping them. Where did they all come from?”

Trey addressed Kal-El, “Perhaps you could explain?”

Kal-El stepped forward and spoke, “Those that you fought against were all members of the El family, gathered from across time and space. They were brought here by a friend of the El family to ensure a just combat following the traditions of New Krypton.”

Ran-Na had a mystified expression as he said, “Across time and space? How is that possible?”

“It is hard to believe, just accept that it is fact. Those you faced were all members of the El family. The most distant relation being a nephew and his wife, uh, bond mate.”

“Lord, Kal-El, if that is actually the case then I ask your forgiveness. Nor had told us that they had to be non-family members. He told us that was why he recruited non-family to help us.”

Ran-Na turned to the Council, bowed and said, “Lords of New Krypton, ignorance is not an excuse. I did willingly participate in this ... this travesty. I willingly accept whatever sentence this Council decides is warranted.”

Lord Trey addressed them individually, “Fina, your sister has informed the Council of your circumstances and finds these to be mitigating in your case, therefore this Council sentences you to one year of labor in the fields of New Krypton. Your punishment is the same as that of your sister. The punishment is not severe and will serve to benefit our population as it is served out.”

“Ran-Na,” Trey looked around at the members of the Council and receiving nods continued, “Ran-Na, Gam-Re, Col-Re yours and your bond mates sentences will be the same as that of Rena and Fina. We accept that you were all duped by Nor-Na into this serious breach of the traditions of New Krypton and had no malicious intent.”

“Your sentences will begin as soon as we return to New Krypton. There will be no need for you to be confined. You may return to your quarters.”

As a group family Na, those that remained, bowed to the Council and filed out.

Once family Na had exited, Trey next addressed, “Lord Kal-

El and Lady Lois-El.”

They rose and faced the council.

“This council proffers its most profound apologies for the actions of Nor and his associates. It is the decision of this council that we will depart and no longer bother you or this planet.”

Kal-El spoke up, “Lord Trey and elders of New Krypton please allow me to address the Council.”

“Speak Lord Kal-El.”

“The Lady Zara told us what precipitated this trial. It is my understanding that Gee-Ra desired a member of the house of El, specifically Kal-El, to form a life bond with Lady Zara thereby uniting the houses of El and Ra. Unfortunately, Kal-El is not available. Lord Trey, I may have a solution for you.” Clark gestured for Alice to join him. Once she was standing beside him he continued, “Lord Gan-Ce you have acknowledged your granddaughter. Gentlemen, Alice, Lord Gan-Ce’s granddaughter is here from an alternate universe. The Kal-El of that universe was also unavailable and an alternate solution was found. I will allow her to explain. Alice, if you will.”

Alice turned and placing her closed fist over her heart, bowed to the council.

Lord Gan-Ce said, “You may speak, granddaughter.”

She straightened up and said, “Thank you, grandfather. In my reality we also had difficulty with Lord Nor and although the path followed was different the outcome was the same. Lord Nor’s death removed him as a threat to our society. As Lord Kal-El has stated, Kal-El was not available to form a life bond with the Lady Zara in our reality. I personally have seen evidence here that the same resolution could be affected. In my reality the Lady Zara and the former Lt. Ching committed to a life bond and jointly rule. I say the former Lieutenant in that he retired from the military and assumed his family name of Ka. Ching-Ka and Zara Ching-Ka have ruled with distinction and honor ever since. They are held in the highest esteem by all New Kryptonians. One of their daughters is my closest friend and I have spent a good deal of time with them as a family. Next to Lord Kal-El and Lady Lois theirs is the most honorable family I know. I have spoken.”

When she had finished speaking and sat down, Elka stood and addressed the elders, “If it may please the council, I wish to speak.”

Gan-Ce asked, “Who might you be?”

She moved over to stand next to Clark. Turning to face the Council she placed her closed fist over her heart and bowed.

Lord Trey said, “You may address the Council. Please identify yourself.”

She said, “I am Elka Ka-El daughter of Tel-Ka granddaughter of Zara and Ching-Ka.”

Gan-Ce asked, “You are the granddaughter of Zara as Alice is my granddaughter?”

“Yes, Lord Gan-Ce.”

“You may speak.”

“Honored members of the Council of Elders I simply wish to add my testimony to that of Alice. My grandparents, Zara and Ching-Ka, have ruled New Krypton in a most honorable fashion and I am proud to claim them. They have guided New Krypton through some serious and trying times with wisdom and compassion. I say with all humility that there has never been a more beloved pair on the throne of High Lord in the history of Krypton or New Krypton. I have spoken.” She returned to her seat.

As she was sitting, Gan-Ce turned to the other members of the council and said, “Fellow elders of New Krypton, it would appear that the object of our search for a new leader of our society has been right here all along. The testimony of my granddaughter and that of the granddaughter of Zara and Ching would appear to be conclusive.” Gan-Ce turned to the gallery and addressed Zara and Ching, “Lady Zara, Lt. Ching.”

Zara and Ching both stood and moved in front of the council bench.

“Lady Zara, what say you in this matter. You were promised to Kal-El as a birth wife. He is not now available. Would you willingly accept Lt. Ching as his substitute?”

Zara looked at Ching and said, “He hasn’t asked.”

Just then the proceedings were interrupted by the arrival of Lori who bore a lead box in her hands.

Lois stood and addressed the Council, “Lord Trey and the Council, this is Lori-El bond mate of another Kal-El. In this box is the means of stripping Jen-Mai of the powers he acquired on the surface. It will be necessary for all of the guards to vacate the cell while Lori-El deals with him.”

Trey addressed the head of the guards, “Follow her orders to the letter.”

The head of the guard detachment gave the closed fist salute and bowed to Lori, “Yours to command.”

Lori gave a half bow and said, “Lead me to his confinement,” and left following the guard.

After they exited, Trey said, “Lady Alice Ben-El, this council thanks you for your testimony. Lady Elka-Ka-El, the council also thanks you. Lord Kal-El and Lady Lois, this council also thanks you and commends you on your restraint. It would appear as though you had it in your power to have killed your opponents as easily as you disabled and captured them.”

Clark said, “Lord Trey, we have learned that with great power comes even greater responsibility and I quickly learned that I could not act as policeman, judge, jury and executioner for moral reasons. Any criminal I capture I give to the appropriate authorities to deal with as they see fit. I long ago learned it was the best way.”

Kal-El continued, “Lord Trey, from discussions we have had with other members of our family, we realize that it would be a mistake if New Krypton were to follow the course you outlined. New Krypton should not isolate itself. It would be mutually beneficial if New Krypton and Earth were they to maintain full diplomatic relations. There is much to be gained by both sides as far as trade of goods and information. With your consent we can begin those trade negotiations using the Superman Foundation as the intermediary.”

“Lord Kal-El, that is most gracious of you considering what our people did to you and your planet.”

“Much harm has been done, but more good can come of it.”

Trey replied, “You are very wise, my friend. We will talk more.”

Zara spoke up, “Lord Trey, if it is the determination of the council that Lt. Ching and I become the leaders of New Krypton we should make that transition of power before we leave orbit. In that way we can establish the diplomatic relations which have been suggested.”

Trey turned to Lt. Ching and asked, “What are your wishes in this matter?”

Lt. Ching performed the closed fist bow to Trey and said, “If it please the council I would beg a conference with Lady Zara, alone.”

Trey looked right and left and receiving nods from the other members said, “Granted.”

Lt. Ching and Zara exited the council chamber. In rather short order they returned with Lady Zara resting her hand on his outstretched hand and Lt. Ching addressed the council, “Lord Trey and members of the Council of Elders, it is my wish to relinquish my military title and resume my family name, Ka. Also, I have asked the Lady Zara if she would consent to forming a life bond with me.”

Trey turned to Zara and asked, “Lady Zara, how say you?”

Zara replied in a serious tone as befitted addressing the council, “I have accepted the offer of Ching-Ka to form a life

bond with him. If it please the council we would request the bonding ceremony be conducted at the earliest convenience.” Turning to the gallery she continued, “We also request Lord Kal-El, Lady Lois, Ka-El and Elka Ka-El be present.” As she finished speaking formally she started to smile.

Looking around Trey said, “We will conduct the ceremony in one hour.”

Chapter 30 — Returning to Alt 3 (Alt 1 a)

1993

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 040 — Alt 3

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Lois and Clark had told Pete and Lana enough about their friend Herb to realize that he had obviously taken them on some kind of mission.

They had no way to know how long they would be gone, but Clark had seemed convinced that the meeting wouldn’t take very long, so Pete went ahead and opened the bottle of wine and he and Lana each had a glass, (Lana had a small glass because of her pregnancy), as they cleaned up the dinner dishes so that when Lois and Clark returned that particular chore would be done.

Not knowing what else to do and deciding that they wanted to actually be around when Lois and Clark returned so that they could hear about just what had happened to them during their absence, Pete turned on the TV and they settled in to watch a movie.

The movie had just finished what the door to the office opened and Lois and Clark entered the living room.

Pete was immediately on his feet and said, “Well, okay, where did you go and what happened?”

Before answering Lois moved over and sat on the couch next to Lana. She heaved a long, relieved sigh before she said, “You are not going to believe what we have been through.” Before continuing, she looked at Clark and said, “We will need to be on the lookout for them to show up here.”

Clark nodded in agreement and said, “Yeah, them and a few more things. I talked to 2013 Clark and he told me about this asteroid, I think he called it ‘Nightfall’, that might be a threat. I think he said the year was 1994, next year. He gave me some pointers on how to handle it. He had amnesia as a result of dealing with it, but if we handle it differently we can avoid that. Since there are two of us it should be a piece of cake.”

Pete, his curiosity really aroused by this asked, “2013 Clark? There are 2013 Kents? What was it a Clark Kent convention?”

Lois chuckled and said, “No, it wasn’t a convention, but it was like one. In this case, I meant that in this case it means that he was a Clark Kent from the year 2013. Are there more, there may just be, but we haven’t met them, at least not yet.”

Confused, Pete asked, “He picked you up here and in 2013? Well, I guess that’s good news, to know that you’re still around in twenty years.”

Clark said, “Actually, Pete, it wasn’t me, it was another Clark Kent. This is going to be a little hard to explain. Pete, Lana, I really am not who you think I am.”

They both stared at Clark as if he had lost his mind. Pete finally broke the silence, “If you aren’t the Clark I grew up with, then just who are you?”

“Well, actually, I am the Clark you grew up with, it’s just that, well, I’m from 1997.” He looked at Lois and said, “So much has been happening, that I forgot that for a minute. I didn’t have to deal with an asteroid in 1994. I guess that didn’t happen in our universe.”

Lois replied, “That’s a relief. 2013 Lois told me about that too.”

Pete and Lana’s jaws both dropped open. Lana finally asked, “Wait a minute! One thing at a time! Do you mean to say that there was a Lois from 2013 as well?”

“Well, yeah, Herb brought couples.”

Pete brought it back to the other subject, “You say that you are from 1997 as in four years from now?”

Clark nodded, “Yes. I’ve told you about Herb. What we,” he nodded toward Lois, “haven’t told you was that Herb brought me back in time so that I could save Lois’s life when she was following the gunrunners in the Congo. You see, in 1997 she was dead, had died in 1992 in the Congo. At the time we thought that by bringing me back in time we had changed history. I am the Clark you grew up with, I’m just actually four or five years older than you thought. As a result of this trip though, we now have a clearer understanding of what actually happened. You see, I met myself.”

“Another Clark Kent, you said that. You said he was from 2013.”

With a smile Clark said, “Would you believe that was another Clark Kent? Besides him, I met myself, oh and 2013 Clark met himself too and we met my doppelganger’s ‘new’ Lois.”

Pete and Lana were both staring at him in disbelief at this point. Pete asked, “Then there were four Clark Kents? How could you tell who was who?”

“We all had slight differences in our uniforms. The nice thing was that all of the women’s uniforms were different.”

Lois spoke up at this point and said, “I’m thinking of changing my uniform so that it is more like Ultra Woman’s.”

Lana blurted out, “Ultra Woman ... who’s Ultra Woman?”

“She’s a Lois from another universe. Actually, she’s the one that helped Clark create Superman in 1997, but that was before he came back in time to rescue me. After that he had to create Superman with me helping. That was 2013 Lois.”

Pete was shaking his head as if trying to clear it. He finally said, “You are saying that 2013 Lois was brought back in time to ... 1997 ... to help you create Superman and then you traveled back in time to 1992 to rescue Lois and then she helped you create Superman again.”

Clark smiled as he replied, “Actually, it happened in 1996 and Lois was from the same year. That’s when she helped me create Superman. It was 1997 when I went to their universe to help them and on the way back Herb offered to take me to 1992 to find Lois, but since Superman didn’t exist back then I had to hide the secret.”

Lana said, “I’m totally confused. Are you the Clark that I dated or not?”

“Yes, I am. Actually, in 1996 we were engaged.”

Lana was stunned. She blurted out, “Engaged?! To be married? Really?”

“What other kind of engagement is there?”

“I don’t know, engaged in a business deal perhaps ... to be married? Really?”

“Really.”

“What happened? Why did you go looking for Lois?”

“When Lois, 2013 Lois that is, helped me create Superman, well, you didn’t accept it very well.”

“Really? I didn’t accept it well? That’s all you’re going to say?”

“Okay, you want the truth?”

“Yes!”

“Our wedding was a week away. When I went public as Superman you threw a fit, called off the wedding and stormed off.”

Lana put her hands over her mouth and just shook her head. Finally she said, “Much as I hate to admit it, that sounds like

something I'd do. What happened then?"

"You went back to Smallville and I didn't know any more than that until I spoke with my doppelganger. It turns out that you and Pete are fated to be together. You are married there as well."

Lana hooked her arm through Pete's before she said, "Well, I can only hope that she's as happy as I am."

