

Healing Hearts

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Rating: K+

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CHAPTER 1: RESCUE

On this one particular day in Metropolis, the sky was beautiful, sunny and warm. It started like any other day, nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. The citizens of Metropolis went about their daily routines, unaware that a sinister plot was being perpetrated as they drove their cars, took commuter buses, boarded airplanes, talked on their cell phones, and lived their lives just like any other day. Three lives in particular would be forever changed by this day. They were Lois Lane, the star reporter for the Daily Planet, Richard White, her fiancé of more than a year, and their son, Jason White.

He was finally home where he belonged. Clark Kent of Smallville, Kal-El of Krypton, and Superman. He never should have left. He knew that now, after all these years. There he was again, saving Lois, just like he's done countless times before. It had become second nature to him, like breathing in and out, and loving her was also just as effortless.

Standing there, watching her, seeing the look of stunned surprise on her face, sent him to a place he had no business going. He didn't like to think about her being without him all this time, but she seemed to have done very well without him. She had won a Pulitzer Prize for her article *Why the World Doesn't Need Superman*. It was clear what points she was trying to make. How ironic was that? But seeing that photo of her with another man and with her son, a beautiful little boy, caused his heart to rise up into his throat. The regret threatened to choke him. He took a deep breath. *How could I have gone away like that? I left the one person who really knew me, understood me, and wanted me. I took her memories of our beautiful time together, and now, all I can do is stand here and think about all the lost time and beautiful memories we could have had, if only... if only I had never left her. I'm so sorry, Lois. I'm so sorry.*

"Are you ok?" Clark thought he wouldn't be able to get the words out, but he managed. The world shrunk to just the two of them just like it always did when they were together. Some things haven't changed.

Lois hasn't said a word, which was a rare occurrence, he admitted. He couldn't help but grin at that thought. *I can't stand here and watch her anymore. People were beginning to stare at us.* So, he spoke to everyone on the plane.

"I hope this little incident hasn't put you off flying. Statistically speaking it's still the safest way to travel." Then he took one last look at Lois, waved and turned to go. Kal-El stood at the

entrance of the plane and watched the crowd, knowing that he was home, but he also knew that not everyone would welcome him back. Several moments later he took off.

Lois arrived at the door a moment too late. She wanted desperately to call him back. *He's back, he's really here.* Her mind couldn't fathom it. She fainted.

Kal-El banked to the right and saw movement out of the corner of his eye, and knew what had happened. He immediately went to see if Lois was alright. She could have hit her head or maybe she was ill. He picked her up and flew her to the nearest hospital.

Lois awoke in his arms, only a few moments later, and knew immediately where she was, and who was holding her. Her heart wouldn't listen to her brain, as it responded to his nearness just like the past had never happened. It was fluttering so fast, she thought she might actually faint again. She was getting light-headed and touched her forehead. Clark tried to reassure her and pulled her closer. "Lois, you're safe. I've got you."

Clark knew the moment she had awakened. He was afraid to look her in the eye, but when she touched her forehead, he could not put it off anymore. He steeled his heart against her, and looked at the woman of his heart. He knew it would be hard, but he was a strong person, he could just look at her without losing it, surely he could. He was wrong, so wrong about so many things. "Lois, I..." The words died in his throat.

"You what, what were you going to say ... Kal-El?" Lois was bombarded with so many emotions right now, she couldn't pinpoint just one, but if she were honest with herself, the one emotion that pushed its way to the forefront of her mind and her heart was ... she still loved him. The feeling leaped and hurdled over every other feeling straight into her heart and sat there waiting for her to acknowledge it. It was the last thing she would do. "Well?"

Clark was stunned. *She remembers my name?* "Lois, are you alright?" He wasn't ready to talk, not now, and certainly not one thousand feet in the air.

"Kal-El, if you don't talk to me, I'll... I'll..." She didn't know what she would do.

"You'll what?" Clark couldn't help the grin that appeared on his face.

"Don't you dare laugh at me." Lois gave him the stern face.

"Lois, I'm not laughing. I'm worried about you. That's all."

"I'm fine. You can put me down now." She didn't want to talk anymore. It was still the same for them, always would be. It was becoming way too easy to talk with him and tease him. She groaned to herself. She was in a lot of trouble.

"Lois, we're one thousand feet in the air. We'll be at the hospital in one minute."

"I don't need a hospital." She crossed her arms over her chest. "Just take me to the Planet." She stared straight ahead.

"Is Jason there?" *Oh, I probably should not have said that.*

Lois was shocked. She stared at him. "How do you know about him?"

"Umm, I umm, read about him. Congratulations, Lois. You have a beautiful little boy. He, umm, looks like his father, doesn't he?" *That was subtle, Clark.* He had to know the truth. He suspected Jason might be his, prayed that he might. The dates and times fit too perfectly. It was possible, wasn't it? He knew miracles happened everyday, all the time.

"Yes he does," Lois said without thinking. She glanced at Clark. Should she tell him that her memories had miraculously returned within months of her moving in with Richard? She remembered that fateful night. *It was days before the fateful shuttle launch. I laid in my bed remembering the dream. Both Kal-El and Clark were there in my dreams for the first time. I remember crying and crying afterwards for my lost love, our son, who may never know and love his real father, and all the lost time we would never get back.* She looked into Kal-El's

eyes and knew the truth. Kal-El was Jason's father.

"Lois, what are you thinking?" She was staring at him so strangely.

"I need to be on the ground. My head is spinning. Please put me down." She looked down and knew exactly where she was. "Here, you can drop me off here."

"Lois, this is a residential area. There's a seaplane and ... whose house is this? Is this where you live?" A stabbing pain somewhere in the region of his heart was almost too much to bear. Lois had a home and a family, and he wasn't a part of it. He swallowed the lump in his throat.

"Yes, this is where I live." She looked at Clark, and what she saw broke her heart. He looked devastated. "Kal-El, you can put me down now." *I don't know what to say to him.* "I have to go inside and make a call. My purse is still on the plane. Kal-El, can you hear me?"

Clark put her down, and like a robot he stood there staring at her. A part of him felt betrayed, but he had no rights, no rights at all. He had forfeited every right he had ever had with her, when he had left her without a single word as Clark and as Superman.

Lois went in search of her spare key. She had placed it under a chaise lounge on the back patio. It was still there. She put the key in the lock and turned to face Kal-El. He hadn't moved an inch. Then, the words just slipped out.

"Come in for a minute. It's alright, we can talk."

When Lois spoke to him, Kal-El snapped out of it. He didn't know what to do. He looked around, and entered the house, wondering what would happen. Lois had a lovely home. He felt like an intruder, an interloper. Lois was engaged, she had a son, and he didn't belong here, not as Clark, and certainly not as Superman. He didn't belong anywhere. He hung his head. "Lois, I shouldn't be here."

"Kal-El, we need to talk. I think we should, don't you?"

"Lois, you called me 'Kal-El.' You remember, don't you?" He had to know the truth.

Lois couldn't look at him. "It doesn't matter, not any more."

Kal-El came closer. "Of course, it matters."

It was way past time for apologies, but Clark couldn't think of anything else to say. "Lois, I'm sorry for everything I put you through. I'm sorry I left you. You do believe me, don't you?" He was pleading with her.

Lois stared at him, wondering how a simple apology could affect her so much. *I knew what he was going to say, but I told myself I wouldn't forgive him, but I already have. I knew the exact moment when I had, when I looked into the face of my little boy and realized the truth.*

Kal-El reached up to touch her arm. He heard the noise at the front door first, then he quickly walked to the other side of the room. *I don't know what came over me. What was I thinking? This is just so wrong on so many levels.* He felt ashamed of himself.

Just then, the front door opened and Richard and Jason entered the house. "Lois, Lois, are you here? I saw the news and I thought..." Richard didn't finish his sentence, as he stared at the scene before him. He suddenly felt his entire life with Lois flash before his eyes. Superman, his rival, was standing in his living room talking to his future wife.

"Mommy, Mommy, we saw you on television flying with Superman." Jason stopped dead in his tracks. It was Superman and he was standing in their living room. "Wow, you're here. Hello, Superman."

CHAPTER 2: SECRETS

Lois Lane could feel her life completely spinning out of control and all in matter of a few hours. After hearing her fiancé and her son enter the house, she knew in her heart that nothing would ever be the same again. She mentally pulled herself together, and tried and get some control over her life.

"Jason, come here, Munchkin." Lois picked up her son, and gave him a hug.

"Hi, Mommy. Daddy and I saw you on television. Are you ok?"

"I'm fine. Did you take all your medicines like a good boy?"

"Yes, Mommy, I did. Can I talk to Superman, please?"

All during this exchange, Richard stood staring at his rival. Meanwhile, Superman walked over to the fireplace mantel and looked at all the family photos. There were photos of Jason at several different ages, including a lovely photo of him as an infant. There were also photos of Lois and Richard together, at the beach and at the office. *It should be me in these photos.*

Lois turned to Richard, saw him staring at Superman with a look that would kill if he could, and decided to try and defuse the situation. "Richard, I'm glad you're home." She went to him then. She put Jason down and gave him an awkward hug.

"Lois, are you alright?" Richard worriedly asked.

"I'm fine, really. I asked Superman here to get an exclusive interview about his return. We're almost done. Could you take Jason upstairs for a few minutes?"

"Aren't you going to introduce your 'family' to Superman?" Richard couldn't help emphasizing the word 'family.' He took Jason and Lois both by the hand and brought them over to Superman.

Lois was forced to introduce them. "Superman, this is Jason, my son, and this is Richard White, my fiancé. He's Perry's nephew, a pilot, and he works at the Planet as the international editor."

Richard noted Lois didn't say 'our' son, a telling sign, he had to admit. It certainly didn't help his mood.