Pete brought it around to the other topic, "So, why did you have to go, wherever it was you went?"

Lois started, "It was all because Lois gave birth. She had a little girl." She looked at Clark and said, "I hope our daughter turns out just like her. She's a sweetheart. Very mature for her age."

Lana was confused, "Wait a minute. Very mature for her age? How old was she?"

Lois laughed and said, "Well, actually, there were two of her. She was a baby, but she was also there as an eleven year old. Very mature for her age." Lois half turned to Clark and said, "What did you think of her name?"

"I liked it."

"If our baby is a girl, do you want to use it?"

"We could, or we could come up with something original."

"I think it suited her."

Lana, her curiosity getting the best of her asked, "What was her name?"

"Penelope Ann Kent. Isn't that just the most darling name? They call her Penny."

Lana, her curiosity satisfied, said, "Yeah, that's a nice name. You know, if you guys don't use it, we might. Penelope Ann Ross. Has a nice ring to it."

Lois laughed. "I guess it'll be a race to see who delivers first to use that name."

Pete tried to bring it back to the meat of the discussion, "So you guys met your doppelgangers and then some. What happened, why were you needed?"

Clark answered, "Right, get back to it. Okay, we were needed because the Earth was being invaded by a group of criminals from New Krypton."

Lois corrected, "We didn't know that they were criminals at first. We were told that we were there to participate in a trial by combat. You see it was limited to families and their family had nine members while our family had only three. That was why Herb recruited us. He was helping to even the odds."

Clark added, "Even the odds, yeah. He tried, but well, bad guys are bad guys. They cheated."

Lois added, "Yeah and how. They brought in auxiliaries. I thought they had us there."

Clark added, "That was only until the kids showed up."

Lana asked, "Kids? What kids? Whose kids?"

Clark laughed as he replied, "The other Lois and Clark's, but from later in the time stream."

"Is there anywhere or anywhen this Herb of yours can't go?"

"If there is, we don't know about it, so it doesn't look like it."

"Anyhow, the kids showed up and got us out of a jam. Oh, and I met another Bill Henderson."

"Another Bill Henderson? The detective?"

"One and the same. And, get this, I'm immune to green Kryptonite. The problem is that the baby isn't. I found out the hard way. Believe me, it was painful."

Pete tried to sum everything up, "So, you guys are home so that means that everything turned out well. You won."

"Yeah, we won, but it wasn't without some lasting damage being done. There were some structural fires, some monuments were damaged and there were some lives lost."

Lois added, "Fortunately none of those were on our watch."

"Yeah, but ..." Clark protested, still wrought with undeserved guilt.

Lois turned and putting her hands on the sides of his face so

that he was looking right at her said, "Don't yeah, but me. It was unfortunate, but that is how it went. There was nothing we could have done about it. We were nowhere near the spot so stop blaming yourself."

"I just hate it when someone dies for no reason."

"Look, we saved the baby, didn't we?"

"Yeah, we saved the baby. Actually, it was six year old Carrie that saved the baby. If she hadn't been there to protect the baby, Nor would have succeeded in killing her. No wonder she calls herself — Protector. That's what she did while we were nowhere around."

Lois asked, "I wonder if there is a Carrie in our universe."

"We should check and see. She was from Chicago, right?"

"Yes."

Confused, Lana asked, "Who's Carrie and how did she save the baby and what baby?"

Lois answered, "Carrie is the adopted daughter of the couple we went to help. The baby was the baby of the same couple. That Clark rescued Carrie from a high rise fire. Afterwards they were told that she had a brain tumor. To make a long story short they cured her and some time later they had a baby."

Clark added, "That baby was the reason for this entire conflict. The baby could have been the legal ruler of New Krypton."

Lana was aghast, "Ruler of the planet? The whole planet? Wow!"

Clark pointed out, "Actually, she would have shared the rule with Zara."

Pete asked, "How many people were there?"

Lois replied, "All together there were 31 on our side and one of them was Clark."

Lana said, "You said that there were several Clarks."

Lois replied, "Yes, there were, but one of them was very special. It takes a better understanding of the multi-verse to understand. The way Herb explained it, it goes like this: there are certain key people that when things happen, usually life and death situations, the alternate outcomes can trigger the formation of a new universe. When I was shot it brought a new universe into being. Here, I lived. There ... I died. Clark, my Clark, this one here by me, was with me then and when he got me to the hospital, the surgery was a success, but in the other universe I died and he almost died of a broken heart." She looked at Clark and said, "I'm sorry he had to go through that, but according to Herb it was unavoidable."

Clark replied, "He is happy now, every bit as happy as we are. He has a Lois. It seemed like he was startled by your presence initially, but got over your presence quickly. The presence of his Lois must have helped."

"Well, I'm happy for him, that he found her. They are very happy together. I thought he was going to tear Nor limb from limb when Nor used that Drei on her."

Clark laughed and said, "I almost felt sorry for Nor at that point. Almost, but not quite. He brought it upon himself."

In a relieved tone, Lois said, "I'm just glad she wasn't hurt."

"You and me both. Fortunately we didn't lose anyone on our side."

Pete asked, "Who were all of these people? Were they all Lois and Clarks?"

Lois laughed, "Please, it was confusing enough with four of each of us. The rest were the children of the Lois that helped Clark create Superman, before he came back in time to find me that is. She and her Clark have eight children and each one is married. One of their nephews was there with his wife ..."

Lana interrupted, "Wait a minute. I can understand the children being super, but a nephew?"

Clark snapped his fingers and looking at Lois said, "I should have asked 2013 Clark about that. Hattie said something about a

machine. If we had access to that we could use it to make Lana and Pete super.”

Lana had an edge of fear in her voice as she replied, “Wait, no, hold on, no, no, not me. Pete maybe, but I don’t think I want that kind of responsibility. Count me out.”

Clark laughed, “It’s all academic anyhow. I didn’t get the information and it was in his universe.”

Lois had a mischievous tone as she asked, “Are you sure you wouldn’t like to be able to do what Clark and I can do?”

“Positive. You guys can have the powers. They’re not for me.”

Lois continued, “The rest were children. One was actually the baby we were there to defend. Of course she wasn’t a baby. She was an eleven year old Supergirl. Then there was Carrie as I mentioned! Another was Lori’s first born, Clark junior, and his wife.”

“Okay, what’s so special about Carrie?”

“Carrie is their adopted daughter.”

“Okay, did they use this machine on her too?”

“No, they didn’t. She didn’t have super powers like us. Hers were powers of the mind. She’d had a brain tumor and they operated on her using their x-ray vision. When they did, it unleashed the power of her mind. She was amazing!”

Pete could see that Lana was becoming weary, probably because of the pregnancy, so he decided that they needed to call it a night. “You guys will have to tell us more the next time, but right now I think I need to get Lana home.” In a teasing tone he finished, “She needs her rest or she’ll be a real grouch in the morning.”

Lana slapped his arm and said, “I am NOT!”

“Are too.”

“Am NOT!”

“Okay, you’re not, but you still need your sleep so we are going to say, goodnight.”

Suddenly, probably due to suggestion, Lana yawned then smiled. “I guess he’s right. Goodnight, guys.”

After they left, Lois and Clark cuddled on the sofa before they headed to bed themselves.

Chapter 31 — Lucy Almost Reveals the Secret

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Universal Locator designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 — Prime

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When Jon found the empty office he was surprised. He hadn’t been told about Herb and the fact that he was a time traveler. He couldn’t very well go back to the game room and announce that Mom and Dad were missing.

Hattie had only been there since school let out and already she had come too close to the family secret more times than he cared to contemplate. If he said that Mom and Dad had disappeared, that would be the straw that broke the camel’s back. He knew that he had to cover for them somehow.

Jon closed the door and headed for the kitchen. Under the circumstances he felt confident that his mom would authorize the snack and he could use it as a distraction. He got out some chocolate chocolate chip cookies, everybody’s favorite, and a bunch of glasses of milk. Once he had everything prepared he called the rest from the play room.

Hattie had Sam in her arms when they came out to the kitchen and she settled him on her lap when she sat. She broke off a small piece of cookie and gave it to Sam and Jon didn’t object because he had seen his mom do the same thing before.

Suddenly Jon realized that there was one person missing — Lucy!

Thinking back just a few weeks Jon started to panic. The last

time he had lost track of her she had almost flooded that bathroom by overflowing the tub and had flushed almost a whole roll of toilet tissue down the commode. Then she had gotten into mom’s cosmetics ...

Fearing the worst he enlisted Lara’s aid, “Lara, Lucy’s missing! We have to find her before she does something that will get us in trouble. Come on! Hattie, can you watch the rest?”

“Sure Jon, but why all the panic? Maybe she’s with your parents.”

Jon replied without thinking, “I don’t think so.” Then he thought better of it and added, “They went into the office with their visitor.” He turned to Lara and said, “Come on, Sis. We *have* to find her before she does any damage! I’ll check upstairs, you check down here.”

They both left the kitchen quickly. Once out of the kitchen they both shifted into superspeed.

After a few seconds Lara appeared in front of Jon on the second floor. “Have you found her?”

“No, I take it you haven’t either.”

“Right, I haven’t found mom or dad, either. What’s going on? Where are they? I thought you said they were in the office.”

“I don’t know sis! They went into the office with Mr. Wells. When I went to ask about us having a snack, they were all gone. Mom, Dad and Mr. Wells had just ... disappeared. I saw them go in, but I didn’t see them come out. It’s like a magician’s trick. Now you see them, now you don’t.”

At this point Lara was really becoming concerned, “What could have happened to them?”

“I don’t know, but they are invulnerable and the only thing that can hurt them is Kryptonite so we shouldn’t worry.”

“But, with all of the stories Mom has told us about Tempus and the Prankster and Toyman and all of the others ...”

“Sis, in that list the only one that knows their secret identities is Tempus and he hasn’t been around for years. Oh, what am I saying? Tempus is a time traveler. Wait a minute. Tempus is a time traveler. We all have read that book, ‘The Time Machine’ by ... H. G. Wells ... Mr. Wells! Do you think???”

Lara looked shocked. That thought had never occurred to her. Could Jon be right? “Jon, if you’re right then they could be anywhere or anytime.”

“And like Tempus, he could show up anytime. No wonder he doesn’t seem to age. Look, we still need to find Lucy. It doesn’t look like she’s in the house. Let’s look outside.”

They found Lucy in the back yard playing on her kiddie swing. She was swinging with maximum effort and laughing harder the higher she went. Seeing this Jon heaved a relieved sigh. At least she wasn’t up to any mischief.

Jon and Lara stood on the back porch and watched Lucy for a minute to talk. “Lara, we have to cover for mom and dad. We can’t let Hattie find out that they went missing. That would be all she would need to figure out what’s what.”

Lara looked at her watch and said, “It’s Sam and Lucy’s bedtime. We can say that since Mom and Dad are tied up they asked us to put them down. Hattie likes to take care of Sam and that will keep her occupied. Afterward we could put on a movie.”

“What should we watch?”

“I think this could call for a double feature. Kung Fu Panda and Kung Fu Panda 2.”

“Sounds like a good idea. I’ll get Lucy.”

Jon went over and stood in front of Lucy as she swung higher and higher on the swing. He simply held out his arms.

Seeing him Lucy started to smile broadly. This was a game that she and Jon had been playing for some time. She gave an extra exuberant swing and as she approached the top she kicked free of the swing. Squealing with delight she flew through the air in an arc and Jon caught her.

“Good job, squirt! That was a good one. We need to go in, it’s

time for bed.”

“Awwwww, don wanna! Wanna swing some more!” She started trying to squirm out of Jon’s grasp. The effort was doomed before it began and Jon simply headed for the back door.

Once they were inside, Lucy forgot all about the swing when she saw Hattie. She squirmed some more and said, “Be wis Hattie.”

Jon set her on her feet and she made a beeline for Hattie. Hattie handed Sam to Lara and picked up Lucy. She said, “Hey Squirt. Where were you?”

“I was on swing! I was high in sky. I fly and Jon caught me.”

Hattie looked at Jon. She said, “Squirt, you can’t fly.”

“Yes, Hattie! I fly!”

Jon clarified, “It’s a game we play. She was on her swing. She swings really high and lets go. She flies off the swing and I catch her.”

Hattie nodded in understanding. Turning back to Lucy she said, “I think I understand. You fly off the swing.”

“Someday I fly for real, like mommy.”

Hattie’s head snapped up and she looked at Jon with a question in her eyes.

Jon was stunned. Why would Lucy come out with something like that? Had she seen Mom change and fly off? Had she seen Dad? How could he cover this up? He had to think of something and he needed to think of it fast! He stammered out, “Uh, well, she, she was uh, uh, looking ... looking at pictures of Superman flying Mom out of danger, yeah, that’s it. Pictures of Mom with Superman. He had saved her a lot of times. We have a whole scrap book of those kind of pictures.”

Hattie gave a hesitant nod still giving Jon a curious look. “Yeah, I’ve seen some of those pictures on the front page of the Daily Planet. But, come to think of it, I haven’t seen too many of them recently.”

Jon made a mental note to tell his mom that she needed to be seen being rescued by Superman more often even though she was super powered now. He needed to distract Hattie somehow. Thinking furiously he finally came up with a plan. He said, “Let’s get these kids down and then Lara and I can tell you about the Halloween party and what happened.”

Hattie immediately perked up and excitedly asked, “You’ll tell me what you know about the new superheroes?”

Jon thought before responding, “I don’t have much to tell, but what I can I will.” He thought, <Well, that wasn’t exactly a lie. I said I’d tell her what I can.>

From that point on Hattie was anxious to get both of the little ones down, but that didn’t keep her from enjoying her time with them. Jon and Lara allowed her to do the bulk of the prep — putting the sleeper on Sam and the footie pajamas on Lucy and even telling Lucy a bedtime story.