Superman shook Richard's and Jason's hands. "Hello, Jason, Mr. White. I'm very pleased to meet you both." He turned to Lois. "Ms. Lane, we can finish the interview at another time. I'll let you reunite with your family. Goodbye, Ms. Lane, Jason, Mr. White." He turned to leave.

"Mommy, don't let him go." Jason ran to him, pulled his cape and looked up at his favorite superhero. "Can you stay for a little while, please?"

He closed his eyes for a moment, turned around and stared at the little boy who may be his son. *Who could resist that face or say no to him?* Clark thought. But he had to, for his own sanity. He knelt down to Jason's eye level. He couldn't help himself. He reached up and pushed his hair away from his forehead. *His eye color is the same as mine.*

Lois watched the scene with an indifferent expression on her face. She steeled herself against it. She couldn't react to it. She resisted the urge to turn and look at Richard, because she knew what she would see.

Richard was watching all of them. *Lois, trying not to be moved, Jason, completely enthralled with the man, and Superman, looking at my son, like, I don't know what that expression was ... sadness, regret, and any number of expressions I can't decipher.*

"I'm sorry Jason, I have to go. I can come by at another time, alright?" Jason looked so

crestfallen, Clark had to say he would try and come back and see him.

"Ok, you promise?" Jason smiled at him.

"I promise." Superman stood up to leave.

"I'll walk you out. I'll be right back." Lois spoke to Richard then, as she followed Superman out the back door.

Richard had seen enough. "Come on, Jason. You have homework, and I'll get dinner started." He felt as if he'd been kicked in the gut.

Lois and Superman silently walked to the end of the pier. Richard stood watching them from the bedroom window.

"I'm sorry." Superman said.

"I'm sorry." Lois said.

They both turned toward each other.

"Lois, I should not have said I would come back here, but I did promise Jason. I can't disappoint him." He used that as an excuse to come by, but he really did want to get to know his son and to see Lois, if he were completely honest with himself.

"No, it's alright. You can visit him anytime." *Lois Lane, what are you thinking?* Lois ignored her inner voice.

"Thank you, Lois." He couldn't help but smile. "And Lois, I won't interfere in your life, get in the way or try to ... never mind. I should go. I'll see you around. Goodbye, Lois."

"Goodbye, Kal-El." God help her. She wanted him to. Superman flew up and away. Lois watched him with a wistful expression on her face.

Richard saw it and his heart sank. "She still loves him." *She lied to me only days ago when I asked her about it.*

Lois turned from watching Kal-El, and she saw Richard watching her. She sighed, knowing what was coming.

Kal-El flew up and over the house, never intending to listen in, but he couldn't help himself, just like he couldn't help touching his son. Yes, Jason was his son. There was no doubt in his mind. Now, what? He had to know what was going on in that house.

Lois entered the house and Richard was in the kitchen fixing dinner. She wanted, no needed, to get a glass of wine. Richard watched her and wondered what she could possibly be thinking, coming on to Superman. The man had no life. All he did all day was save people. *What kind of a father could he be to my son?*

"Lois, what just happened here? I'm in shock. I walk in and Superman is my house talking to my fiancé. What were you really talking about, and don't tell me it was an exclusive interview? Don't insult my intelligence." Richard was getting worked up.

"Richard, lower your voice. I don't know what you're talking about. I asked him why he left, and why he returned after all this time, and he tried to answer my questions, but he didn't get a chance to answer me. You and Jason walked in."

"Lois, you told me the other day that you never loved him. Was it true or not?" Richard couldn't help the pleading in his voice. He had to know. He could not be with a woman who was in love with someone else.

"Richard, how many times are you going to ask me that? Yes, it's true, don't you believe me? Richard, I love you. I want us to stay together and be a family."

"You don't really mean that Lois, or you would have set a wedding date. Every time I bring it up, I'm shot down and I feel like a complete heel, so I don't ask and it's been over a

year. Are we getting married or not?"

"Richard, I'm tired. I almost died today. My head is pounding. I'm going to take this glass of wine upstairs, take a shower and try to forget this horrible day." Lois turned on her heel and left Richard standing there with his mouth agape.

"Damn it." Richard couldn't believe she just sidestepped every question he asked her again. *I can't believe this is happening, but I have to face the facts.*

Kal-El flew up and away from the house. *Lois and Richard have a lot to work out, and my coming back has stirred up all kinds of insecurities about their relationship, or maybe it was there before I came back. I don't know.* He sighed. *I have to stay away from all of them, including Jason, but how can I? He's my son. He needs me in his life. I know he's young, but his abilities may come to the forefront at any time, and I want to help him understand his powers. I don't know what to do now.* Maybe, answers would come in the morning. In the meantime, Kal-El decided to head to the Fortress and check in with his Father.

As he came closer to the Fortress, he could sense something was wrong. It was cold and dark, and it appeared vandalized. But how could that be? Only one other person on Earth, besides Lois, knew where that place was ... Lex Luthor. He drifted down into the main chamber, and he could see that the crystals that kept the place alive with all the knowledge of his heritage were gone. Why hadn't he checked in earlier? He had been too busy feeling sorry for himself, thinking that he had lost Lois forever to another man.

Now, Luthor was a threat to everyone on Earth. He had to find a way to stop him once and for all.

The next morning, after spending the night in the guest room, Richard awoke to find Lois had already left for the office. Jason was still asleep. He rubbed his tired eyes, and got Jason up and ready for school. As he walked into the office, he spotted Lois and Clark with their heads together. Clark had come back the other day from his many travels abroad, and Perry had put his 'world famous reporting team' back together. *Great, this is all I need after the day I had yesterday.*

"Good morning," Richard said, as he walked by, but he didn't expect either of them to acknowledge him.

Lois left Clark and went to speak to Richard. As he entered his office, and was about to close the door, Lois walked in and shut the door.

"Richard, I wanted to apologize for yesterday. It was just a terrible day, and we both said things we didn't mean. Can you forgive me?" Lois came to him and tried to kiss him.

He pulled her arms down from around his neck and stepped back. "Lois, I think things are crystal clear for the first time in years."

"Richard, what are you saying?" Lois felt like her world was falling apart and it's been barely twenty-four hours since Kal-El came back into her life.

He turned from her and went to stand at the window. "You know, I've had this terrible feeling for a while now, but now it's been confirmed. You don't love me, not the way I want you to, and I can't change it. I've tried to make you love me, but that's not how love works. I know that, but I gave it my best shot."

"I do love you, I do." Lois started to cry.

"Lois, who are you trying to convince, me or yourself?" He walked over to her and gave her a hankie. "Here, dry your eyes. I want Jason in my life. You'll allow that, won't you?"

"Of course, you're his father, and have been his father for most of his life."

"You know, Lois, you never told me who Jason's father was. Will you tell me now?"

"Richard, I told you never to ask me that. I can't tell you. He's world famous, and he could take him away from me." *Richard would probably put two and two together now with that lie.* Lois shuddered to herself.

"Alright, I won't ask again, but Lois, Jason needs his father with him, even if it's part-time. I can't be there for him, not the way I used to."

"Oh Richard, I'm so sorry. I never meant to hurt you." Lois hoped he would believe her. That much was the truth.

"I know." He gave her a hug. "I'm going to talk to Perry." Richard left his office.

Lois watched him go, and her eyes gravitated to Clark, who stood up and watched her with an expression on his face, as if he had heard every word.

CHAPTER 3: THE TALK

Lois stood in Richard's office for few moments and dried her eyes. What just happened? Richard had dumped her. It was really over. *Can you blame him? You wouldn't set a wedding date. You strung him along for years. It's a wonder he stayed with you this long.* Lois couldn't stop the hurtful monologue in her mind, because she knew it was all true.

She stood there not knowing what to do. She couldn't go back to her desk and work like nothing had happened. She stared at Clark, not knowing what to say to him either. *You know what Lois? Your love life leaves a lot to be desired.* Her inner voice had a point. She wiped her steaming eyes, went to her desk, got her things, and headed for the elevator.

Clark watched her go. He wanted so badly to go after her. *Should I go after her, try and talk to her? What could I say that wouldn't sound like I wanted to take Richard's place?* He shook his head, not liking that train of thought. *She does need a friend right now. We were friends. We still are, at least I hope so.*

Perry looked up and saw Lois heading for the elevators. "Lane!" It was Perry screaming at Lois from his office door. "Where are you going? Kent? Go after her. We don't need any more last minute saves."

"Umm, Perry, it wasn't her fault the plane fell out of the sky."

"I know that Kent. Just go after her." *Why can't people just do what I tell them?*

"Sure, chief." Clark sighed. He grabbed his suit coat and left the bullpen.

Perry went back into his office and sat back down. "Sorry, Richard, what were you saying?"

Richard sighed. "I was saying I need another position away from Metropolis. If there's anything available, and I mean anything, I'll take it."

"What are you talking about Richard? What the hell is going on? Did you have a fight with Lois? Did she kick you out? What is it, man? Spit it out."

"We broke up. It's over." Richard still couldn't believe it. He had to face the truth. *Lois doesn't love me anymore. I don't know if she ever did.* He didn't know anything.

"What? Why, when did this happen?" Perry was shocked. They've been together for years.

"It was a little while ago. Look Perry, I'd rather not get into it now." He stood up to leave. "Could you just check into it for me? I have to go."

"Richard, wait." Perry barely managed to stop him from leaving. "Do you need a place to stay? You know Alice and I would love to have you."

"No thank you, Perry. I'll get a hotel room for a few days, until you find me another position, then I'll put my things in storage before I leave. Remember, Perry, I need something away from this city." He wanted to stay with Perry, but he didn't want any interrogations. It was over, and there was no need to discuss it. It wouldn't change anything.