Once the two littlest were in bed Jon, Lara and Hattie all moved downstairs.

Lara asked, “Feel like watching a movie?”

Hattie asked, “Which one?”

Jon chimed in, “We were thinking about a double feature, ‘Kung Fu Panda, 1 and 2.’”

Hattie warily said, “Okay, but first, Jon, you promised to tell me all you know about the new superheroes.”

Jon had been hoping that Hattie would have been so distracted that she would forget, but he should have known better. He said, “Let’s go into the living room and get settled.”

Once they were all on the couch, Jon started. “Well, Lara, Mike and I were at Maisie’s stand ...”

Hattie interrupted, “Maisie Matthews?”

“Yeah, she has a diner in town and she had set up a stand in the park serving eats. Well, while she was preparing our orders she discovered that she was out of condiments and said she had to go into the diner to get some. Well, we waited and waited. Finally

Lara and I couldn’t wait any longer and so we with to the rest rooms. When we came back, Miss Maisie still wasn’t back and we had to wait some more. Finally we saw Miss Maisie and Sheriff Broadhurst come out of the diner with a guy in handcuffs. When Miss Maisie came back she told us she had been robbed. Here is where this gets interesting. She said that a couple of kids saved her. The crook had her tied to a chair and was threatening to kill her. The kids disarmed the crook and tied him to a chair and then brought in the sheriff.”

“Come on Jon, most of that was in the paper! What’s the inside scoop?”

“Well, she did describe the kids. She said that the guy’s uniform was a lot like Superman’s, but the colors were off. I think she said that instead of blue it was black.”

Lara added, “She said that the girl’s uniform was just like Ultra Woman’s, except that the colors were ... are you ready for this?”

Hattie nodded.

“Reversed! Where Ultra Woman’s uniform is pink this one was turquoise and vice versa.”

“Didn’t they get any pictures?”

“Nope and Miss Maisie said that they disappeared once the sheriff was there to take charge.”

“How did she know they were kids?”

“I don’t know. By their size I guess.”

Hattie thought for a second before she said, “Now, if I was a superhero using an appearance generator to look human and I wanted people to think that there were more heroes around, I’d use the appearance generator to project a different image. Going smaller, changing the colors hmmm, I wonder if they have a voice activated interface so that all they need to do is say, ‘Make the suit black.’ And it’s done. It’s possible that they haven’t done this before because it took time to do the programming.”

Jon said, “Let’s watch the movie.”

“Okay, but I’m going to have to think about this.”

Lara turned on the TV and hit play. The other kids heard the TV and came in and settled in to watch.

The first movie had just finished and they were about to start the second movie when the office door opened and Lois and Clark stepped out.

Jon heaved a silent sigh of relief. They had been in a bind and between him and Lara they had managed to dodge the bullet.

Lois looked around and didn’t see Lucy or Sam. She addressed Lara, “Where are Sam and Lucy?”

Lara replied, “We knew that you were tied up in your meeting, so we didn’t bother you. We just put them to bed when they were supposed to go down.”

Lois said, “Thanks, Kiddo. You did good.” Turning to Hattie she asked, “Have you been having a good time? What have we missed?”

“I’ve been having the best time ever. Jon was telling me about your scrap book.”

Lois got a worried look as she asked, “Which scrap book would that be?”

“The one with all of the pictures of you flying with Superman.”

Lois knew that no such scrap book existed. She realized that Jon must have come up with this to cover up something and she wondered just what that something was. She knew that she’d have to play along so she said, “Oh, that old thing. How did that come up?”

“Oh, Lucy said she was looking forward to when she could fly like you. Jon explained what she meant you flying with Superman. By the way, when you fly with him, does he feel, I don’t know, normal? No extra arms or tentacles or anything?”

Lois started to laugh, “Extra arms or tentacles?”

Jon explained, “We watched ‘Galaxy Quest’ earlier and

Hattie has this theory that Superman and Ultra Woman could be using appearance generators to look like Earthlings.”

Hattie added, “Yeah, you see, that would explain the new superheroes. If that was actually Superman and Ultra Woman they could be changing their appearance to make the world think that there are more superheroes around and then crooks would have more to fear.”

Clark nodded and said, “That’s an interesting theory. I guess we’ll just have to wait and see if, maybe sometime, some new superheroes will make their debut and Superman and Ultra Woman might be standing there next to them.”

Hattie was surprised. She said, “But, that would mean that there really are new heroes. Maybe they are really their children. Do you think that is possible?”

Clark replied, “I guess anything is possible, especially when it comes to superheroes.”

Hattie was looking directly at Clark so she didn’t see Lois wink at Clark. She also didn’t see Jon smile at Lara.

Hattie finally looked around and caught Jon’s smile fading and started to get angry, “You guys are just pulling my leg! Was that a phony copy of the Planet with that story inserted to get me going?”

Lois tried to mollify her, “No Hattie, we aren’t. That was right from the newsstand. We wouldn’t do anything like that. We all heard about the new heroes. We just don’t know when or where they will show up again. From what we heard they are a lot like Superman and Ultra Woman. They show up when and where they are needed. In this case, Maisie was in real trouble and they showed up to help her out.”

“But, how did they know she was in trouble? Were they there to see it? Were they flying overhead and saw her with their x-ray vision? Did they hear something?”

Lois laughed, “Whoa, slow down Hattie. So many questions! The only ones that could answer them aren’t even here. I think we can possibly make some guesses. Did they see what was happening? Perhaps ... we don’t know the extent of their powers; after all they were only there for a short time. We do know that they are fast and strong from what Maisie and the sheriff said. Those are two of the powers that Superman and Ultra Woman possess so it could be logical to assume that they have the same powers.” Lois knew that she was treading a very fine line so she had to be careful. “Based upon that assumption, they could have been flying over and saw what was happening with x-ray vision as you suggest because those are also powers that Superman and Ultra Woman possess.”

Deciding to use this opportunity to its fullest, Lois continued, “We know that Superman showed up about sixteen years ago and Ultra Woman made her first appearance about fourteen years ago and then came back, apparently to stay about three years ago.”

Hattie interrupted, “I wonder where she was all of that time. Do you think she went back to New Krypton?”

“Well, Hattie, you’d have to ask her that question. All we know is that now she is here and it looks like she will be sticking around.”

“Do you think that these new superheroes are their children?”

“Well, Hattie, has Superman been away for any long periods of time?”

“He went missing for a while back when the Nightfall asteroid was a threat.”

“Right, but that was only a few days.”

“Then he went to New Krypton.”

“Right, but that wasn’t for a long period of time.”

“You mean that these new heroes might not be their children? They could be some new visitors from New Krypton?”

“Well, I don’t know. I guess that would be a possibility. What do you think?”

Hattie was shocked speechless. She finally said, “Wow, more

Kryptonians and kids, like us. I wonder how many more will join us.”

Lois said, enigmatically, “Only time will tell,” as she thought of each of her eight children and how each of their spouses would eventually become super through exposure to the Kryptonian aura and the use of the pendant. Then she thought of that peek she’d had into Hattie’s future and started to smile. Hattie would become a member of the family. She had seen Hattie interact with JJ whenever he was over at the same time as her. She knew that Hattie liked him and he liked her. It made Lois happy that they would eventually marry and that they would both become super. “Only time will tell.” She repeated with a shake of her head.

Without them realizing it the memories of the trip began to fade. Eventually the block that Herb had initiated was in place and they forgot that they had even been away.

Chapter 32 — While you Were Away

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Universal Locator designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124 Prime Alt

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Teri was immediately concerned. This guy claimed to be a friend of Grams and Gramps, but first he had taken away CJ and now it looked like he had taken them away. CJ had been gone for eight whole months!

Uh oh, CJ, she had left him in his highchair. She needed to get back to him and give him his dinner. She decided to give him the sweet potatoes rather than open a new jar of carrots.

Teri took out one of the bottles of formula and mixed up the cereal, opened the jar of sweet potatoes and started feeding CJ. Teri talked to him the entire time she was feeding him, telling him just how much she had missed him and how worried she was that Grams and Gramps had disappeared. She knew that he didn’t really understand what she was saying, but he looked at her with interest so she continued.

When he was finished eating, Teri cleaned him up and took him into the play room and put him into his play pen. He picked up his bunny and cuddled it.

Teri was sitting on the couch, crying as she pulled out her cell phone and called her mom.

As soon as she answered the phone, Lucy could hear the upset in her daughter’s voice and hear her sniffing so she asked, “Teri, honey, why are you calling? Grams and Gramps won’t be coming back for a while. They may not even be at the restaurant by this time.”

“That’s just it, Mom. They didn’t leave for the restaurant.”

“Did they change their plans? Do I need to come pick you up?”

“No, Mom. They aren’t here.” Teri burst out in a new set of tears.

“You said they didn’t leave.”

“No, they left, they just didn’t go to the restaurant.”

“Then where are they? You’re confusing me Teri.”

“Listen, Mom, here’s what happened. You remember that guy that came and took CJ away?”

“Yes ... Mr. Wells. What does he have to do with it?”

“Right after you dropped me off, before Grams and Gramps had a chance to leave for the restaurant, he came to the door.”

Lucy voice was starting to rise as she asked, “Mr. Wells came to the house again?”

“Yes, Mom, that’s what I’ve been trying to tell you. He came to the door and I told him I wouldn’t let him take CJ away again. He said that he hadn’t come for CJ, and that he just needed to talk to Grams and Gramps. They all went into the office. Grams said she wanted to show him her new bow. It didn’t seem like there was anything wrong.”

“And?”

“And they all went into the office and closed the door and ... and I found that the jar of carrots was almost empty so I went to ask Grams if I could give CJ sweet potatoes instead.”

“Okay, what did she say?”

“That’s just it! She didn’t say anything! She wasn’t there! I opened the door and the office was empty! No Grams, no gramps and no Mr. Wells! No bow either.”

“Mom, did I say or do something that would make them go away?”

“Oh, Teri, honey, no, you didn’t do or say anything. Hang up and I’ll be there in a couple of minutes.”

“Okay, Mom. Thanks.”

Teri hung up the phone and walking over to the play pen, picked up CJ and cuddled him. “I don’t know where your mamma is CJ, but I’m here and I’ll take care of you.”

A minute later there was a knock on the door, Teri opened it and Lucy stepped in. Lucy held out her hands to CJ to see if he wanted to come to her, but he shied away and snuggled more securely into Teri’s arms.

Lucy put an arm around Teri’s shoulder and headed her into the play room. Indicating the couch, Lucy said, “Let’s sit down. I have some things to tell you about Mr. H. G. Wells.”

Teri was startled, “Mr. Wells? He’s H. G. Wells? I thought that H. G. Wells was dead. He died a long time ago. You made us all read his book ‘The Time Machine’.”

“Yes, Teri, we all read that story. That has become something of a family tradition. You see, H. G. Wells, the author, well, he actually did build a time machine and that man that you met, he really is H. G. Wells, in the flesh.”

Teri’s tears and upset were forgotten as her mother spoke to her. “Wow! He’s really a time traveler? Grams said something about that when he took CJ away, but I didn’t understand it all.”

“Yes, he is and he has caused us no end of headaches. You know how Grams is a lot younger than Gramps.”

Teri nodded her agreement.

“Yet, she remembers all of us, me your dad, all of your aunts and uncles as her children.”

Another nod.

“That’s because Mr. Wells gave Grams a present, when she was a baby that caused her to remember everything from before, when she was Lois Lane.”

In a skeptical tone Teri asked, “Memories from before she was born, how was that possible?”

“Teri, your Grams and Gramps have been together for a long time and I mean a LONG time, through many lifetimes. It wasn’t until we were all about your age that we were all told the story. Your Grams and Gramps are what is called soul mates. It’s the same with your Uncle Jon and Aunt Jen, Aunt Lara and Uncle Mike, even your dad and me. Some day it will be the same for you too. Out there, somewhere there is one special person that will complete you. Your dad and I found each other when we were young and I knew right from the start that he was the one. Your Uncle Jon actually saved your Aunt Jen from drowning and they both knew from that minute that they were meant for each other.

“Now, Grams and Gramps, they, with the help of Mr. Wells have actually been able to go back and experience times, in their previous lives, when they have been together. Mr. Wells made it possible for Grams to remember her past lives with a device that was an offshoot of the machine he called a soul tracker. That machine is what he used to take them back to defeat the curse ...”

Teri was really enthralled by this story, but now, with the mention of a curse it was beginning to sound like a fairytale and she interrupted her mom, “Curse? Come on, Mom, are you making this all up?”

Lucy laughed and said, “It sure sounds like I am, doesn’t it?”

Believe it or not, it’s all true, every word of it. You see, Grams and Gramps were fated to be together throughout time, but at one point there was a problem. There was a powerful Baron that wanted Grams, at that time her name was Loisetette, Lady Loisetette. The Baron wanted her lands. The problem was that she loved Sir Charles, Gramps. Now, Sir Charles had a secret identity, he was known as ‘The Fox’ and he fought against the evil Baron. He took the money that the Baron’s tax collectors gathered and returned it to the poor people.”

“That sounds like the story of Robin Hood!”

“Most legends that are handed down have some basis in history. Anyhow, ‘The Fox’ was to be captured and executed, but failing that, if he got away with Lady Loisetette the Baron had a powerful sorcerer put a curse on their union. That was why Mr. Wells got involved. Using his Soul Tracker he took them back in time to correct that problem.”

“Then there was the time that a bad guy by the name of Tempus tried to brainwash everyone in the country to vote for him to be president. He was another time traveler and he managed to trap Gramps in a time bubble. That time Mr. Wells traveled to a parallel universe and brought back another Superman to help.”

“Another universe? Another Superman?”

“Yeah, well, you see it’s this way, this Tempus guy, he has been a real problem. One time he kidnapped Grams, a week before the wedding, and stranded her in a parallel universe where there was no Superman.”