As Richard left, Perry sighed. *What in the world is going on around here?*

Clark found Lois easily enough. She was a few blocks away in a coffee bar. He walked in and stood by her table. "Lois, can I join you?"

Lois didn't look at him. She nodded her head.

Clark sat down and waited for her to speak.

"We met barely a month after the love of my life, and my best friend walked out on me." She looked at Clark then.

Clark bowed his head, feeling ashamed. He wanted her to understand. "Lois, let me explain."

Lois sat back in her chair with her arms crossed and waited. "Well, let's hear it. Where did you go?"

"Krypton."

"Krypton?" That was the last thing she expected him to say. "But you said your planet had been destroyed. I don't understand."

"World famous scientists published several articles claiming to have found something and there was a possibility that Krypton may still be there, so I left."

Lois just stared at him. She could not believe what she was hearing. "You just left, just like that?"

"Lois, it was never that easy and to make matters worse, Krypton was a kryptonite infected dead zone. I almost didn't make it back." He sighed. "I never should have left you, Lois. I should have looked more closely into the scientist findings. I realize that now. I never should have taken your memories, and I never should have left without saying goodbye. Please say you forgive me." He had to have her forgiveness.

"I don't understand how you could leave us like that." Lois tried to get control of her emotions. "How hard was it to say those two words ... goodbye?"

"Lois, I tried for weeks to get up the courage to do it, but I couldn't. I couldn't look you in the eye and say that I was leaving you, and that there was a real possibility we may never see each other again. Please, Lois. Please try and understand." He didn't know what else to say. He wanted to say that he still loved her and wanted her, but this was definitely not the time for that.

She sat there thinking and thinking some more. She was so quiet, Clark didn't want to say anything, for fear she would never speak to him again. He started to fidget, she was taking so long. "Lois?"

"I'll try, Clark. That's all I can say for now." She held up her hand to stop him from speaking. "There's one more thing, and you know what I'm going say. I don't know how you took my memories, but if you ever do anything like that to me again, I'll ... I'll. I don't know what. You make me crazy, you know that?"

Clark had to bite his lip to keep from smiling at her. "Finish your coffee. I have something to show you," he said.

Clark twirled into the suit in a nearby alleyway, picked Lois up and flew high above the clouds. He didn't want anyone to see them.

"Clark Kent, where are you taking me, and why are we flying so fast?" She had to hold on tight, and duck her head under his chin to keep warm.

"You'll see." In a matter of minutes, they were at the Fortress of Solitude. "I had to show you this, Lois." He set her down, but held the cape around her. It was still freezing inside.

"Clark, oh no. What happened here?" It was freezing, dark and dead. She felt sad looking at it, remembering the last time she was there. *We had defeated Zod and his cronies, and Clark and I.* She mentally pulled herself back to the present. Clark was speaking to her.

"Lex Luthor. It's the only explanation. I have surveillance, but I can't access anything without the crystals, and they're all gone. I'm sure it was him. It couldn't have been anyone else. Luthor, you and I were the only people who knew about this place."

"Oh, Clark, I know what it means to you. I'm sorry. But wait a minute. Do you think he's responsible for the blackout? It would explain a lot. I mean, all the technological equipment failures and the way that it happened were 'otherworldly.' There's no other way to describe it. It was uncanny. All cell phones, computers, electrical equipment, planes, automobiles, telephones, everything just died and all at the same time."

"I know. I can't think of any other explanation. I think Luthor is out there somewhere with my crystals planning and plotting some mad scheme. We have to find him soon. I thought if I brought you here, you could help me. It would take your mind off things, and keep you focused on your work. So, are you with me?"

"Do you have to ask? Of course, I'll help you, Clark, anyway I can." It was just what she needed right now. *He knows me so well.*

"Thank you, Lois. It means a lot. Here, you're freezing. Let's head back now." He pulled her closer, and Lois had to steel herself against his nearness. She was stiff as a board. "You can relax, Lois. I'm not going to try anything." He grinned at her.

"Ha-ha, you're a funny man. Let's go, alright?"

They headed back to Metropolis and the Planet to formulate a plan to capture Luthor, before he could put another mad plan into action.

While flying back to Metropolis, Clark could sense Lois had a lot on her mind, so he slowed his pace. He wanted her to open up to him. "What are you thinking?" Clark asked, wanting to know.

"I couldn't help remembering the last time we were at the Fortress," Lois said, surprising him with her answer.

Clark didn't want to go there, but he had to admit he also remembered their time together. "Me too," he said.

"Clark, how did you do it?" She watched him closely.

"Do what?" He didn't want to do this, didn't want to think about it. It was too painful.

"How did you talk to me, see me everyday for weeks, and not think about what we shared, what we had, or what we lost? I mean, when you told me it was over, I died inside. I thought the sun wouldn't come up again."

"Lois, I..." He couldn't finish. He didn't know what to say to her.

"Let me finish, Clark. I have to say this." She took a deep breath, trying to make sense of everything that had happened, trying to understand. "I know you loved me. You gave up your

powers for me, and I can't tell you how much that meant to me. You had saved the world from Zod, and everything was as it should be, except we couldn't be together, and then, it was over just like that." Lois was barely holding herself together now.

Clark listened to her questions and tried to think of how to answer them. All he could think to say was ... he had been a fool. He looked ahead and he could see the Planet globe in his sights. He landed on the rooftop and set Lois down. He couldn't look at her. He was so ashamed of the things he had done. He left her side, went to the ledge, and looked down. At that moment, all he wanted to do was ease her pain and his. It was like they were reliving the past. All the pain and heartache were back, but it was much, much worse now, because they couldn't change any of it.

"Lois, please don't say any more." He closed his eyes, as the heartache and pain seared his heart and mind.

Lois could see he was getting upset. "Clark, I'm sorry. I don't want to do this either, but we have to get past it. All I want to do is put the pieces together. It's hard to do that when you don't have all the facts. Will you tell me everything now? Please?"

Clark turned to face her then. She had to know the truth, and it was way past time for that. "Lois, first of all, don't ever doubt that I loved you. I still do ... very much."

Lois shook her head, amazed at what he had just said. She never doubted his love for her. It's in everything he did, back then and now. She knew in her heart that he was telling her the truth, but loving her wasn't the real issue here. "Go on."

"After what happened with Zod, I didn't think we could make it work. My father..." Clark was cut off.

"Wait a minute. Jor-El told you to dump me?" Lois couldn't believe this.

"No, Lois. It was my decision to do it, and it was the hardest thing I've ever done." He walked over to her then, and looked into her eyes. "Lois, I regret very much taking your memories of our time together, but seeing you everyday, knowing you didn't remember any of it, it was getting harder and harder for me to pretend it never happened. Then, I heard about Krypton, and I didn't really think it through. Those days were pretty much a blur to me. All I could think about was never being with you again, holding you again, or loving you the way I wanted to love you ... never again." He closed his eyes for a moment, and taking a deep breath, he continued. "So, I made the decision to leave. At the time, it felt like a lifeline, but looking back, it was me being a coward. Can you ever forgive me, Lois?" He stared at her, trying to convey his feelings, how much he cared, and how much he regretted everything.

Lois listened and heard everything he'd said. *At least I had the luxury of not remembering, but Clark didn't have that luxury. He had suffered so much, given up so much, all because of me. He had felt compelled to leave his home, leave everything and everyone that he loved for five years. How could I not forgive him?* She looked into his eyes then, eyes so like her son's. "Yes, Clark, I forgive you."

Clark couldn't help himself. He came closer. He reached up to touch her shoulder.

Lois stepped back a little. "Clark, we have a lot to work out, and I ... I can't think when you're standing so close."

"I'm sorry, Lois. I didn't mean to upset you. I just wanted ..." He sighed, not knowing what he wanted.

"We need to get back to work, alright? Luthor, remember?" Lois had to admit it to herself. She didn't trust herself around him.

"Sure, Lois and thank you for listening." He couldn't help grinning at her.

She smiled at him. "Let's get to work." She looked him up and down. "And you need to change." They both laughed.

CHAPTER 4: HIDDEN TRUTHS

Lois and Clark were both relieved they were finally able to talk and find a bit of normalcy in their lives. A heavy weight had been lifted and after all this time, they felt they could work together again without all the bad memories, regret, and worrying about things that were left unsaid.

As Lois went back to the bullpen, Kal-El went to the police station to file an official report about the theft of his crystals. He also wanted an investigation of the theft of rare artifacts that went missing the night of an out-of-control car, and the woman who was driving. He remembered her name was Katherine. It appeared now that it was a diversion for him. He also told the police the missing artifacts included kryptonite, and that Luthor was probably behind both thefts.

Meanwhile, Lois began writing her article about the theft of the crystals and the rare artifacts also stolen by Luthor. Luthor was definitely up to something. She looked up and Clark walked in. Before he had a chance to speak to her, Lois pulled Clark by the arm and into Perry's office.

"Perry, you're not going to believe this." Lois began, as they entered Perry's office.

"Lane, can't you see I'm busy? Don't you know how to knock?" Perry asked annoyed.

"Hello Lois, Clark." Richard said, as he stood up to greet them.

"Oh hello, Richard, I'm sorry to interrupt." Lois said.

"Come back later, Lane. I'm not done talking with Richard," Perry said.

"It's ok, Perry. I'll let you guys get back to work." Richard walked over to the door.

"I'll call you later, Richard." Lois said.

That's the most words she's said to me in days. "Sure, Lois, I'll talk to you later. How's Jason?"

"He's fine. Why don't you call him later? He'll be happy to talk to you." Lois said. *Damn, this is awkward.*

"Sure, I'll give him a call. Bye, guys."

"See you later, Richard," Clark said, speaking for the first time.

"Bye, Clark." Richard left Perry's office.

"Now, what did you say about Luthor?" Perry asked, hating to deal with personal business in his office.

Lois pulled herself together. She needed to concentrate on Luthor. "Well, apparently Luthor has been very busy since he left prison. I had my suspicions about that robbery and the woman who Superman was carrying in that photo. That same night, there was a robbery of rare artifacts, and get this, Superman told us that Luthor stole his memory crystals from his Fortress of Solitude in the Arctic."

"So, Superman told you all of this? When was this, Lane?" Perry asked.

"We talked to him just today. Superman is at the police station right now filing a criminal report against Luthor."

"I was there, Perry. It's all true," Clark said.

"Well, well, Luthor has been busy. Alright, we'll run with it. I want it in the same issue as

the return of Superman article. That should make Luthor very happy indeed. What else did Superman say?" Perry wanted all the details.

Clark spoke up then. "Superman told us he felt violated by Luthor's invasion of his home. His sanctuary is now cold, empty and unlivable. The crystals not only contained the memories of his home planet, Krypton, but it also contained his parent's words to him, so that he wouldn't be alone. They mean a lot to him, Perry. He also said Luthor is the wrong person to have possession of the crystals. They're very powerful."

"Perry, Clark and I think Luthor was behind the blackouts," Lois said.

"Lois, we can't print that without proof. Do you have any proof?" Perry asked, hopeful they had something.

"No, we don't, not at the moment, but it's only a matter of time before we do," Lois said.

"Well, until you do, we'll run with the Luthor thefts, but not the blackout theory. Now, get back to work you two, and get that evidence." Perry ordered, as he went back to his desk.

"We will, Perry, we will." Lois said, as they left Perry's office.

"Now what?" Clark asked.

"Well, we need to find out more about that woman you rescued. What was her name, if you can remember after carrying her all over town?" Lois asked, pretending to be jealous, as she quirked an eyebrow at him.

"Now, Lois, I didn't ..., we didn't ...," Clark stammered.

"Clark, you're so easy," Lois chuckled.

Alexander 'Lex' Luthor was a man with a burning desire to see Superman destroyed. Luthor had been released from prison only a few short weeks ago. He had served his time, five years of his life, and because Superman had disappeared and no one could locate him, his appeal had been overturned. Now, with all the tools he needed in his possession, he would finally have the 'Man of Steel' at his feet begging him to put him out of his misery.

The Vanderworth estate was proving to be a good place to put his plans into action. As Luthor sat on the veranda reading the latest issue of the Daily Plant, there was a headline of Superman's return, his rescue of Lois Lane, the space shuttle and countless other lives. Luthor snorted to himself. *That alien has stood in my way for the last time.*

As he turned over the front page, he gasped. There below the fold was a photo of him as a wanted man for questioning as the only suspect in the theft of priceless artifacts from the Natural History Museum in Metropolis, and for the theft of Superman's crystals. He read the article and apparently the crystals had been placed under international jurisdiction and diplomatic protection since his disappearance. Luthor was shocked at that revelation. He knew it would not stop him from getting what he wanted, but this 'news' did put a crimp in his plans. "Kitty!" He hollered. "Get out here!"

"What is it Lex, I'm right here." Kitty had been standing behind Lex with her puppy watching him. Lex had a curious expression on his face. *What is it about Superman that drives Lex up a wall?* She sighed. *I'll never understand him.* Why even bother trying to figure him out.

Luthor's initial plan was to blackmail the people of Metropolis and the entire world, if necessary, with his 'blackout scheme.' He hadn't expected the blackout to happen, but it had given him ideas to get what he wanted. But now, after seeing his photo plastered all over the world again, no thanks to Lane and Kent, everything had changed. I have to get rid of Superman once and for all. He is my number one priority, nothing else.

"There's been a change in plans," he told Stanford, Brutus, Riley and Kitty, after getting his things and meeting them at the back of the mansion. "We're leaving, now. We have to move everything, and pay attention everyone. Plan B is now in effect. Stop standing around staring at each other, move it!"

They all stared at each other, knowing what was ahead. What Lex was planning now sent chills down their spines. They then moved everything out of the mansion and onto the yacht that was moored out front. Luthor told them he only had a few days to put everything in motion, and warned them that if anything else happened to change his plans, it would be their heads.

Meanwhile, at the Planet offices, Perry had all his staff on the Luthor story. While trying to figure out what he was planning, he convinced Richard to stay a few more days, until they could figure out Luthor's schemes. Richard reluctantly agreed. He hadn't talked to Lois about how to move on with their lives because she was avoiding him, but they needed to talk and soon.

Jason White was sitting at his mother's desk feeling bored. Everyone was busy making phone calls and ignoring him. His Superman coloring book was all done, so he got up and wandered over to Mr. Clark's desk. He'd heard Mommy talking to Mr. Clark about them being partners again, and he wanted to meet him. His hearing was getting pretty good. He had meant to tell his Mommy about that but he had forgotten about it.

"Hello, my name is Jason. Lois Lane is my Mommy." Jason hoped he wasn't too busy to talk to him.

Clark stiffened when he heard Jason's voice behind him. *Stay cool, Clark. He's just a little boy, and he doesn't know about me.* He turned around, pushed his glasses up his nose, and smiled at his son. "Hi Jason, it's nice to meet you." He shook Jason's hand.

"You're Clark Kent, right?"

"Yes, I am. Umm, where's your Mom?" Jason turned and pointed to Lois. She was standing over at Jimmy Olsen's desk talking to him.

"Oh, I see her," Clark said.

"I'm bored, Mr. Clark," Jason said.

Then, the television monitor came alive with talk about Superman's recent rescues and Jason went to stand closer to watch. Clark followed him to keep an eye on him.

"He's amazing, isn't he?" Jason asked as he turned to look at Clark. Clark looked at Jason, and then he frowned. Jason had a dawning expression on his face. His eyes grew huge. He looked back and forth between Clark and the monitor. Clark frowned even more. *Now what?* He thought.

"Umm, Jason, I'll bring you to your Mom now."

"Mr. Clark, you're really tall," Jason said. "How tall are you?" He wanted to know.

"Six-four," Clark answered automatically, with memories of Lois interviewing him all those years ago. He shook his head.

"Lois, Jason said he was bored," Clark said as he brought Jason over to Lois.

"Jason, why aren't you at my desk? I told you over and over not to roam around. You could get lost." Lois kneeled down to Jason's eye level and stroked his hair.

"Mommy, can I sit with Mr. Clark for a little while? Please?" Jason pleaded to his Mom.

Lois couldn't help but wonder what brought on this sudden interest in Clark. She looked at him for his approval, and thought, maybe it would be alright. *I know Clark won't say*

anything to him. Jason is drawn to him, though, maybe I should tell Clark the truth. She shook her head, thinking it wasn't the right time.

"Well, only if Mr. Clark says it's ok. Clark, would you mind watching him for a little while? I'll understand if you're too busy."

"Sure, I have a little time." Clark was a goner and asking for trouble, but he couldn't refuse either of them.

"Yayy," Jason said, as he bounced over to Clark's desk, dragging him by the hand. Clark just shrugged his shoulders at Lois.

Meanwhile, Richard watched the entire scene from his office and wondered what the hell was going on with his family. He couldn't help but wish that he could still be with them. Has Lois moved on already, or has she always been interested in Clark? And now Jason seemed to like him too. He'd heard stories about them in the past, but he thought Clark was just some nobody that Lois never mentioned. *Was I wrong about that? Was Lois lying about that too?*

Once Jason was settled across from Clark, coloring a new Superman book, Clark returned to his article. Jason couldn't hold it in any longer. "How fast do you fly, Mr. Clark?" Jason whispered. *Oh, oh, I shouldn't have said anything. I can tell by Mr. Clark's shocked expression.* "I'm sorry, Mr. Clark, did I say something wrong?" His bottom lip began to quiver.

"No, no, Jason, it's alright, come with me. Let's go for a walk, alright?" He looked around and no one was paying them any attention. He took Jason by the hand, speaking briefly with Lois, and entered a vacant office.

Lois watched them go, looking around for a moment and then followed them, and wondered what they were up to.

Jason was seated on a sofa watching Clark pace back and forth. "You are Superman, aren't you?" Jason asked, needing to know.

Clark sighed, just as Lois walked in. "What's up, guys?" She asked, as she closed the door. She looked back and forth between them. *This is uncanny*, she thought. *They both had the same guilty expressions on their faces.* She crossed her arms waiting for an answer. "Well? Will someone answer me please?"

Clark sighed again. "Lois, he knows."

"He knows? Knows what Clark?"

Clark arched an eyebrow at her.

"Oh, I see. Did you tell him?"

"Of course, I didn't tell him. He was watching the TV monitor, then he looked at me, he looked at Superman, and then he just knew somehow."

Lois stared at Jason shocked, but she couldn't help feeling proud that he had figured it out just by looking between the two personas. She went over to him and sat down, took his hands in hers, and tried to explain to her son about secrets.

"Jason, honey, I want you to listen very carefully to what I'm going to say, alright?"

"Ok, Mommy."

"Mr. Clark is Superman."

"Wow." He looked at Mr. Clark, staring wide-eyed at him.

"Jason, look at me. Now, Mr. Clark is also a friend to me and a lot of people. He likes being Mr. Clark. If everyone knew he was Superman, they would treat him differently. Do you understand?"

"I think so," Jason said, not understanding.

"Here, let me try and explain it another way. Now, suppose Mr. Clark walked into the office to work at his desk, but . . . he was wearing the Superman costume. How would that look?"

Jason frowned, beginning to understand. "That would be all wrong, Mommy."