“No Superman? How did she get back?”

“Actually, that was why she was taken there, so that she could create Superman.”

“Create Superman? Was Grams a scientist so that she could make a clone or something?”

“Well, no, she was a reporter and the universe she was in had a Clark Kent, but no Superman.”

“Didn’t he have his powers?”

“Oh, he had his powers, but his girlfriend didn’t want him to use them.”

“But, Grams always wanted him to use his powers.”

“Yeah, she did, but Grams wasn’t his girlfriend. At that time Grams was Lois Lane and the Lois Lane of that universe had been killed years earlier.”

“Grams was dead?”

“Well, sort of, the one in that universe was dead and your Grams took her place. She made a Superman Suit for that Clark and helped him on his first set of rescues as Superman.”

“I didn’t know that Grams was so good with a sewing machine.”

With a laugh, Lucy replied, “Really she isn’t, that’s why your Aunt Peg makes all of the new Suits. She’ll be making one for you soon, just a few more years and you’ll be ready to join the family business. You need to start thinking about what your Suit will look like.”

“But, Grams made his suit?”

“She cheated. She started off with a speed skating suit instead of starting from scratch. Anyhow, she made his Suit and got him started. It had all been a plot by Tempus. He wanted Superman to be created so that he could use him as a threat that he could defeat and win an election. Between Grams, that Superman and Mr. Wells they foiled his plans and captured him. Mr. Wells helped to get Grams home and then a year or so later Mr. Wells brought that Superman here to help. Tempus was at it again, this time in this universe. While Gramps was trapped in a time bubble Grams and Mr. Wells looked for him. While they did that the visiting Superman kept on after Tempus. They finally beat Tempus, again, and Mr. Wells took the visiting Superman home.”

“But, what does all of that have to do with Grams and Gramps being missing?”

“Well, I can’t be sure, but you said that Mr. Wells showed up and that’s when they went missing. Based on what I’ve been told of Mr. Wells, my guess would be that they have been recruited by him to help out somewhere, somewhere that an extra or extra pair of Superheroes was needed.”

“But, why is Gram’s bow missing?”

“Maybe she was going to need it.”

“But, why? With her superpowers she shouldn’t need a bow!”

With a smile, Lucy said, “I guess we’ll just have to wait and see.”

CJ had been snuggled in Teri’s lap and her arms had been around him holding him tight and the feeling of security of being held thus had finally put CJ to sleep. Lucy saw this and smiled. She said, “Looks like you’ve got a sleepy boy there. Why don’t you take him up and put him to bed?”

“I think I’ll just put him in his playpen. That way I can keep an eye on him.” Standing and walking over she placed him in his play pen and handed him his bunny which he clutched in his sleep. She returned to the couch and sat down.

Just then there was a noise from the office and Lucy and Teri were instantly on their feet.

The door opened and through it stepped Ultra Woman and Superman. Ultra Woman was carrying a bag in her hand. Spying Teri and Lucy in the living room they both spun into their dinner clothes after which they walked in and sat on the other couch.

Looking around, Lori asked, “How long were we gone?”

Teri said, “About an hour.” Her irritation at her Grams started coming out, “Why didn’t you tell me you were leaving or where you were going? I was getting so worried! I didn’t know what had happened to you! One minute you were here and the next you were gone, without a word! What if something had happened?”

Lori moved over and wrapped Teri up in a hug. She said, “I’m sorry, sweetheart. We didn’t mean to worry you. We were only supposed to be gone for a few seconds. Herb goofed on his time settings and brought us back later than he had promised.”

“Was it a dangerous trip? Did you have to fight against Tempus again? Did you see the other Superman?”

Lori started laughing at this torrent of questions. She said, “Whoa, slow down. One question at a time! Let’s see, ‘Was it a dangerous trip?’ actually it was, but it could have been much worse. As it turned out we had a lot of help, your mom and dad were there and all of your aunts and uncles.” She pointedly looked at CJ asleep in his play pen before she said, “Even your uncle CJ and his wife.”

Lucy and Teri both burst out, “CJ and his WIFE?”

Laughing at their reaction, Clark said, “Yeah, believe it or not, CJ and his wife. She’s a lovely girl from New Krypton. He’s going make a good match when he gets older.” Lori lifted the bag she had been holding and said, “Speaking of CJ, we won’t be needing formula for a while. I have a supply of breast milk which his Mamma donated. He should recognize the taste. Teri, could you put this in the fridge?”

Taking the bag, Teri said, “Sure thing, grams,” and disappeared into the kitchen.

Lucy let out a slow breath and said, “Wow, a peek into the future. You said I was there? I don’t remember anything.” Teri returned as her mom was finishing her statement.

Lori said, “Well, it was you, but it wasn’t you. It was you from another universe, but it was definitely you. I think the next question was ‘Did we fight against Tempus?’ Not this time. This time we were up against the New Kryptonians. And last but not least, ‘Did we see the other Superman?’ Actually that is the most difficult question to answer. Yes, we saw him and we saw him, both of him and both wives. We also saw your Grams from before.”

Mystified, Lucy asked, “Are you going to tell us the whole story?”

Clark said, “Not right now. We still need to go out to dinner. All that fighting builds up an appetite.”

Frustrated, Lucy said, “You are going to tease us, telling us this much and then leave us in suspense? You’re just being cruel!”

Lori and Clark were both laughing by this time and Clark finally said, “You’ll just have to wait. We will tell everyone, but we want to do it only once. We will have a family gathering in a couple of days and tell everybody at once. Right now, if Teri is still up for it, we will go out for our delayed dinner.”

“As long as you promise not to just disappear again, sure, I’ll stay and watch CJ.”

“Thanks, sweetie. You know, we never would have gone on this mission if we hadn’t known that CJ was in good hands. We knew that you would take good care of him.” Looking over at her sleeping child she said, “Our confidence was not misplaced. He is happy and sleeping peacefully. You have to be the best babysitter ever.” Lori gave Teri a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

Standing, Lucy said, “I’ll head home. Teri, you can call me if you need me, okay sweetie?”

“I’ll be okay now, Mom. I’ll call when I need you to pick me up.”

Lucy turned to Lori and Clark and said, “I don’t know if I’ll be able to wait for the gathering to hear that story. It sounds just too interesting.” She released a sigh of resignation and said, “I guess I’ll have to. I’ll see you guys later.” She headed out the door.

Lori turned to Clark and asked, “Are you ready to go to dinner?”

Clark looked at the clock on the wall and said, “I think we need to change our plans. What say we go to LA for dinner?”

“Ooooo, yes! Maybe we could see some movie stars. Let’s go!”

“See you in a little while, Teri.”

“Sure thing, Grams. Have some fun.”

As Lori and Clark headed for the door, Teri picked up a book she had brought along to read, ‘The Scarlet Pimpernel’ by Baroness Emmuska Orczy. She needed to do a book report on it for school and she couldn’t get over the parallels between this hero and her family. Even though it was published in 1905 it was like the Baroness had looked into the future and had seen her family. With her new knowledge, Teri thought, <I wonder if the Baroness knew H. G. Wells.>

Later, at the restaurant Lori and Clark were seated and placed their order. While they waited Lori was extremely quiet and in the dim light, Clark could just make out tears running down her cheeks.

He reached out for her hand and in a quiet tone asked, “What is it, Honey? What has made you so upset?”

“JJ and Hattie.”

“JJ and Hattie? We just saw them.”

“I know, that’s just it. We just saw them, but it wasn’t them, our them, our JJ and Hattie. Remember what she said?”

“What she said when?”

“When she was explaining why she had powers. She said that you, Jon and *Ultra Woman* got tired of rescuing them so much so they used Gretchen Kelly’s machine to give them the powers.”

“Right, so?”

In exasperation she said, “Don’t you get it? Ultra Woman apparently was among those saving her. In this universe Ultra Woman was only around for about a week. The fact that Ultra Woman was not around for her is what caused her death.”

Musingly, Clark said, “Hmmm, you could be right.”

“I know I’m right. Remember how it happened? They were investigating ‘The Main Street Bomber’ at the time. They found JJ with a fractured skull. Hattie had been blown up in that tunnel

under the street. There was evidence that she had been murdered even though the STAR tried to imply that she was the bomber, just creating a story for the Planet.”

“Yeah, I remember all of that.”

“Think about it. You were dealing with a situation on the west coast, helping out Lara. Jon and Jen were on their honeymoon. Sean, Celeste and Jessica were all away at school. Jimmy, Lucy and Sam didn’t have their powers as yet. If I had been Ultra Woman, I would have been there for her, but I wasn’t. Because Lois, in this universe, never became Ultra Woman — Hattie and JJ lost their lives.”

“Lori, you can’t blame yourself for things over which you had absolutely no control.”

“Why didn’t Herb give me a pendant? He gave one to the other Lois. If I had been super, JJ and Hattie might not have died and I might not have died of old age.”

“Honey, if there is one thing I’ve learned from our association with Herb, there’s a reason for everything he does. It’s possible that if the Lois of this universe hadn’t died of old age, you might not have been born and even if you had been, we wouldn’t be together.”

“That doesn’t change the fact that several people died as a result of his inaction that didn’t need to.”

“Remember the conversation we had with the other Clarks. They started off as the same individual. When their Lois was shot, there were two possible outcomes — She either lived or died. Each outcome resulted in a universe, one in which she recovered and became super and the universe in which she died continued to exist. They were not able to change the outcome for Clark. No matter how many times or ways they would have tried to save Lois, in his universe she would always die. It wasn’t until Herb found a universe with a Lois and no Clark that he gained his soul mate. I’m sure that Herb would have a better explanation, but that’s the best I can come up with.”

Lori was still weeping quietly as she said, “It’s just that, seeing both of them, alive and happy, it really hit me.”

“I know, Honey and it hit me too, but I was happy to see that even if not here, there they are alive and well and together. Be happy for them.”

“Yeah, I can do that. I just wonder if we’ll ever see them again.”

“Only Herb could answer that question.”

Chapter 33 — Returning to the party

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Universal Locator designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 — Prime

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After noticing that all of the kids were absent Lois called Louise over and asked, “Louise, did your mom say anything about having an errand to run?”

Surprised, Louise looked around. She noticed that not only were her mom and dad gone, but all of her aunts and uncles as well. Now she had a tone of mystification in her voice as she replied, “No, Grandma, she didn’t say anything to me. Where’d everybody go?”

“I don’t know, sweetheart. Let’s not panic. They have to be around, somewhere. I’m sure they’ll be back soon. You’re doing a really good job with the younger children. You’re some special babysitter.”

Louise smiled at this praise from her Grandma and headed back to the play area to supervise the smaller children as Lois moved back to Clark.

Clark suddenly put down the spatula and fork and reached for Martha. Taking her out of the carrier he cuddled her and kissed the top of her head. He said, “You know, I’ve been thinking.

Remember, way back when Herb recruited us to help Clark and Lois with Nor? The kids showed up.”

“You mean, you think that’s where they are now?”

“It all fits, doesn’t it? They are all grown and as of today they are all married. Sam and Alice were the last ones so she is now a member of the family and can legitimately fight on our side.”

“You know, I think you’re right. JJ and Hattie were there as well and they’ve been married for a while now. I guess we just have to hang in and wait for them to return. Wow, that’s a relief. At least now we know where they are and it’s just a matter of time.”

“The best thing is we know that no one was hurt and they will all be coming back in one piece.”

Lois called Louise over. “Louise, honey, Grandpa and I just remembered where everyone went and they will be back in a while, so just have fun while we wait. They shouldn’t be gone too long.”

“Okay, Grandma. Thanks, I was starting to get worried. Why couldn’t they take us kids?”

“Well, honey, they went on a special mission and it required superpowers. They wanted you kids to be safe so they left you here with us. This way Superman and Ultra Woman are still handy. Why don’t you go ahead and enjoy yourself until they get back. I’m sure they won’t be gone long.” With a smile Lois said, “I think I see some more cake over there on the table. There might just be enough for everyone to have one more slice. Why not see how many of your charges would like another piece? I just might be able to find some more ice cream to go along with it.”

Smiling broadly at the prospect of more cake and ice cream, Louise headed back to the play area to supervise the younger children.

As she walked away, Lois said to Clark, “I wonder why Herb didn’t take us.”

Clark’s reply didn’t really satisfy her as he said, “If you think about it, we already are. He picked us up in 2013 and took us to help. There must be something about having two representatives from the same universe there at the same time.”

“But, another super couple would have made things so much easier.” Lois quibbled.

“Yeah, but we made out okay. We won, didn’t we?” Clark asked.

“Yeah, we won, but if it hadn’t been for all the extra help that Herb provided, it might have turned out differently. Before the kids showed up, Nor almost had us.”

“We should have known that Nor would ignore tradition and violate the rules of the combat. Why didn’t we anticipate that? We knew from what he did to us that he couldn’t be trusted!”

“We couldn’t be sure that this Nor would do the same things that ‘our’ Nor did. Okay, he was the same, but we didn’t know that at the time.”

“It was almost too late when we discovered it. If Jon hadn’t shown up and released the other Clark. You know that was just so confusing. There were two of him! They were both the one that helped us with Tempus. That still blows my mind.”

“Just think how confusing it would have been if we HAD been there. Two Ultra Women in the same uniform. At least this way, even though there were two Ultra Women they had different uniforms and actually were different people. Imagine, you died and your soul essence passed to Lori. I wonder what will happen to her now that you aren’t about to die. Will she even be born?”

With a thoughtful expression, Lois said, “There’s no way for us to ever know the answer to that question.”

Clark asked, “Should we even try to find out? She would be your cousin, after all.”

With a wary look, Lois asked, “Why should we do that?”

“Well, she seemed like a nice girl.”

“Yeah, just keep in mind, she was me or maybe that is the attraction. Just remember, Kent, Kryptonians are monogamous. In this universe, she will not receive my soul essence. She will be a different person.”

“I realize that, I’m just saying, she was CJ’s mom, you know, maybe we could help her out.”

Lois said, “Yeah, she was CJ’s mom, but you were CJ’s dad and I don’t want you getting any ideas. Besides, that was in another universe and he wouldn’t be the same child if he were born here. This is all so confusing and irritating. Why are we just now remembering all of this? All of this happened to our 2013 selves.”

As if stating a fact that they both knew, Clark said, “There can only be one answer — Herb. We found out that with Lori he helped her to recall all of her memories from her previous lives, yours included. If he can do that, what is to say that he can’t block memories as well and put a time or some other trigger in place so that at the proper time the memory returns. It could be that when the kids all disappeared from the party it triggered the memory so that we wouldn’t worry about them.”

Lois glanced in the direction of the play area and realized that Louise was gathering the grandkids together and they would soon be there looking for cake and ice cream. With a laugh, Lois said, “There’s a bunch of kids headed this way looking for a promised treat. I’d better go get the ice cream before we have a mutiny on our hands.”

Laughing, Clark said, “Yeah, you’d better! I’d rather face the wrath of Ultra Woman than the grandkids. Here, I’ll take Martha.” He reached for, removed baby Martha from the carrier, and started cuddling her as she looked up at him and cooed and smiled broadly.

Lois had to make an emergency trip to the market for more ice cream to satisfy the hungry horde, but returned with it before the cake was all served out.

The grandchildren were all gathered in a circle around Lois and Clark finishing their cake and ice cream while Lois told them stories about some of the investigations they had done while at the Planet. The children would all scream when she got to the point where her life had been threatened and then they would all cheer when Superman swooped in to the rescue. They had all heard each of the stories numerous times, but they all loved hearing them and whenever they had the chance they asked for Lois to tell them.

Lois related the story of how she had been affected by the pheromone and in the course of the story how she had been lured to the airport, knocked out and hung up by the wrists over a vat of poison with Superman rescuing her at the last second. Next she told the story of the terrorists that were building a truck bomb in Smallville. The kids liked that story even if Superman wasn’t the hero. Grandma and Grandpa were the heroes.

When she finished that story Louise asked, “Grandma, could you tell the story about how you captured the Werewolf Murderer?”

“Okay, well, that was back when we were babysitting CJ. A number of women had been attacked, beaten and robbed. Grandpa didn’t want me to go undercover, but I thought that it would be the only way to bring him out into the open so I went undercover as a waitress. Well, finally we found him.”

Several of the grandkids shouted, “Grandma, tell us about how you arrested him!”

“Okay, well, when we found him, he tried to do to me what he had done to the other women, but I was ready for him. When he came after me I used my karate and knocked him down.”

A cheer went up.

“He pulled a knife and threatened me with it!”

There was a general gasp.

“I kicked the knife out of his hand.”

There was another cheer.

“Then he pulled out a gun!”

There was another gasp.

“But, I kicked him on the chin and knocked him out then I kicked the gun away from him.”

There was another cheer. Then Louise asked, “Where was Superman?”

This story had been told many times and Lois knew that Louise was just giving her lead-ins to what she felt were the good parts.

Looking askance at Clark as she told this part, Lois said, “Well, Superman was there, but he just stood there like a lump on a log while I did all of the work. I called 911 and notified the police that I had captured their criminal and they came to pick him up.”

“What did the mayor do?”

“The mayor was so happy that I had captured the criminal that he gave me a Certificate of Appreciation from the mayor’s office for performing a Citizen’s Arrest.”

There was one final cheer and then the grandkids all mobbed their Grandma.

As Lois was finishing up and while the grandkids all vied for a position on Lois’ lap, Jon and Jen came out through the door into the back yard.

Behind them came Lara and Mike followed by the rest of the family.

Jon headed for the buffet.

Clark shouted, “You guys hungry?”

Jon’s reply was succinct, “It feels like we haven’t had a decent meal for ... almost a week.”

Clark started putting more burgers, franks, ribs and chicken on the grill as he said, “Be ready in a jiff.”

The grandkids all mobbed their parents welcoming them back.

There was a second round of meals. Jon finally drifted over to have a talk with his mom and dad. “You guys know where we were, don’t you?”

Lois said, “We have a pretty good idea. While you were gone we remembered the incident. I’m happy to report that when we did, we were very relieved because we knew that you would all be coming back in one piece. We were elsewhere most of the time that you guys were covering emergencies. Care to tell us about some of them?”

Jon replied, “Maybe some other time, right now I just want to relax and enjoy the kids. It’s been a busy week.”

“We know how it is. It’s good to have you back.”

Hattie came up before Jon had a chance to leave, “Hey, Jon, Aunt Lois, wow, it was weird. It was you, but then it wasn’t you, I mean it was an earlier you. It was the you from when we were teens. Back then I never suspected that you were Ultra Woman or that Uncle Clark was Superman.” She started to laugh, “Boy, were you surprised when JJ and I took off our masks! You should have seen the look on your face! I wish I’d had a camera. When you realized who I was and that I was super powered.”

“Yeah, it was a surprise. I didn’t remember it until a little while ago. Mr. Wells must have done something to suppress our memories or else I’d have known how things were going to turn out with you and JJ. I might have let something slip or encouraged the relationship or done something that would have changed history. That is the last thing I would have liked to have done. I am very happy with the way history has worked itself out. You did really well in the fights.”

Hattie had a musing expression as she said, “Something occurred to me a little bit ago. I wonder what happened to us in that other universe. It didn’t seem like Lori knew me. She had

been you, right?”

“Yes, but along a different track. That Lois never became super. I guess that’s going to have to remain a mystery, sweetie. I would guess that Mr. Wells could tell us, but he probably won’t. That’s just the way he is. He only tells you what you need to know. Sometimes, it really isn’t enough or at least it’s not as much as you’d like.”

“Aunt Lois, how closely do these universes parallel one another?”

“That’s hard to tell. The Clark we went to help lives in two different universes. In one he had to deal with Luthor in the other he didn’t. Things can be quite different.”

“So there’s no way to tell if there was a ... me ... in that other universe?”

“The only person that would know the answer to that question would be Mr. H. G. Wells and you know what I believe? I believe that if you asked him that question straight out ... he would never answer you. Oh, he would come up with a good excuse for why he can’t, but the result would be the same either way.”

“I just feel like I need to know, you know, just so that I would know.”

“Hattie, you need to decide how much good it would do you to know the answer to that question. If it is going to change your life ... that’s one thing. If not, then, well, you have to let it drop.”

“I guess it won’t change anything either way.”

“Are you happy? I mean, you and JJ, are the two of you happy with the way things turned out?”

“You mean becoming super and all?”

“Yeah, becoming super and all.”

“It’s a lot of responsibility and all, but I wouldn’t trade the life I have with JJ and the rest of the family for anything.”

“My advice — concentrate on what you have and don’t worry about how things might have turned out somewhere else.”

“Aunt Lois, if I had any doubts before about having you as my role model, they would all be gone now.” Hattie stepped up to Lois and put her arms around her in a hug as she said, “I really love you.”

Returning the hug, Lois said, “No more than I love you, Hattie girl. I’m glad you’re part of the family.” Hattie couldn’t see it, but a single tear fell from Lois’ eye as she contemplated events. She knew just how many times she had needed to save Hattie and thought, <What would have happened to her if Ultra Woman hadn’t been around?> There could only be one answer.

As Hattie pulled back from Lois she saw the tear and asked, “Are you sad? Was it something I said?”

“No, Hattie girl, I’m happy you’re here with us. It’s where you belong. I just don’t know what this family would be like without you and, frankly, I don’t want to find out. Come on; let’s go get something to eat.”

Lois put an arm around Hattie and led her over to the buffet table.

Lois knew that there would be many new stories of superhero rescues told as bedtime stories in the weeks to come. She just hoped that the kids would tell her and Clark before she died of curiosity.

Lois had her wish answered. Before too long Jon, as usual acting as spokesperson for all of the kids, pulled his mom and dad aside.

Jon asked, “How much of what went on do you guys remember?”

Lois replied, “Until a little while ago we didn’t remember any of it. Herb must have time blocked our memories. Now we remember our part. We’d like to hear your side of it though.”

“I have to admit, when Mr. Wells approached us with this mission, I didn’t know what to think. You guys seem to hold him

in high regard so we all decided to go along with it. He had us all change into our uniforms before we stepped through the portal and it’s a good thing he did because as we stepped through we could see all of you guys caught in that trap. It was weird seeing four of each of you. I recognized your uniform right off, Mom.” Jon smiled, “It was the only one of its kind.” Jon paused before he continued as if he were considering the effect of the topic he wanted to address. “With all that was happening and how busy we were with Nor’s supporters we didn’t have much of a chance to get to know everyone.” Jon paused before continuing. “Who is Lori?”

Lois answered, “She is me, well, not me exactly, but yes, me. The way she explained it there were two of me. There was me, me with a long life and super powers and then there was a me that had a regular Earth human life span and died of old age. She is the next me in that universe. Somehow, Herb arranged things so that she could remember her life as me and Lady Loisette and Lulu Kent and all of the rest, so you see, she is me and more than me.”

“Okay, that explains some things. I guess the others will tell you what they did. Jen and I stayed together most of the time ...” Jon went on to relate their part in the events in Alt 2.

Eventually all of the kids related their activities which satisfied Lois’ curiosity, but it took some time and it wasn’t all told in one day since each couple had their own story.

That evening after Lois and Clark put CJ, Olive, Benjamin and Martha to bed they had a chance to discuss the day.

Lois snuggled up to Clark on the couch curled her legs under herself and released a relieved sigh. She wiggled a little bit to get more comfortable and then said, “What a day. Lara really surprised us with that one. She really had to pull a lot of strings to bring it off.”

Laughing he said, “She takes after her mother. Accomplishing what most people would consider impossible. Well, how does it feel to finally be the Kryptonian Lady Lois-El?”

“It feels good, but speaking of the Kryptonian Lady Lois. That was some story. When the laser transferred Clark’s powers it also changed her to fully Kryptonian and she wasn’t able to return the powers to him. Because of that, he was killed. You know, Lucille could have done that to you, then where would we be? Penny was absolutely adorable and Carrie was really special. I’m glad I can remember it all now.”

“Do you think we should see if we can find Carrie in this universe?”

“I don’t think so. That was 1997 ... sixteen years ago. If there was a Carrie in this universe, she’s probably dead from the tumor. Wait a minute! She might have died in the fire since you didn’t rescue her.”

“If there ever was a fire, which there might not have been. These multiple universes can be confusing. There are a lot of things that are duplicated, but there are a lot of differences too.”

She shifted position so that she could give him a kiss. With an arched eyebrow she said, “I seem to recall that there is a second part to that bonding ceremony. Wasn’t there something about the marriage bed? I think that if we are truly to honor the Kryptonian ceremony we have a date upstairs, but, we need to be quiet so that we don’t wake the kiddies.”

Together they floated up off the couch and floated upstairs so that not even the quietest footfall would wake the children and they disappeared into their bedroom.

Chapter 34 — The New Ambassador

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2
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The ceremony binding Zara to Ching-Ka had been conducted quickly at the request of the two principals. Zara and Ching had made this request so that the sentences of the Council against Nor and Jen-Mai might be carried out. There was a requirement that the High Lord approve the sentence handed down.

At the completion of the ceremony the couple, happily, one could almost say eagerly, moved down the corridor to the royal bedchamber to complete the ceremonial requirements and consummate the life bond.

Four hours later the couple emerged and moved to the High Lord's audience chamber where two thrones sat on a dais. Side by side and hand in hand they moved through the corridors from the bedchamber and onto the thrones.

The time had come to comply with the laws and customs of New Krypton.

The Council had been alerted of their leaving the bedchamber and after meeting them in the corridor, followed them into the audience chamber.

Once they were seated, Lord Trey approached and said, "Lord Ching-Ka and Lady Zara Ching-Ka we welcome you and await your pleasure."

Ching addressed the assembly, "Lords of the Council of Elders we wish to hear your petitions."

Lord Trey said, "We have only two petitions to bring before you. Lord Nor-Na stands accused and convicted of High Treason. This council has sentenced him to death in the prescribed fashion."

Zara spoke up, "Are there any extenuating circumstances which would mitigate this sentence?"

"None, My Lady."

Ching replied, "It is the decision of the High Lord that on the recommendation of the Council of Elders the sentence of death be carried out, and may Rao have mercy on Nor-Na."

Zara asked, "Lord Trey, you have another petition?"

"We do, My Lady. Lord Jen-Mai, formerly a member of the Council of Elders, stands accused and convicted of Conspiracy to commit High Treason and this council has sentenced him to death in the prescribed fashion."

Zara spoke up, "Are there any extenuating circumstances which would mitigate this sentence?"

"None, My Lady."

Ching replied, "It is the decision of the High Lord that on the recommendation of the Council of Elders the sentence of death be carried out and may Rao have mercy on Jen-Mai, former elder of New Krypton."

Trey turned to the Chief of the guards and directed, "The Council of Elders has decreed a sentence of death to Nor-Na. The High Lord has affirmed the sentence. You will send a detachment to conduct Nor-Na to the place of execution immediately."

The Chief of the Guards had never been through these formalities before, but had anticipated and prepared for his role in this drama. He signaled to a subordinate who had been prepared for his part and he departed.

Again Trey addressed the Chief of the guards and directed, "The Council of Elders has decreed a sentence of death to Jen-Mai. The High Lord has affirmed the sentence. You will send a detachment to conduct Lord Jen-Mai to the place of execution immediately."

The Chief of the Guards signaled another subordinate who had also been prepared who immediately departed on his mission.

Zara and Ching both arose and Ching said, "Lord Trey and members of the Council. We will repair to the chamber of execution that we may witness the end of this drama as is required by the laws of New Krypton." Ching held out his hand and Zara placed hers over it and they led the procession as the

Council of Elders followed to the chamber of execution.