"Of course, it would. Mr. Clark wears a business suit and a tie, so he can be like everyone else, and live his life like everyone else. So, we will keep his secret for him, no matter what. Do you understand now, honey?"

"Yes, Mommy, I understand." Jason looked up at Clark. "Mr. Clark, I'll keep your secret. I promise." He crossed his heart with his fingers. "Cross my heart."

Clark was so moved by the scene, he could hardly speak, but he managed. He wanted to pull them both into his arms and never let them go. Instead, he shook Jason's hand. "Thank you, Jason, and thank you, Lois."

"You're welcome." Jason and Lois both spoke at the same time. They all laughed.

Just then, Lois' assistant knocked on the door, gesturing to speak to her. "What is it, Hana?" Lois asked.

"Ms. Lane, you wanted to know when Metropolis Power called you back. They're holding for you."

"Thanks, Hana. I'll be there in a second," Lois said. She turned to Jason and Clark.

"Alright you two, please try not to get into any more trouble. I'll see you both in a little while."

"Bye, Mommy."

"Bye, Lois," Clark said. "Come on, Jason, I have to get back to work, and you have a Superman book to show me." Clark couldn't help the bounce in his step.

Jason looked up at Mr. Clark smiling and thinking, *wow, he really is tall.*

CHAPTER 5: UNEXPECTED GUESTS

Lois went back to her desk, anxious to take the call from the power company, but her mind was still in the vacant office with Clark and Jason. What an amazing little boy I have. She shook her head, still shocked at how instinctive he must have been to realize in moments who Clark was. I still can't believe it. *What does that say about me? How blind was I?* She didn't want to answer that question.

She took the call from Metropolis Power. They were very forthcoming about the power outage and where it originated. Lois realized the time and decided to take Jason home with her to change their clothes, and meet everyone at the Pulitzer dinner later that evening. She had not had a chance to talk to Kal-El about it, but she planned to apologize and make a speech declining the award. She knew it was the right thing to do, and the more she thought about it, she had made the decision to tell him the truth ... that Jason was his son. Sighing, she looked up and saw Jason and Clark back at his desk. "Jason? Come here, we have to go."

"Lois, where are you and Jason going?" Clark asked, after bringing Jason over to Lois' desk.

"Well, first we're going home to change for the Pulitzer award dinner, after that, I have a few errands to run, and then we'll meet you at the hotel for the ceremony."

"Lois, I hadn't planned on going." Clark couldn't look her in the eye.

Lois went to him then. She wanted to touch him, but decided this wasn't the place. "Clark, I want you there. I need my best friend there for support. Please say you'll come, or promise

me you'll think about it."

Jason listened to their conversation, and he decided a little extra persuasion couldn't hurt. "Please, Mr. Clark. You can sit with me."

Clark sighed. They already had him pegged. Why fight it? "Alright, I'll come."

"Great," Lois said. "We'll meet you there around 7:00, and try not to be late." She gave him a look.

"Yayy," Jason said, bouncing up and down.

"Come on, Jason, let's go. Bye, Clark," Lois said, as she took Jason by the hand.

"Bye, Mr. Clark," Jason said, waving.

"Bye, Jason, bye, Lois," Clark said, waving goodbye.

"You can't have them." It was Richard.

"What? Richard, you startled me. What did you say?" Clark was so intent on saying goodbye that he hadn't heard Richard come up behind him.

"I said you can't have my family, Clark. Stay away from them." Richard felt the only way to keep another rival from his family was to be stern, and make sure Clark understood where he was coming from.

Clark could see he was serious. "Richard, I'm no threat. Lois and I are friends. That's all. We've been friends for years. She doesn't look at me that way."

"If that's true, how come she never talked about you, or even mentioned your name?"

"I have no idea. You know, Lois, she's just not that talkative about her personal life."

"What about Jason? I've been watching you two all afternoon. You already love him, don't you? Don't deny it. It's all over your face."

"Richard, what's not to love? He's sweet, innocent, and friendly. I was just helping Lois take care of him. Jason loves you. He talks about you all the time. He misses you."

Richard ran his hands through his hair. "I miss him too."

Clark could see Richard still wanted Jason and Lois back. He didn't know what to say to him, because he knew exactly how he felt.

Richard sighed. "I believe you Clark. It's just been hard these past few days. Lois ignores me, and Jason wants his Daddy back home."

"So, do you think you have a chance to get them back?" Clark couldn't help asking.

"I would have a chance, if Superman were out of the picture."

"Oh, I see." *What can I say to that?* "So, you think Lois still has feelings for him, even after he's been gone for so long?" *I really shouldn't be doing this.* He ignored his inner voice, but Jimmy had said the exact same thing. Maybe it was true.

"Oh, I'm positive about that. She denies it, but you didn't see her face when she thought I wasn't looking, and she was talking to him right in our backyard, I might add. It made my blood boil. It's not like I can compete with him." Richard was at the end of his rope. He didn't know what to do to get them back.

"I don't know what to say, Richard. I ... I'm sorry." Clark was sorry about the entire situation.

"Thanks Clark for listening. I'll see you later." With his head hanging, Richard headed back to his office.

"Richard, are you going to the awards dinner tonight?" If Richard was going, he certainly couldn't be there.

"Well, we had planned on going together, but Lois hasn't said anything to me about it

since, well since I moved out." He looked at Clark then. "She asked you, didn't she?" Richard asked, already knowing the answer.

"Yes, but just as a friend to help with Jason." Clark knew that wasn't true.

"Right, see you later, Clark." Richard just shook his head and went to his office.

Lois thought she was cutting it close getting to the awards dinner, but one stop at the Vanderworth Estate and she could see for herself what had happened there and why. She would break the story about the black out, and it would put her on the map again.

"Mommy, where are we? Is this the Pulitzer?" Jason asked, looking around.

"No, sweetie, it isn't." Lois looked around, not seeing anyone. The house was probably locked up tight, but she did see a yacht moored off in front of the house. It looked deserted, and they did have a little time. "Come on, Jason, this will only take a minute. Take my hand." Without thinking things through, Lois boarded the yacht, and looked around. She didn't see anyone on board, but it was obviously in good shape, and it looked like it was being well taken care of.

Lois entered one of the side doors, and there on the side dresser were wigs of all shapes and sizes for a man. The yacht started to move. "Oh, no, Jason we have to go now." She turned the corner and there was Lex Luthor standing there like he had just stepped out of the shower with a toothbrush in his mouth. "Lex Luthor."

"Lois Lane?" Lex had heard a noise and had come out to see what it was. He couldn't believe his eyes or his luck. Lois Lane was on his yacht. He could not have planned this any better. Lex told her in no uncertain terms that she and her son would not be allowed to leave. He had a schedule to keep, and she would have to just cool her jets until after he got the job done. He took Lois and Jason to the main salon, with a piano and a spectacular bottomless view of the ocean, but Lois had questions.

"You were behind the blackout, weren't you?" Lois asked, convinced it was true.

"Of course," Lex said, looking at his fingernails.

"You're not going to deny it, are you? And you stole those artifacts and Superman's crystals, didn't you?"

"Right again." Lex yawned.

Lois pulled Jason close to her. "What's your plan, Luthor? Wasn't the blackout bad enough? Do you know what you did to those people? Planes, cars, trains, were all disabled, not to mention, cell phones, TVs, and countless other technological devices that were damaged. We're talking billions of dollars and people's lives who depend on those devices, or don't you care about anything or anyone?"

"No, not really." Lex shrugged. "No more questions, Lois. I have a few things to say to you."

Now, pay attention, this is important. "How do you feel about crystals?" He laid the crystals out on the table for her to see.

"You made a bad move when you stole those, Lex. Superman wants them back, and you know he won't stop until he does."

"I'm counting on it. Now, these crystals have taught me a lot. I think if I were to combine the crystals with a certain green organic matter, then I would be able to create an island that would be mine and mine alone, and Superman wouldn't be able to come near me ever again."

"Yet another mad scheme about land, Lex?" What was it with him and land?

He ignored her, and pulled down the map of his creation. "Look at this. Once my island is

created, the Americas will have to just move over. Well, how do you like it?"

"You're insane. Billions of people would be killed. Lex you can't do this. You don't know what you're doing." She looked at Kitty. "Surely, you know this is wrong, don't you?"

"Leave her out of this. Now, pay attention." He picked up the green crystal tube and showed it to her. Jason stiffened, and Lex saw it. "Who is that boy's father?"

"Richard." Lois didn't hesitate.

Lex waved the tube in Jason's face, but Jason didn't react again. "Humm, interesting. Let's get started, shall we? Brutus, you stay with them, and make sure they don't leave this room. Kitty, come with me. You won't want to miss this."

Clark and Richard were both looking for Lois and Jason. Clark called the hotel but Lois and Jason hadn't arrived yet. Richard called her cell, but no answer. They were both at the Planet offices, and Perry and Jimmy didn't know where they were either. They logged onto Lois' computer with a password of "Superman," but found nothing.

Just then, a fax was held up, and Jimmy saw it. "Hey, let me see that. I'd know that handwriting anywhere. It belongs to Lois." He brought it over to them. "What does it mean?" Both Richard and Clark said at the same time. "They're coordinates."

Richard reacted first. "I'll get my plane, and go there." He knew this was his chance, maybe his last chance, to get Lois to see that he could save her, just like Superman, and be there for Jason too.

Clark watched him leave, and mumbled to Perry and Jimmy, that he would try and contact Superman. He entered the empty elevator, tore through the shaft, tearing off his clothes as he flew, and headed to save Lois and Jason.

CHAPTER 6: THE SON BECOMES THE FATHER

Lois Lane had one thing on her mind at the moment to protect her son at all costs. It was all her fault that they were in this mess. Lex Luthor was a madman, capable of anything and she had walked right into his hands. Now, she and Jason were his prisoners and Kal-El would be forced to do whatever Luthor said to free them. She knew in her heart that he would do anything to free them. She felt terrible and she had no one to blame but herself if anything happened to Jason or Kal-El. She had to make Luthor see reason and convince him to let Jason go.

Her pleas fell on deaf ears. Lois still could not believe what she had just witnessed with her own eyes. Her little boy had just saved her life by tossing a piano and killing a man. Both she and Jason were now locked up in the pantry waiting for what, she had no idea, but they were huddled together on the floor trying to comfort one another.

Suddenly, the door opened and Luthor walked in. "Come with me now, and keep your mouths shut, no questions."

"Where are you taking us?" Lois wanted to know.

"I said keep your mouth shut." He pointed his finger in Lois' face to emphasize he meant business. Luthor had no idea what had happened to Brutus. His crew members were too afraid to say anything. They knew Luthor would be furious with them if he had to alter his plans yet again. Luthor didn't ask where he was, and they weren't saying.

Lois and Jason were put on board the helicopter and taken to a massive kryptonite-

infected island. Also on board were Kitty, two members of Luthor's crew, and Luthor himself.

"Why have you brought us to this place? It's an abomination. What sick plan are you plotting against Superman now?" Lois thought Kal-El would not survive this place. She looked at Jason and he seemed to be alright, at least for the moment.

"You'll see. I want you both to witness this. Keep your eyes on the sky. It won't be long now." Luthor said.

Lois prayed that Superman wouldn't show up, but she knew he would. He always came for them, no matter what.

Richard very carefully landed his seaplane on choppy waters. The yacht was surrounded by large outgrowths of unusual rock formations, like nothing he'd ever seen before. He boarded the yacht, yelling for Lois and Jason, but no one was on board. He saw the smashed piano and the dead body, and wondered what had happened. *Where are they? Luthor wouldn't harm them, would he? They are too valuable to him.* He didn't know what to do next, but a thought came to him that the Coast Guard would be able to help him. They could put together a search team.

He found the communications room, and placed the call on the radio. He also contacted the Planet and gave them an update. Perry told him that Clark was out trying to find Superman, and that he hadn't heard from either of them. After hanging up with Perry, Richard hoped to find some clue concerning Lois and Jason and possibly figure out Luthor's next move. Then he saw it. It was an animation of an island growing and mutating off the east coast. Luthor was truly insane to do something like that. He immediately wrote down the coordinates, thinking he could use it to find Lois and Jason.

Suddenly, Richard heard and felt a loud crashing and crunching sound. The boat rocked back and forth throwing him wildly against the console. *What is happening?* He just made it to the deck just as the boat was suddenly torn in two by a monstrous rock formation.

Meanwhile, Superman was flying all over Metropolis trying to counteract the effects of the earthquake. He tried to minimize the damage caused by the quake, save lives, and get people out of harms way. Then he flew to the yacht hoping he wasn't too late to save Lois and Jason. He knew it was the right coordinates, but he didn't see the yacht anywhere. He did see Richard's plane and there was Richard swimming towards it. He dived down to help him get on board.

"Richard, are you alright? What happened? Where are Lois and Jason?" Kal-El was becoming frantic. He took deep breaths to calm himself.

"I'm alright. The yacht sank. No one was on board, no one alive, anyway."

"What do you mean? No, you don't mean." Kal-El couldn't finish the sentence.

"No, Lois and Jason weren't on board. I don't know where they are, or where Luthor took them." Richard hesitated. *I wanted to save them.* "But I think I may know where they are. Luthor is growing some sort of island not far from here. I have the coordinates." He realized that Superman would have no problem saving them, while he couldn't possibly land his plane on that island and Luthor would probably shoot him on sight anyway. He gave Superman the coordinates.

"Thank you, Richard. I'll get them back. I promise." Superman assured him.

"I know you will. I notified the Coast Guard, and I'll meet you there as soon as I can. Hurry, Superman, go."

Kal-El sensed Richard's hesitation. He placed his hand on his shoulder. It was his way of thanking him. Then, he flew up and away.

Superman landed very hard on the island. He looked around, and he could see his home world, but it was not Krypton, not the way it should be. What had Luthor done? He saw him then, in a white coat. He was waiting for him. He saw a woman who he had saved from a car crash. She shrugged her shoulders at him. He felt like a fool.

Then his heart nearly stopped. He saw Lois and Jason surrounded by Luthor's men. At that moment, he felt as if he could actually kill the man. He had to keep his cool. He didn't want Luthor to see his reaction to any of it.

"Let them go, Luthor. I'm here. You got what you wanted." Superman didn't want Lois and Jason to see this.

"No, I don't think so, not quite yet. I want them to see your demise, the last few moments of your life. It will be a documentary to remember, that's for sure. Wouldn't you agree? I'll probably make a fortune from it." Luthor glanced at his cameraman who was filming the entire scene.

Jason couldn't bear to watch anymore. They were killing him. Lois covered his eyes, but Jason was compelled to look, and what he saw broke his heart. "Mommy, I have to do something."

Jason urgently whispered.

"No, Jason, he'll be alright in a minute." Lois didn't believe that. Kal-El was getting weaker and weaker.

"Nooooo!" Jason screamed. Luthor had just stabbed Superman in the back. He had to do something. He pulled away from his Mommy. The men weren't fast enough to stop him. He ran to Superman and covered his body with his own, trying to protect him.

"No, Jason, get back, Jason!" Lois hollered at him. She ran after him as best she could. She covered Jason's and Superman's bodies with her own.

"Well, well, isn't this a lovely scene? I could not have planned this any better. Men, pull them away from him. I have to finish this now!" Luthor ordered.

The men hesitated, because they knew who the kid was, but they had no choice. They reached down to pick up the boy.

Jason reacted instinctively and pushed them both away. They flew up into the air and landed with a sickening thud.

Luthor was so shocked that he didn't know what to do. Kitty just stared, too afraid to move.

Lois looked up. She heard and saw a Coast Guard helicopter and Richard's plane had just flown overhead. "Jason, we have to go now!" Lois hollered.

Jason looked around and saw only one way out. "Mom, do you trust me?"

"Of course, I do, Jason." *What is he planning?*

Jason stood up and lifted Superman under his arms. Lois stared at him in shock. "Mom, put your arms around my neck." Lois did as he asked. Then Jason jumped over the side of the cliff. They flew for several moments then landed in the ocean safely.

The Coast Guard helicopter made another pass a few minutes later and saw a place to land. They picked up Luthor, Kitty and the two other men, who were groggy but were able to walk. They noticed Luthor pointing to the ground and a helicopter crew member picked up a suitcase and a cloth full of crystals wondering why Luthor so interested in the items.

Richard watched the entire scene unfold before his eyes. Jason, Lois and Superman were falling over the cliff, then they seemed to hover for just a moment. He watched them with his mouth agape, not believing what he was seeing. Jason was flying. Then Richard jumped into the ocean, swam over to them and helped Lois and Jason pull Superman on board the seaplane.

Lois spoke first. "Richard, we have to get out of here. Luthor stabbed Superman in the back. He needs medical attention." Superman was writhing in pain. "There's no time. I have to get this thing out of him. It's killing him." She found some pliers and pulled the kryptonite knife out of Superman's back.

Kal-El screamed and moaned in pain. It felt like a fire poker was being pulled out of his back.

Lois had never heard that sound from him before. Tears sprang into her eyes. She wanted to stroke his hair and sooth him, but she thought better of it.

After several moments, Kal-El slowly got up, straightened his shoulders and looked at Lois and Jason. He wanted to pull them both into his arms so badly, but he couldn't. Instead, he thanked them for saving his life. "Thank you, Lois and Jason for saving me." He turned and opened the hatch.

"Where are you going? You're hurt," Lois asked, worried for his safety. *He can't go back to that island. It's suicide.*

"I have to go back. I have to get rid of it, and I'm the only person who can."

Jason watched the entire scene knowing deep inside that Superman would save them all. He went to his Mom and hugged her around the waist.

Richard watched the scene as an outsider. He knew the truth now. Jason was Superman's son. He had to step aside.

Lois and Jason began to cry.

Kal-El couldn't bear it anymore. He looked at his son and Lois once more. "Goodbye." He abruptly turned and flew away.

CHAPTER 7: SAVING THE WORLD

Kal-El flew away from his son and the love of his life with only one thought to save them. He had to save everyone. So, he flew up, up towards the sun to get his strength back for what he knew was ahead. He felt his powers fully returning. It would have to be enough. He then flew as fast as he could toward the sea and dived down to the island's spinning and turning core, using his laser vision, all the way through to the earth's crust.

This was so much worse than Luthor's nuclear blasts from years ago. The kryptonite was imbedded deep inside the island, but he tried not to think about it, although his body was feeling the effects. He had to be strong. There was no turning back now. He couldn't fail, there was no other alternative. There was way too much at stake.

He had to lift the island up above his head. There were no words to describe how heavy it was. He tried not to think about it. He didn't know where the strength came from, but it was there and he had to do it. It was working. He could feel it working. He was above the clouds now. His arms and back felt like they were about to explode, but he pushed himself. He was in the atmosphere now, and he could feel his strength starting to wane. He felt one more burst of

strength, and pushed the island away from him as hard as he could.

He watched it move slowly away from him. His eyes refused to stay open, but then he knew nothing else. He passed out and floated towards Earth.

Lois, Jason and Richard had just landed at the house and then, they all looked up at the sky, and saw a red speck falling to Earth very fast.

"Mom, look. Is that Superman? He's falling, but why won't he fly?" Jason asked, pointing at the sky.