Several minutes after they were in place, Nor-Na was led in, still in manacles.

He was brought to a halt in front of the assembly.

Trey addressed him, "Nor-Na, it is the decision of this Council that you stand convicted of High Treason. The High Lord has approved that sentence. Do you have any final words for this council or the High Lord?"

With a sneer in his tone, Nor looked directly at Ching and Zara as he replied, "I do not recognize your authority to affirm the sentence of the Council."

At a signal from Ching the guard forced Nor into the device of execution.

Zara stated, "It does not matter that you do not recognize our authority. You stand condemned. The sentence will be carried out."

Trey signaled the executioner who activated a switch and within a minute Nor had ceased to exist.

The scene was repeated with Jen-Mai with the exception that Jen-Mai was blubbering and begging for mercy. The sentence was carried out nonetheless.

Once Jen-Mai had disappeared, Ching turned to the Council and said, "I thank the Council for following the laws and traditions of New Krypton. Lords Gan-Ce and Trey, if you would please accompany us back to the Council Chamber. We wish to discuss continued diplomatic relations with Earth as proposed by Lord Kal-El. We should have something arranged before we break orbit to return to New Krypton."

Lois and Clark were summoned from the surface and they joined the group in the Council Chamber.

Zara asked, "Did the other members of your family make it out okay?"

"Yes, Herb made several trips taking them to their various destinations. I trust that they have suffered no ill effects from their time here. I must say, it was interesting having them here."

"No less for us."

Zara said, "The reason we asked you to join us is for the purpose of setting up a diplomatic mission here on Earth. How would you suggest that we proceed?"

Lois said, "Lady Zara, we have given this matter some consideration and we feel that a minimal presence, at least for the time being would be warranted. We would suggest that whoever you select be provided with clothing from Earth so that their presence is not so obvious. The person you select will need to be of high moral character so that the possession of the powers does not tempt them to attempt to rule. If that were to happen, we would be forced to take the appropriate steps to stop them." At this point, Lois looked directly at Gan-Ce and continued, "Perhaps an elder statesman, a trusted member of the Council of Elders would be most appropriate."

Trey looked at Gan-Ce and asked, "What say you, Lord Gan-Ce? Would you be willing to serve as representative of New Krypton to Earth?"

"My Lord Trey, I am honored that you would consider an old man like me for this post, but how could I?"

Lois replied, "Lord Gan-Ce, it was through your intervention that this conflict was honorably resolved. Your courage in bucking Jen-Mai and Nor brought it to an end and prevented a travesty of justice. I can think of no one better qualified to hold the post of Ambassador to Earth."

Clark added, "A side benefit of this assignment would be the acquisition of the powers. You will no longer be calling yourself an old man."

Zara added, "Lord Gan-Ce you will need a small staff. Unless I am greatly mistaken, your son Lan-Ce's birth wife Shiga has the requisite skills to organize an office and your son, Lan-Ce, would

be an able assistant. We have the advantage of knowing, from the testimony of your granddaughter, just how honorable her parents, your children are. They would be worthy representatives of New Krypton on the surface. Might I suggest that the bonding ceremony as soon as possible?"

Clark addressed Trey again, "Lord Trey, I have the ship that my father, Jor-El sent me to Earth in. If you had it, Gen-Ta and the Science Council could analyze the drive he invented. I have it on good authority that it will shorten the transit time between Earth and New Krypton by almost 80 percent. That will facilitate the interactions between the two planets."

Trey was truly astonished. "Lord Kal-El, you are most generous. How can we repay you?"

"Lord Trey, as I said before, both of our planets will benefit from open trade." With a knowing smile he continued, "Some of the younger residents of New Krypton may even find their life mates on the planet below and if they do, those individuals will acquire the same powers that their mates enjoy. It is also possible that once that has happened, New Krypton could have its own resident superhero."

Trey turned to Gan-Ce and asked, "What say you, Lord Gan-Ce?"

Gan-Ce placed his closed fist over his heart and gave a small bow as he said, "I am the humble servant of the Council. It would be an honor to serve New Krypton in this fashion."

Lois spoke up, "I assume that you will need to travel back to New Krypton so that you can bring your family back. While you are away we will see to the acquisition of a suitable residence and have it prepared for when you return. Would you like to reside near our national capital?"

Gan-Ce turned to Lois and replied, "If it would please you, I think a house somewhere near your residence would be desirable."

Clark replied, "Perhaps accommodations can be found in the same building that houses the Superman Foundation. They will be acting as intermediaries so that would be most appropriate."

Gan-Ce replied, "I bow to your wisdom in this matter. Thank you. If you will excuse me, I must go consult with those of my family that are aboard and apprise them of these developments."

After Gan-Ce had departed, Trey addressed Kal-El, "How can we make reparation for the damage done by Nor and his followers?"

"New Krypton does not as yet have what could be called a thriving economy. You are still in the process of establishing yourselves on the planet. I would propose that you allow Lord ... no, Ambassador Gan-Ce negotiate those details once he is installed in his office." He turned to Ching and continued, "He will need some documents asserting his authority, from the High Lord, to conduct negotiations in the name of New Krypton."

"We will have the appropriate documents prepared. I am sure that there is information in the archives on documents of that nature."

Trey said, "If you will excuse me, I will go and begin the search for the appropriate documents. If Gan-Ce decides to stay and simply send for his family, he will need them before we break orbit." Finishing his statement, Trey bowed and left.

That left only Zara, Lois, Ching and Clark. Zara put an arm around Lois' waist and said, "Why don't we go to our private chambers," and led the way out.

Once in the royal chambers they sat as couples on a couple of divans facing each other.

Zara visibly relaxed. "I was raised in the royal family, but I never dreamt that all of this formality would be so draining."

Lois smiled and said, "You did just fine. You took to it like a duck takes to water."

"Duck. What is a duck?"

Lois chuckled and replied, "A duck is a small water fowl. It

swims on the surface of bodies of water."

"Ah, yes, we have a similar animal on New Krypton."

Lois smiled and said, "I'm sure you can handle it, but if you have any problems, now you know karate."

Zara laughed and said, "I don't know how much call I'll have to practice that."

Getting back to a more practical matter, Clark asked, "How much longer will you remain in orbit?"

Zara looked at Ching and asked, "What do you think?"

He replied, "I think we could afford to remain for at least a couple of days."

Lois had a mischievous look as she said, "I think you need to give Perry your notice, otherwise he will put in a missing person report and have the police hunting for you."

Zara smiled, "I had forgotten all about Perry and the Planet. Do you think I should tell him why I'm leaving?"

"Hmmm, let me see. 'Perry, I'm leaving so that I can rule another planet.' I don't know that he would believe you."

Zara started to laugh, "I don't think I would if I was him and I know it's the truth."

Lois reached down and placed her hands on her breasts and said, "It's time for me to go feed the baby. I guess we'll see you guys later."

After leaving the ship they returned to Smallville.

When they walked into the house the first one they saw was Carrie. "Mommy! Daddy!"

"Hi Sweetheart, how's our girl?"

"I'm fine and so is Penny. Penny's asleep."

With a pained expression Lois said, "I think I'm going to have to wake her up. I need to feed her." Lois headed upstairs while Clark and Carrie went into the living room joining Jonathan and Martha. When Clark sat on the sofa Carrie crawled up in his lap and Clark wrapped his arms around her.

"Daddy, did the bad men go away?"

"Yes, Carrie, the bad men have gone away. We don't have to worry about them anymore."

"All of the other people went home?"

"Yep, they all went home. It's just us now."

"Daddy, when I grow up will I wear a suit like them?"

"Carrie, honey, I think you just might, but don't rush things, okay? You have a lot of growing to do."

"Okay, but I know what colors I want. I want to look like that girl. I want that color blue and purple."

"You may just get your wish."

"Who was she?"

"Oh, I think you'll find out eventually." Clark pulled her into a hug. "Just enjoy this time with us. Grammy and Grandpa Kent want their little girl around for a long time."

After a short time Lois came downstairs carrying Penny. She sat next to Clark and Carrie and asked, "Carrie, honey, do you want to hold Penny?"

"Oh, Mommy, can I?"

Lois smiled and said, "I think you've earned it. Put your arms out. That's right, just like that. Now be careful with her."

"I will, mommy. I'll take the bestest care of her."

"I know you will, honey. You already have. You have to be the very best big sister ever. Look, she's smiling at you."

Carrie looked at Penny and said, "Don't you worry. No bad man will hurt you. I'll protek you always."

Lois gave Clark a knowing look as Carrie said this then Lois said, "We know you will, honey. We know you will."

Chapter 35 — Back to Work

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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The following morning, Carrie came running into Lois and Clark's room and jumped up on their bed. A second later Scrappy joined her. She shouted, "Mommy, Mommy bad men are gone! Penny is safe! I proteked her from the bad man and he went away."

Lois held out her arms to her daughter and Carrie crawled over into them. Lois hugged her and said, "You sure did, sweetheart! You protected your baby sister from the bad man and now you don't have to worry about him anymore." As Lois was speaking Clark reached over and ruffled Carrie's hair.

"Now we can settled down and be a family. You need to go back to school. You missed several days, but with all that's been going on, I think your teacher will understand. I think you need to go get dressed for school, then we'll have breakfast and head back to town."

"Okay, Mommy. Come on Scrappy. Let's go get dressed." She hopped down off the bed and Scrappy followed her out and into her own room.

Lois stood and moved to the cradle in the corner. She leaned down and picked up her other daughter and looking into her face with love in her eyes, said, "Well, little one, there was a lot of trouble because of you, but we made it. You're safe now. All you need to do is grow up strong and healthy." She turned to Clark and asked, "Do you think we'll have any more problems over her?" Lois sat in her rocker, bared her breast and presented her nipple to Penny who latched on and eagerly fed.

Taking in the sight of his wife feeding his child and listening to the slurping sounds being made by Penny as Lois fed her, Clark had a thoughtful expression as he said, "Much as I hate to quote him, Herb would say, 'Only time will tell.' We found out one thing as a result of this, she's already super powered. I wonder what other effects that will have on her. We already know that your pregnancy was longer than an Earth woman's. I didn't start to develop my powers until I was ten and they came on gradually, but that was because I was born on a giant planet under a red sun. I wasn't able to fly till I was eighteen. That isn't going to be the case with her. We will have to keep a close track on her development. We may have to reevaluate how we do things."

"How?"

"Well, I was thinking, your pregnancy was longer and that is probably due to the increased molecular weight. 2013 Clark told me that our lives are extended because of our high molecular weight. If that is the case with her it may start earlier which means that she may develop slower. In that case, she might have to spend time in both universes so that the slower development isn't too obvious."

"I'm sure Carrie would approve of that. I was dreading taking Penny to the other universe and keeping her there all of the time. Carrie would have missed her terribly. This way they could grow up together. What can we do about work?"

"I think we can stay here for a few weeks anyhow. We should get a handle on her development within that time. Babies usually grow a lot in the first weeks. If she seems slow then we can put the plan into action. I think Penny needs to stay here with Grammy and Grampa until we're sure. At lunch time I guess you'll fly out to feed Penny. Once we decide, we can bring her into the Planet and show her off. When we do we can put her in the DP daycare center on the second floor. Then all you will need to do is go downstairs to feed her and Carrie can be with her in the after school program."

"That sounds like a plan." Lois shifted Penny to the other breast and she continued to feed. "If she continues to eat like this she's bound to put on weight. If she doesn't we'll know pretty quickly. It seems like she is eating more as time goes on. Have you noticed, my breasts are getting bigger so that I can produce more milk? The more she eats, the bigger I get so that I can keep

her satisfied."

With a leering look he said, "Yeah, I had noticed. Looking good!"

"Keep me pregnant and there'll be plenty there for you to look at."

A few minutes later Penny finished nursing and Lois handed her to Clark, "Here you go, Papa. Change your daughter."

In a teasing tone he said, "If you want to hog that privilege, you may."

"Not on your life, she just as much your responsibility as she is mine. You want the pleasure of the intimacy you have to pay the price. Make sure you clean her thoroughly and don't forget the powder."

He carried Penny over to the changing table and proceeded to clean and change his daughter. Once he was finished he handed her back to Lois and said, "Clean and dry."

Lois checked and said, "You'll do," and started laughing.

While Lois had been feeding Penny Clark had dressed and while he had changed her Lois had dressed and it was a good thing they had because there was an impatient knock on the door. "Mommy ... Daddy ... Grammy is calling us for breakfast!"

Clark opened the door and scooped a giggling Carrie up in his arms and tickled her as he said, "She is huh? Well I guess we ought to get down there then." Carrie was laughing and squirming as he tickled her. When he stopped she put her arms around his neck and kissed his cheek.

Smiling as she watched this activity, Lois couldn't help but see the love and affection displayed in the play on both sides and it was heartwarming. They were really becoming a family. Lois carried Penny and all four moved downstairs.

Zara came down and joined Lois and Clark just as they were finishing up with breakfast. After Lois put Penny down for her morning nap the three of them spun into their uniforms and with Clark carrying Carrie they flew to Metropolis. Landing on the roof of the Planet they all spun into their work clothes and took the stairwell down to the news floor. Carrie wasn't due in school yet so she went with them to the newsroom.

As they were exiting the stairwell the first one to see them was Jimmy Olsen. When he saw Zara he brightened up. Ever since she had started a couple of weeks ago he'd had a crush on her. As he was approaching them he shouted, "Hi, Sara! Where have you been? I missed you. Listen, if you're free tonight, maybe we could get together and you could tell me what's been happening."

Zara turned to him and said, "Uh, Jimmy, I, uh, don't think so."

"Well, if tonight isn't good, maybe tomorrow." There was a hopeful note in his voice.