Lois shaded her eyes and gasped. She couldn't speak, nor could she watch. She had seen the island being lifted into the sky by Kal-El when they were on the seaplane. She couldn't watch this. She picked up Jason and ran into the house. "Don't look at him, Jason."

Richard watched them with a heavy heart. Then he felt the ground shake. Superman must have hit the ground.

Lois and Jason both felt the earth shake, and knew what had happened. They looked at each other, not knowing what to say or what to do. "Are you alright, honey?" She asked her son.

"Mom, is Superman dead?" Jason asked.

Lois closed her eyes, holding back tears, not knowing what to say. "I don't know, Jason. I hope not."

They turned on the television hoping for some word, and there were crews already at the scene of Superman's fall to earth. The newscaster spoke:

"Ladies and gentleman, Superman was rushed to the nearest hospital, Metropolis General, and ... (she touched her ear)... we have just received word that he is alive. There is a pulse, but he has not regained consciousness."

Richard walked in and saw Lois and Jason hugging each other and crying. "What? What happened? Is he ...?" Richard couldn't say the word.

"No, he's alive, Richard. He's alive." Lois said, laughing and crying at the same time, unable to hide her feelings any longer.

Richard looked at Lois and he couldn't remember ever seeing her as happy as she looked at this moment, except when she held her son for the first time. There was only one thing for him to do. "Go get changed, the both of you. I'll take you to him."

Lois looked at Richard with so much gratitude. She went to him and pulled him into her arms. "Thank you, Richard."

Jason ran to him then too, hugging him around the legs. "Thank you, Daddy. I love you."

"I love you too, buddy. Now, hurry up you two. I'll bring the car around." He shoed them up the stairs, turned off the television and said a prayer for Superman to live.

Lois and Jason were able to get through the massive crowds, once the security personnel realized who she was. They were allowed in to see him with complete privacy. Jason immediately saw Superman's suit on a chair and went to it. He stroked it reverently. *Could it really be true?* Jason wondered.

"Jason, come here sweetie." Lois called to him. They went to his bedside, took his hand in both of theirs and spoke to him, hoping he would hear them.

Jason had a question first. "Mom, is Superman my bio, biolog...?"

"Is he your biological father?" Lois finished for him. Jason nodded. "Yes, Jason, he is."

"I'm Superman's son?" Jason knew it had to be true, but hearing it sounded so amazing.

Lois hugged him tight. "Yes, you're his son, and you saved his life, and you saved my life as well." She turned him to face her and looked into his eyes so like his father's. "I never thanked you for saving my life. Thank you, Jason."

"And for saving mine," Kal-El whispered slowly.

"Clark, you're awake." Lois said.

"Superman?" Jason said.

"Should I call the doctor?" Lois asked, still worried about him.

"No, they can't do anything for me. I'm alright. Just let me look at the both of you. I thought I would never see either of you again."

Lois squeezed his hand. "We thought we would never see you again either." Lois looked at Kal-El closely. He still looked pretty weak, but she felt compelled to tell him everything that was in her heart. "Clark, did you hear what I told Jason a few moments ago?" Lois asked. Kal-El nodded his head, no. She took a deep breath, coming to a decision. "Clark ... Jason is your son." She waited for his reaction.

Kal-El closed his eyes for moment. He opened them and they were both smiling at him. He returned their smiles. "Lois, I had a feeling but I never really let myself believe it was true. "He tried to raise his hand to touch his son. "Jason?" Jason took his Father's hand and smiled at him.

"Clark, Jason and I have something else to tell you." Jason nodded his head in approval. "We love you very much, and we wanted you to know that you don't have to be alone anymore. We're your family now, if you'll have us." Lois eyes filled with tears, but she smiled in spite of them.

Kal-El thought this all had to be a dream, something his mind had conjured up to test him, but it was really happening. He was so touched by her words that he closed his eyes trying to hold back the tears.

"Jason hand me a tissue, please." Jason grabbed a tissue from the side table and handed it to his mother.

"Don't cry, Clark. You don't have to say anything, alright." She wiped his eyes.

"Lois, I..." Kal-El tried to speak, but he couldn't get the words out past the lump in his throat.

"Don't talk. We'll be back tomorrow when you're feeling stronger." She stood up then, leaned down, and kissed him on the lips. "Get some rest. Jason, say goodbye to your Father."

Lois lifted him up and Jason kissed Kal-El's cheek. "Goodbye, Father."

"Goodbye, Jason," Kal-El said. "Goodbye, Lois."

They both turned and waved goodbye. "We'll see you tomorrow." Lois said.

For someone who hated goodbyes, Kal-El felt like he was saying goodbye a lot lately, but he didn't mind these goodbyes, because he would see them again very soon. *Am I dreaming? Did the last five minutes actually happen?* He pinched himself.

The doctor came in then. "Well, I see you're awake. Ms. Lane told me."

So, it was real. Lois and Jason were here. It wasn't a dream. Kal-El smiled and then he began to laugh and cry all at the same time.

Then he thanked whatever God he could think of. Thank you, thank you for my beautiful and wonderful family.

Several days later, after telling the doctors there was nothing more they could do for him, he left the hospital. He wasn't one hundred percent, but all he needed was a good dose of some

sun, and he would be fine. Oh, yeah, he was fine. He hadn't felt this good in a very long time.

He didn't think he would ever come down from this high he was feeling, but the day would come when they would all have to sit down and talk about this fantasy of a family they were dreaming about. It still felt like a dream, although he knew it wasn't. The idea that Clark Kent, Kal-El of Krypton, and Superman would co-exist together as one person, living with a wife and a son, was so far from his imagination that it left him speechless and so unsure of everything he had ever believed about his life.

Lois knew him so well. On those days when she and Jason would come to visit, she would always ask him if everything was alright, if he wanted to talk about something, and he would change the subject, or say everything was fine. Of course, she didn't believe him. He sighed. He can't avoid talking about it, and he wanted to talk about it, but he had a lot of thinking to do first.

His mother came to mind then, and he needed to talk to her, make sure she heard about Jason from him. Yeah, his Mom would put everything in perspective for him. He headed to Smallville to have a heart to heart with his Mom.

CHAPTER 8: FAMILY MATTERS

After the events of the past few days, Martha Kent was finally able to get back to work, and to breathe again without worrying about her son. As she worked on her garden in the backyard, she felt everything would get back to normal. She had just talked to Clark, and he was on his way home. He said he needed to talk to her about what was going on in his life, what had happened to him recently, and about certain things he didn't want to talk about over the phone. He had her curious now. *I think I have some idea what those certain things are, and it probably involves a certain Daily Planet reporter.*

Martha had a few things to talk to him about too. She was just glad he was alright and on the mend. She didn't like to think about what had happened to him on that island, what Luthor had done to him, and what had almost happened. Her prayers had been answered, and she couldn't be more proud of him.

Clark called out to this Mother as he landed in the house. "Mom, I'm home. Where are you?" He quickly changed into jeans and his well-worn plaid shirt.

"Clark, I'm out back." She got up from her garden, turned and saw her son come out the back door. He looked fine, but his eyes were tired and she could see he had a lot on his mind.

"Hello, son. How are you?" She asked, as she gave him a warm hug.

"I'm good, considering. How are you, Mom? The garden looks great."

"Clark, I know you didn't come all this way to talk about my garden. Let's go inside. Are you hungry?"

"No, Mom, I'm good." She was always feeding him, even now.

"Well, hospital food leaves a lot to be desired. Let me fix you up something hot. I have some soup in the fridge. It won't take but a minute to heat it up. Have a seat at the table." She went about fixing Clark some soup.

"Thanks, Mom. I suppose I am a little hungry. That does smell good." He sure did miss his Mother's cooking.

"Here you go. Careful it's hot." Martha chuckled, as if she needed to warn him about that.

Clark pretended it was too hot. He fanned his tongue. "Mom, what are you trying to do to

me? My tongue is burned."

Martha laughed. "Alright, alright, eat up. So, tell me what's on your mind, Clark. I can see you want to talk. I'm always ready to listen."

"I know." He took a few swallows of soup. "There's nothing like a good bowl of chicken soup, right Mom?"

Martha shook her head at him. He'll talk when he's ready. "Would you like something to drink with that? How about some lemonade or some milk?"

"Lemonade sounds good. Thanks, Mom." He felt like he was seventeen again. He sighed. *I can't put it off forever.*

After Martha had given him some lemonade, she sat down across from him and waited for her son to talk about what was bothering him.

"I don't know where to begin. The past several weeks have been like a high speed chase. I come home, and I find myself rescuing Lois just like the past five years never happened. We talk and it's still there Mom, all the feelings and the connection we've always felt."

"Oh, I see. Has she said anything to you about how she feels? She is engaged, Clark. I read about it in the papers a while ago. Clark, you didn't do or say anything that would influence her ... you know, did you?"

"No, Mom. All we've done is talk about things, but she did tell me something that changes everything. Her memories returned about a year ago, and ... Jason is my son, not Richard's."

Martha's eyes grew huge, then she gasped. "Clark Jerome Kent. How could you? I raised you better than that, young man." Then her eyes suddenly filled with tears.

"Mom, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset you. It's just, Lois and I never thought we could ever have children. Jason was a complete surprise, and I didn't know she was pregnant when I left. You believe me, don't you?"

"I'm a grandmother?" Martha was so overjoyed, she couldn't hold back her tears. "Oh, Clark, you have to bring Jason here real soon, alright?" She wiped at her eyes with her apron.

Clark smiled and took her hand. "Of course, I will, Mom, but how about a little preview? I have a photograph of him. Here, this was taken just a few weeks ago. Lois gave it to me yesterday. Mom, this is Jason, my son," Clark said proudly.