Zara looked at him and said, "Jimmy, you're a really nice guy, but ... I already have someone."

Jimmy was crestfallen, "Oh, a boyfriend."

With an almost embarrassed tone she said, "Actually, I'm married."

"Oh, well, in that case ... MARRIED! Did you say married?"

"Yes, I did."

"But, the other day ... you were single."

"It just happened, yesterday. I'm sorry, Jimmy. It wasn't expected. It just happened."

"What was it, one of those Las Vegas quickies? You can go to Reno and be divorced just as quickly, you know. If you aren't happy with him, that is."

"No, it wasn't a Vegas quickie even if it wasn't expected. We've been in love for a long time, but we didn't think we could marry. We finally received permission and ... so ... well ... we got married."

Just then Zara was reprieved as Perry White. He shouted, "Lois, Clark, my office, NOW!"

Lois and Clark had been interested observers in this byplay. While it had been going on, Lois had taken Carrie over to her desk and settled her in her visitor chair.

Clark looked at Lois and shrugged. Lois smiled and said to Carrie, "I'll be right back, Carrie. If my phone rings, you can answer it. You can be my secretary. How's that?"

With an eager smile, Carrie put her Superman lunchbox that Grammy had packed for her on the desk and said, "Okay Mommy. I'll be your seketary."

Lois patted her on the head and then she led the way to the office while Clark and Zara followed. Once they were in the office and Clark had closed the door, they sat side by side on Perry's couch. Zara sat in a chair nearby.

Perry seated himself behind his desk and moved some papers, clearing a space in front of himself. He folded his hands together before he said, in a calm tone, "All right, let's hear it. Hopefully, you've come back with one heck of a story. You've been gone for days! Nobody's even heard from you. You didn't call in to file a story." As he proceeded, his tone became more and more gruff. "You didn't even let us know you were still alive. In the meantime we've had a flock of superheroes flying around creating emergencies in every part of the globe. The Star has had teams out all over the place reporting incidents. It looked like there were two factions and they were having a war. Half of them were wearing colorful costumes. It looked like there were three Superwomen and four Supermen!"

"Now, I don't mean to impose on your free time, but you seemed to know this was going to happen and then you up and disappeared!"

Zara stood up and said, "Perry, I think I can explain. You see, I'm not who you think I am."

"No? I think you are a research assistant I hired a couple of weeks ago. If that's not who you are, please enlighten me." His tone was one of skepticism.

In an almost embarrassed tone, Zara said, "Well, actually, I am one of those super powered people that have been flying around."

Perry gave her a disbelieving look before he said, "Sara, you really don't need to try to cover for these two. I know you are low man on the totem pole, but that doesn't mean that you need to take the blame. When the three of you left, they were in charge and as senior staff it is their responsibility."

Zara held up her hands and said, "No, Mr. White, I am serious. I was the one that took them away and it was so that they could get the entire inside story on what was happening."

"You are seriously trying to tell me that you took them with you and not the other way around?"

Zara replied, "That is exactly what I am saying. I arrived in advance of the rest of my people. I wanted to find a reliable news outlet for the true story. I hired in here because I had determined that the Daily Planet was the paper to handle it. I had already checked out your reporters and determined who would do the story justice. I simply had to wait for them to return from their vacation to introduce myself and invite them into the story."

Perry was still skeptical as he asked, "You are super powered, like Superwoman?"

"Just like Superwoman, in fact she is a close friend of mine."

Perry still wasn't convinced. "How do I know that is a fact?"

Zara said, "In that case, I guess I'll have to do something to convince you." As she said this she started to float around the room.

Perry stared, open mouthed. Finally he found his voice, "You really are!" He came out of his stupor and looking at Lois and Clark said, "Well, why are you just sitting there? We have a newspaper to get out. I need copy to fill the pages! What a scoop this is going to be! Get to work! I expect something on my desk for the evening edition."

Clark slowly stood and stepped over to Perry's desk. "Chief, you haven't heard the whole story yet."

Zara floated back to the floor next to Clark as he continued, "The reason that there was a war going on in the first place was to determine who was going to rule a planet." He turned and put out a hand, indicating Zara and said, "Allow me to introduce, Lady Zara, you would consider her queen of New Krypton although that is not her actual title, but that is what it amounts to."

Perry was shocked speechless again and simply fell back into his chair. Finally he said, "You're not funnin' me with this now are you. This isn't like callin' Elvis 'The King'."

"No, Perry, this is the truth. Zara and her new husband are now the rulers of New Krypton and they have appointed an ambassador to Earth. They wish to establish full diplomatic relations and set up trade with Earth."

"And you say we are the only paper with this information? This is an exclusive!?!?" Perry asked with a hopeful smile on his face.

"Yes, we are. That is exactly what we are saying. This is our exclusive."

His hopeful smile morphed into a Cheshire cat like grin, "Start getting me copy. I'll order a double run. Just think what this will do to our circulation! Get out of here and get busy. I want the first article on my desk in an hour. I'll want background as well as detail, personal interviews, descriptions of the battles, who was involved and why. Clark, you work on the personal angle, the human interest side. Why do they want trade? Are they in need?"

"You got it, Chief! We'll get you the lead story in a bit. There's a lot more to come. Just wait."

Perry was dry washing his hand in glee as they left the office. Lois said, "Let's go into the conference room." Once inside she said, "Thanks, Zara. You really didn't need to do that, but it'll help."

"It was the least that I could do. Your help was invaluable in this. What your friend Herb did was amazing. If he hadn't brought in all of that extra help, I don't know what would have happened."

"I can tell you just what would have happened. You'd be looking at a marriage that you didn't want and we would possibly have died along with the kids."

That evening the lead story carried a Lane and Kent byline.

The next morning the first in-depth story hit the paper and later in the afternoon Perry called everyone together in the bullpen while he stood at the top of the ramp and read the article, in its entirety to the staff. It finished up with:

"And so the fate of two worlds hung in the balance. Not only that of New Krypton, but Earth as well would be decided based upon the outcome of the conflict conducted according to the customs of New Krypton. In the end it was the honorable conduct and character of Superwoman and Superman that proved to be the deciding factor. Their maintaining of the traditions of New Krypton when their opponents were willing to violate those sacred traditions caused the ruling Council of Elders to decide in their favor and award them the victory. Their opponents have been duly tried for their transgressions and appropriate punishments assigned.

"Those who visited temporarily have at this time returned to their homes.

"The people of Earth need fear no longer that they will be subjected to a tyrannical rule by people from New Krypton.

"The people of New Krypton wish to establish full diplomatic relations with the people of Earth and will use the Superman/Superwoman Foundation as the intermediary. The trade which they wish to establish will benefit both planets and could be the means of moving this planet ahead technologically

while we will provide commodities which they sorely need.”

“The new rulers of New Krypton,” here Perry interrupted his reading, “You’ all don’t know it, but our very own Sara is now one of those rulers. She’s like the queen of New Krypton and she says that they wish to express their regrets for what happened here and promise that in the future, if there is a need, their people will be ready to assist us if circumstances require it. They will provide auxiliaries to assist Superwoman and Superman as needed thereby adding to the peace and security of this planet.”

Perry lowered the paper and said, “That article has the famous Lois and Clark touch. I can foresee another Kerth nomination. Do you two have anything to say?”

Lois stepped up next to Perry and said, “We owe it all to Sara. She approached us and asked us to be the journalists on this story. What can I say? She liked our work!”

Perry added, “And our circulation has almost doubled.” He turned to Lois and asked, “You are going to be doing followups, aren’t you?”

Lois replied, “Of course we will. We will have interviews with the new ambassador and his staff. We will have pieces that will make Arnie in travel jealous. I don’t think Steve in sports has anything to worry about though.”

Perry wrapped it up with, “Okay, people. Show’s over. We still have a paper to get out. Frank, I still need that piece on the mayor’s press conference.”

“Coming right up.”

“Ralph, where’s that piece on the boat show?”

“The boat show was cancelled because the venue had a fire created by one of those people from New Krypton.”

Perry was incredulous and he sputtered out, “You didn’t think that was newsworthy?”

Abashed, Ralph replied, “I’ll get right on it.”

“You’d better do more than that!” Perry replied as he watched Ralph turn away and scurry in the direction of his desk.

People hurried back to their desks. Clark sat on the corner of Lois’ desk and said, “What say we pick up Carrie from day care and head home? We have another member of the family I have missed all day.”

“Sounds like a good idea to me. Let’s go.” Lois picked up her bag as she stood and they headed for the stairwell.

Chapter 36 — Supergirl

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 — Alt2

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Three weeks later

Lois and Clark were startled awake by the bed shaking under them. They both opened their eyes to see Carrie bouncing on the bed between them.

With a chuckle, Lois asked, “What do you think you are doing?”

“Come on, Mommy, it’s time to get up!”

Clark sat up quickly, grabbed Carrie and pulling her down, started tickling her. As he grabbed her she let out a squeal and then started laughing as he tickled her.

He stopped abruptly and she shouted, “More, Daddy!” So he started the tickling her again to her squeals of delight.

He stopped again and said, “That’s enough. I think we need to get up and ready to go.”

Lois reached for Carrie and gave her a hug as she said, “He’s right you know. Today we have a special treat. Penny is going with us and you will see her when you get to the day care after school. Won’t that be nice?”

“Yes! I miss her when it takes us so long to come home.”

“Well, then, let’s get ready. You need to go get dressed for

school and we’ll get ready.”

“Okay, Mommy. I’ll go get dressed.” Suiting her actions to her words she jumped down off of her parent’s bed and scampered out of the room.

By this time they had developed a system and it followed the same pattern each day. While Lois fed Penny, Clark would get dressed and while he cleaned and changed the baby, Lois prepared for the day. The previous day had been Sunday and they had used their day off to move from Smallville to Metropolis so today they would be driving to work.

It was Lois’ turn to make breakfast. Lois had learned a lot from Martha about what a growing child needed in the way of nutrition so the days of a donut and coffee breakfast were long gone. When Carrie made it downstairs she found a small bowl of cereal, some fruit, scrambled eggs and bacon with a glass of milk. To set a good example they each had the same breakfast.

While they were eating Scrappy came in through his doggie door from taking care of his morning business and trotted over to his food bowl and water for his breakfast.

After breakfast Lois packed Carrie’s lunch while Clark put Penny into her car seat.

Carrie patted Scrappy on the head and said, “I’ll see you later. Be good.” He was wagging his tail the entire time.

Lois took Carrie’s free hand and asked, “Everyone ready to go?”

Carrie nodded enthusiastically and they headed out.

As they exited the elevator they were spotted by Jimmy.

“Morning, guys! Hey, what do you have there, CK?”

Lifting it, Clark said, “Baby car seat.”

Jimmy started walking in the direction of Clark’s desk. “Why do you have that, CK?”

Clark smiled as he said, “Well, I don’t know, maybe it’s safer that way for carrying the baby.”

Jimmy had arrived next to Clark as he spluttered, “Baby? What baby?”

Clark threw back the blanket and revealed a sleeping Penny as he said, “This one.”

Jimmy was surprised, “Where did you get a baby?”

“Jimmy, do I really need to explain the birds and bees to you?”

“Wha .. no .. aw CK, I know that stuff, but Lois she wasn’t ...”

“Remember Olive?”

“Yeah.”

“What did Olive look like?”

“Like she was pregnant ... you mean she really was?!!?”

Lois said, “The light dawns!”

“But, you guys have been back for a while now.”

“Right, but what was happening?”

“The war between the superheroes and New Krypton.”

“Do you think we wanted to bring the baby into the middle of that? We left her with my parents in Smallville where we thought she would be safe.”

Just then Perry came out of his office. He spotted Lois and Clark and shouted, “Lois, Clark, my office, pronto!”

As they started to move toward him he saw the car seat in Clark’s hand and got a questioning look on his face. As they neared him he asked, “What is that?”

Rolling her eyes, Lois said, “It’s a baby car seat.” She turned around and shouted, “Hey, listen up, everybody!” Once she had the attention of the entire news room she said, “Here’s a news flash for all of you. What Clark is carrying is called a baby car seat. In this baby car seat is a baby. Her name is Penelope Ann Kent and she is ours! We got her in the usual way. Today is her first day here and we are going to enroll her in the day care program on the second floor. Does anyone have any questions?”

Someone shouted, “Is that why Olive looked pregnant?”

“Yes, Sherlock, that is why Olive looked pregnant. She was! Happy now?”

In a hushed tone, Ralph said, “I thought she looked bigger up top.”

Lois turned in his direction and giving him a withering stare said, “Yes, I am breastfeeding. Any other questions or comments?”

Silence answered her.

Lois turned on her heel and strode toward Perry’s office with Clark bringing up the rear carrying Penny.

Once in the office, Perry forgot all about what he had called them in for and said, “Let’s get a look at this little lady.”

Clark put the car seat on the corner of Perry’s desk and he took a close look. He commented, “Yep, she’s yours all right. It is surprising how much she looks like Carrie. Are you sure Carrie’s adopted? They really look like sisters.”

Thinking about Protector and Supergirl, Lois said, “You’d be surprised just how much they look alike. We want them to really be sisters. We are going to do everything we can to encourage that. I think we’ll succeed, too.”

“Why did you guys keep her secret?”

“In a word. Luthor. We were involved in recapturing him and then we went right into the war and this is the first chance we’ve had to bring her in.”

“Well, while you go file the paperwork to get her registered in the day care, why don’t you leave her here and ol’ Uncle Perry’ll watch her.”

Lois laughed and said, “Okay, Chief, we’ll take you up on your offer. We’ll only be gone a short time.”

When they returned Perry had his finger stuck in his mouth, sucking on it with a look of pain on his face.

Lois asked, “What happened?”

Perry removed his finger and said, “She has some grip! She woke up and I allowed her to grab my finger. When she squeezed it I saw stars.” In a more conspiratorial tone he said, “You guys are going to have to watch out about that. That kind of thing could give away a secret. Now, just forget I said anything, but remember what I said.”

Lois and Clark both had dumbfounded expression as the goggled at Perry. Lois sputtered, “Wha .. how? But uh.”

Clark was just as stunned but he was speechless.

Perry just said, “Look you two. I didn’t get this job because I could yodel. I’ve been around the block a few times. I’ve been an embedded journalist and I’ve been an investigative reporter. That’s why I teamed you two up initially; I saw the promise of greatness in you as a team. I figured out who you were a while ago, but I also figured that if you wanted me to know you’d tell me yourselves. In this case, it was just too important to keep quiet any longer. You’re gonna need to be careful or she’ll give you away.”

Clark replied, “Thanks for the heads up, Perry.” He looked at Lois and said, “Perhaps we could have mom knit her a pair of mittens to wear all of the time. We could say that it is to keep her from scratching her face with her fingernails. Really, we should have known something like this would happen after what we found out.” Turning to Perry he said, “We recently found out that she was born super powered. She should also be invulnerable so she can’t be hurt. I think there will be a time, in the future, when we won’t have to keep it a secret, but right now there would be too many problems if our identities were known. For one thing, my parents would be in danger, as would Lois’ parents and her sister.”

“Well, you can trust me to keep your secret.”

“We know Chief, and we appreciate it.” Turning to Lois he said, “I think we need to hold off on putting Penny in the day care until we take care of that.” Turning back to Perry he said, “Do

you mind if we keep her on the news floor until we take care of that little item?”

“I got no problem with it, just watch out for Ralph. I wouldn’t let him get too close. He’s an idiot, but he might discover something by accident and with him you can’t tell what he would do with that kind of information.”

Lois picked up the car seat and said, “I think I will go to the ladies room and feed this little lady. See you in a few,” and walked out.

Clark turned to Perry and asked, “Okay, Chief, what gave us away?”

“Oh, nothing big, just a lot of little things that when I put them together the puzzle made a pretty picture.” As he was speaking Perry brought up his hands and like a photographer squared forefinger and thumb to form a frame which he moved around.

Changing the subject he asked, “So, what are you and Lois going to work on next?”

Later that night

Lois oversaw Carrie’s nighttime prayers and tucked her in bed. She leaned down and kissed her goodnight and said, “Pleasant dreams, little one. I’ll see you in the morning.”

Carrie said, “G’night, Mommy,” and half rolled over, hooked her arm over Scrappy’s neck and closed her eyes.

Clark, holding Penny, had been watching from the doorway with a smile on his face. Lois joined him and they headed for their bedroom. Once there he placed Penny in her cradle and they started getting ready for bed.

Lois broke the silence, “There is something that we need to talk about.”

“Oh? What would that be?”

“It has been several weeks now since they all left, but I really need to know ... where do I stand?”

Clark was totally mystified by this question. He asked, “What do you mean, where do you stand?”

Lois stood and looking down at her feet started pacing the room as she launched into full babble mode, “Where exactly do I stand, in your affections? I mean, suddenly here is the first Lois you ever met and by your own admission you were strongly attracted to her, I mean, how could you help it, being soul mates and all and then *your* Lois, the Lois that you were supposed to be with, showed up. I saw how you reacted to her arrival. I’m sure there was an attraction there. Then Lori came in and as the next Lois, how could you help but be attracted to her. Where do I fit in, sloppy seconds?” She paused to take a breath and with chagrin said, “I’m babbling aren’t I. I can’t believe I’m babbling. I only do that when I’m nervous.” She looked at Clark and asked, “I am babbling, aren’t I?”

Clark had moved over and placed himself directly in her path and when she looked up and asked that question, there he was. He pulled her into his arms and said, “Like a brook. Where is all of this insecurity coming from? *You* are my wife. We have a family together. We have built a life together. We have, in the time we’ve been together saved each other more times than I care to count. I love you and that is the only thing that counts.” He thought for a few seconds before he spoke again, “Could this actually have anything to do with you and how you feel?” It would only be logical for Lois to have felt an attraction to the other Clarks as he had to Lois so he asked, “Did you feel an attraction to the other Clarks?”

Her cheeks flushed and he knew he was on the right track. “You did, didn’t you? Come on, you can be honest with me. You were attracted to the other Clarks, weren’t you?”

In a shy, embarrassed tone she replied, “Well, yeah, sort of.”

He smiled and kissed her forehead before saying, “Lois, Lois,

Lois. It's nothing to be ashamed about. Look, I admit that I felt the attraction to Lois, it was still there, but what we have is so much more! Yes, I was shaken when *she* showed up, but I got over it quickly. Fortunately, the other Lois showed up first. I had been with her and her Clark a couple of times. I already knew what their relationship was like and frankly I envied them. Now I know what they have ... because I have it with you. She had told me that I could not replace him in her affections. She told me that the first time we met and that was before they were married. The attraction was still there and it was so confusing, when he was trapped in the time bubble, we almost kissed. She was missing her husband and there I was, his duplicate, and me without a Lois. But, that was then and this is now and no one can replace you in my affections just as I hope none of the other Clarks could replace me."

He stopped for a few seconds before he began again, "I know what you are going to say next ... 'But, you did. You replaced *my* Clark when he was killed.' Yes, I know, but that was a special situation. We had, both of us had, lost our soul mates. We felt that bond break when they died and then, from the moment we met we were connected by that same bond and it has only grown stronger the longer we have been together. So to answer your question, you stand at the top, but there are two little girls that are running close seconds." He paused again before he continued, "Want to know a little secret?"

Lois brightened up; she always liked to be let in on secrets so she nodded enthusiastically.

"That was one of the reasons I suggested that we pair up as couples and fight that way."

"So, you didn't trust yourself?"

He chuckled, "No, well, maybe ... a little, but just a little. No, there was actually a good reason, other than that, for that suggestion. We have been working together and we are used to how each other reacts in situations. I'm sure that pertains to each of the other couples as well. We work best with those we know best."

"So you weren't afraid that you would kiss the wrong Lois by 'mistake'?"

"No, I wasn't afraid of that happening at all."

Lois admitted, "It was confusing and I felt myself being drawn to each of the others, but you are right. I knew which one was my lover every minute we were all together," and sealed her statement with a kiss. With an arched eyebrow she said, "We have a couple of hours before Penny will be hungry again and Carrie is asleep ..."

Before she could even finish her statement she found herself in bed with her Clark, her soul mate, her forever husband.

Chapter 37 —Epilogue

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Universal Locator Designation

Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120

Distant future — TTEMPO Headquarters

%%%

Herb stepped down off of the transfer plate in the clean room euphemistically called Reception. He smiled as he saw the motto, in gold, over the portal — 'Only Time Will Tell' and thought about just how true that statement was. He was glad that he had chosen that as the motto for TTEMPO.

He moved out of Reception and as he did he was greeted by several TTEMPO agents as they were heading out on missions. He shuddered slightly when he saw Andrus, but was somewhat comforted when he saw what he was wearing. TTEMPO agents, when going on survey missions, had started dressing in period costume so as not to give away their presence so easily. In more technologically advanced ages they could get away with their

normal clothing, but in more antiquated cultures they would stick out like the proverbial sore thumb. It appeared as though Andrus was going into the Wild West period. He was in the costume of a drummer, or traveling salesman, presumably to check on Lulu Kent and The Lone Rider. Herb was relieved that there would be little chance of Andrus messing up the timeline. Then another thought came to him, what if he interacted with Tempus Tex? That could be a disaster in the making. He made a mental note to check the time records for discontinuities before anything became irreparable.

Shaking his head Herb took the translift to his floor and moved down the corridor to his office. The door, with its usual reliability, opened as he approached. He stepped in and said, "Lights on."

Once the lights were on he hung up his derby and coat on the coat rack just inside the door then he moved to his desk. As he was crossing the floor to his desk he removed his tie, opened his collar by removing the collar-button and heaved a relieved sigh, thinking, "<I really ought to update my wardrobe. These hard starched collars can be very irritating.>" He smiled as he heard that familiar squeak as he sat in his chair and then simply sat there in thought for a time with his fingers steepled. He was planning his report on this incident.

Finally, once he had organized his thoughts he reached over, pushed a button and started speaking into the air in his British English accent, "Computer, dictation."

A very human sounding voice replied "Working. Will this be a letter, or a journal entry?"

"This will be a journal entry. Addenda to report on incident in Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190 Alt 2, Incident with New Krypton.

"Working, file accessed."

Herb commenced, "The incident involving the conflict between Nor-Na of New Krypton and the El family of Alt 2 has been successfully resolved."

"Monitoring of that particular universe has fallen under my direct purview ever since we matched up the Clark Kent of universe Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 036, Alt 1, with the Lois Lane of Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190, Alt 2. Their pair bonding has been a total success as demonstrated by surveys conducted in that universe's future, but continued monitoring is indicated."

"In this particular incident it was necessary to recruit auxiliaries, all of whom were family members, to come to the assistance of Lois, Clark and Zara. In all cases it was necessary to ensure that all formalities of the wedding/life bonding were accomplished prior to recruiting, thus complying with New Kryptonian customs which limited the conflict to family members only. The fact that James Olsen Junior and his wife Henrietta had chosen to identify with the El family as a result of having been made super powered by them and actually participating with them in the life bonding ceremony officiated by the New Kryptonian elders entitled them to participate. If they had not been available, I might have had to recruit another super couple from yet another universe. Perhaps from one of the universes that Alt Clark visited on one of his missions. I feel confident that any one of the couples that he had assisted would have been more than willing to repay the favor."

"After performing an analysis of the situation it was determined that the resources contained within those universes under my direct control would be adequate to the task. Traveling to those universes I succeeded in recruiting the individuals most appropriate to the situation. The inclusion of Alice and Elka were a serendipitous afterthought; however, their presence proved to be keys to the final solution. In the case of Alice, I simply had to delay the pickup until the requirements of the Kryptonian life bonding ceremony had been complied with. That, in itself, set a

convenient time for the pickup of the children since they were all gathered in one place at the same time.”

“Pause recording.”

“Paused.”

Herb was lost in thought for a time before he continued. The next parts were going to be very important to have recorded and he wanted to make sure he had everything correct. He pulled out a chart of figures that he could refer to in order to have everything correct. Once he had the chart in hand he said,

“Resume.”

“Recording.”

“The idea for this entire exercise was a direct result of having sent the Clark Kent now of two universes, his own native universe, Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 036, Alt 1, and the native universe of his Lois, Alpha -120 x Gamma 255 x Tau -190, Alt 2, on the missions referenced above. He completed his task of preserving the lives of the Lois and Clark of those universes in those missions in other universes where his presence was needed.”

“As was expected, the recruiting of the Lois and Clark couples from the year 2013 in Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120 and 1993 in Alpha 023 x Gamma 025 x Tau 040 went without any problems as did the recruiting of Lori and Clark from 2091 in Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124. As soon as they were informed that there was a Lois and Clark couple in need of assistance they were more than willing to participate.”

“Not too surprising was the willingness of the children of the couple in Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120, Prime, in the year 2083 to assist. They were every bit as willing as their parents. It was a pity that I couldn’t recruit the parents at the same time, but having two manifestations of the same couple, from two different timeframes, in the same time frame was risky thus it was deemed that a single couple from each universe be included.”

“The inclusion of 2112 Clark Junior and his wife, Elka, from Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124 was a risky decision, but the correct one.”

“The most difficult decision was the inclusion of Carrie and Penny in their personas of Protector and Supergirl because their earlier selves were in the same timeframe, however their presence was actually required. Protector’s unique abilities were needed to prevent the destruction of untold billions of dollars of real estate and uncounted numbers of lives.”

“There was only one Lois and Clark couple that I had to initiate a time stamped memory block on as I returned them to their own time, specifically the Lois and Clark from 2013 in Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -120, Prime. The trigger which would restore that memory was the absence of the children from the Labor Day party. That was used as a trigger because of the presence of all of the grandchildren. It was necessary to prevent a general panic among them because of all of their parents being missing.”

“As determined earlier, Lori’s skill with the bow was key in resolving the conflict therefore encouraging her to take that particular weapon with her was warranted.”

“Pause.”

“Paused.”

Herb got up and moved to a sideboard. Picking up a cup he held it under a faucet which dispensed near boiling water, then pulling out a tea bag he prepared a cup of Earl Grey tea which he carried it back to his desk before he continued. Once he was again seated and after taking a sip of his tea he said, “Resume.”

“Recording.”

“In view of the success of this exercise we may consider utilizing this approach again in future incidents. There exists the possible need of a so called ‘show of force’ on New Krypton in 2093 in universe Alpha 023 x Gamma 004 x Tau -124. I will discuss this with the Commissioners and make a final decision at

the proper time.”

“Due consideration will have to be given to exactly who and from what eras the recruits will come. The teamwork displayed by the participants in this exercise was exceptional and beyond expectations. That bodes well for any future exercise of this nature. The concern here is that if we involve the spouses and the children’s spouses then we will have two of each individual in a single timeframe. Fortunately, it would be easy to sort them out by their memories.”

“End recording. Do not finalize and allow for future additions and edits. Format as a document and send a copy to my hand held device for review.”

“Recording stopped. Sending.”

Herb’s hand held beeped and a small light started to flash indicating the file had been received. He nodded his approval and stood up from his chair. He would review the file and make his edits after taking a brief nap. He moved to his sleeping alcove and after kicking off his shoes and placing his glasses on a side table, he lay down on a trundle bed.

He spoke to the computer again, “Lights off.”

In response to his command the lights were extinguished.

After a few seconds he said, “Computer.”

“Working. Letter or journal entry?”

“Tickle file.”

“Recording. Entry?”

“Check on Andrus mission to Wild West.”

“Time on reminder?”

“As soon as I wake from my nap.”

“Recorded.”

THE END