Martha took the photograph from him. She touched his little face with her fingers unable to find the words. She raised her tear filled gaze to her son. "He's beautiful, Clark. He has your eyes, doesn't he?"

Clark nodded. "Yes, he does."

"Clark, I have a confession to make. I've seen him before."

"Really, when?"

"I came to Metropolis the day after you fell from the sky. I wanted to see you, but of course, I couldn't get in, so Ben and I stood outside praying for you like so many others. Then, the next day, I saw Lois come out holding a little boy in her arms. I have to say that her face was radiant, and Jason was smiling at the crowd. They walked right by me, son. I remembered thinking, what a beautiful little boy. Little did I know he was my grandson."

"Oh Mom, I'm so sorry." Clark took her hand in his. "Lois and Jason were there with me when I woke up. At first, I thought I was dreaming, but it was real. They were there speaking to me, telling me that they loved me, and ... that they wanted to be my family. I can't describe how I felt at that moment, Mom. It was all so overwhelming."

Martha squeezed his hand. "What did you say to them, Clark?"

"Not much. I was so happy at the time that I couldn't stop crying," Clark said, feeling

embarrassed. "All I kept thinking was ... they're here with me now and I had thought I would never see either of them again."

"Oh, Clark, don't feel like you can't show how you feel to the people who love you. It's the most natural thing in the world. And you do love them, don't you? Is that why you're here, to tell me about Jason, and to decide what you want to do?"

Clark stood up then, went to the screened front door and looked up at the sky. He took a moment before he could answer her. "Mom, sometimes I feel like if I don't see them, talk to them, be with them, if only for a little while, I couldn't go on doing what I do everyday. Do you know what I'm trying to say?" He turned to look at his Mom then, and she could see his eyes were bright.

Martha came to him then and gave him a comforting hug. "Of course, I understand, Clark. You've made your decision, haven't you?" She looked at his face, knowing the answer.

"Yeah, I can't deny my feelings anymore. I've learned some pretty hard lessons from the past. I can't keep hurting the people who love me and care about me. I think we can make it work. It's definitely worth a try. It won't be easy, I know. Lois, Richard, Jason and I have a lot to work out." Richard was definitely part of the equation. He would be a part of Jason's life. He wouldn't want it any other way.

"I'm happy for you, son. You know I'll help in any way I can, and if you ever need a babysitter, I'm available." She smiled at him. "Now, tell me more about my grandson."

"Well, there are a few things you should know about Jason."

Several days later, Lois and Jason were getting ready for Richard's visit and were busy putting dinner on the table. He was expected at any moment. Lois asked him over for dinner, and they both thought it best to talk about Jason and make arrangements for visitation. Lois had avoided this, but it was time to put aside their own feelings and do what was best for Jason.

The doorbell rang. "I'll get it!" Jason hollered, as he ran to the door.

"No running in the house, Jason!" Lois hollered back.

"Sorry, Mom." He opened the door. "Daddy, you're here."

"Hey, buddy." Richard picked up his son, gave him a warm hug. "How are you, Jason? I've missed you."

"I've missed you too, Daddy. I'm doing fine. Hey, did Mom tell you that I don't have to use my inhaler anymore? Isn't that great?"

"No, I hadn't heard. That's wonderful news, Jason." Richard looked at Lois as she came to the door.

"Hi, Richard. How are you?" Lois asked.

"I'm ok. Hotel living leaves a lot to be desired." He saw her expression. "I didn't mean..." He didn't finish.

"Jason, could you put the napkins on the table, please?"

"Sure, Mom. I'll be right back, Daddy," Jason said.

"So, no more inhaler? When did this happen? Is he cured now?" Richard wanted to know.

"Yes, Richard. I spoke to the doctor just this morning, and he said Jason's lungs are clear. He's fine now. I was going to tell you about it tonight."

Richard watched his son setting the table. "Lois, I know about Jason."

Lois sighed. "Richard, I'm sorry I couldn't tell you about Jason before. I have no excuse, except I wanted to protect my son, and after what happened on the yacht."

"What happened, Lois?"

"He killed a man to protect me. He saved my life, Richard. He threw a piano at him."

"Oh, no, how terrible for Jason. I saw the piano smashed on the yacht, but I couldn't imagine what could have caused it. How is he handling it? Is he alright?"

"He seems fine. He's had a few nightmares, but I hope that's the end of it, and ... Superman said he would talk to him about it." She paused. "I'm sorry, Richard."

"Mom, I'm hungry. Can we eat now?" Jason asked.

"We're coming, Jason. By the way, it's 'Mom' now. He's grown up a lot in the past several weeks. We can talk later, alright Richard? The food's getting cold. Let's eat."

They all sat down to a pleasant dinner. They talked about Jason's school, his new health status, and setting up a schedule so Richard could come visit more often.

Jason had a question. "Daddy, why can't you stay here with us?"

"Jason, we talked about this the other day, remember? Your Mom and I won't be living together anymore. We both want what's best for you and our living together won't be best for us or for you. We love you and want you to be happy and we're going to do our best to make sure that you stay that way. Can you try and understand? I know it's hard for you, buddy."

"I'll try, Daddy." Jason just didn't understand grownups. "Mom, I have homework. Can I go to my room now?"

"Sure, honey. Say goodnight to your Daddy."

"Goodnight, Daddy. I love you," Jason said, not wanting to see him go.

"I love you too, Jason. Come here." Richard gave Jason a hug and a kiss goodnight. Jason was barely holding it together. He felt he had one more chance to get Lois to see reason. He watched his son go upstairs with a heavy heart. Once Jason was upstairs, he had a few questions for Lois, as he helped her clear the dinner dishes. "So, you and Superman? Lois, come on. How can he be a father to Jason? He flies around the world all day, everyday. Does he even have a job, a place to live, or money in the bank? Let's be realistic here."

Lois glanced up at the ceiling. "Lois, are you listening to me? What is that?" Richard asked, as he too glanced up at the ceiling. He thought he heard Jason speaking to someone. He then started for the stairs.

"Richard wait!" Lois tried to stop him.

CHAPTER 9: CHANGES

Kal-El watched the house on Riverside Drive from above. He could see Jason was in his room doing his homework. Richard was about to leave, so it was safe for him to enter the house. He hated snooping around, but Lois had not spoken to Richard about their new status, and it certainly wasn't his place to say anything. Jason needed him right now. Lois had told him about his nightmares and he wanted to be there for his son. He quietly entered Jason's room, but of course, Jason became a little too excited about seeing him. He had to place a finger in front of his mouth to quiet him. It was their special time together, and Jason was very good at keeping secrets.

Lois caught Richard halfway up the stairs. She grabbed his arm and spoke softly. "Please, Richard, think of Jason. He's been through enough already." She sighed. "I'm sorry, Richard."

Richard stopped and looked at Lois. He could see she was getting upset, so he came back down the stairs. The last thing Jason needed was to hear his two fathers in an argument or

worse. "Alright, Lois, I won't interrupt them, but we all need to sit down and talk about ... everything and soon."

"I agree, and we will, very soon. I promise, and thank you, Richard." Lois led him to the front door.

"I'll leave now. Thank you for dinner and for letting me be a part of Jason's life. You didn't have to set up visitation, but I can't tell how much it means to me. We were never married, so you have no obligation to do any of it." He glanced up the stairs. "I do think of him as my own son." Lois knew what he was feeling.

"I know you do, and Jason needs you in his life. He misses you everyday. I appreciate everything you've done for both of us."

"Goodnight, Lois."

"Goodnight, Richard." Lois gave him a hug, and showed him out. She took a deep breath and went to sit on the sofa. Kal-El would be down soon, and they really needed to talk.

Kal-El heard Richard leave the house. He sighed. Lois was right, they all needed to talk and soon. Jason was getting sleepy, so he finished his bedtime story, tucked him in bed, and kissed him good night. After a quick change into his office clothes, Clark headed downstairs to talk to Lois. He saw her sitting on the sofa staring at her hands. She appeared deep in thought. "Lois, are you alright? I heard ..." Seeing the look on her face, he didn't finish his sentence.

Lois looked up at Clark as he came into the room. Her eyes were bright. She couldn't help what she was feeling. There were so many changes in her life and all within the span of a few weeks. They were all living in a whirlwind, but it was time to sit down and sort through everything that had happened. She supposed she was feeling overwhelmed by it all.

Clark knew exactly what she was feeling. He came to her then, sat down next to her and took her into his arms, holding her close. "Everything's going to be alright, Lois. We'll take it slow and easy, give Jason and you a chance to adjust to all of this."

"Oh, Clark." She took a deep breath. "You always know what to say to me."

"I try." He smiled at her. "Don't cry, alright. Everything will work out. Just give it time." He pulled her tighter against him. He meant every word he'd said. It would be hard for all of them, but they could do this.

Lois welcomed Clark's arms around her. It felt so good, so right, and she never wanted him to let her go ... never again. "Just don't let me go, Clark. Promise me you'll never leave us." She looked into his eyes then.

"I promise, Lois." He touched her cheek, wiping her tears away. *Should I kiss her? I said we should take it slow, but it's just one kiss. I can see it in her eyes. She wants me to kiss her.* Clark leaned down a little. She closed her eyes. He closed his eyes. Their lips touched softly at first, then more pressure, then more still. Heads turned, tongues touched and moans were uttered. Lois pulled him closer. It had been so long. She ran her fingers through his hair, clutching the back of his neck to kiss him the way she has wanted to do since she first saw him on the plane. Lois moaned again.

Clark couldn't get close enough. *We should stop, shouldn't we?* He ignored the voice in his head. His mouth wandered across her soft cheek to her beautiful throat, kissing her all the while.

"Mom, I'm thirsty." Jason was awake.

Clark leaned his forehead against Lois' and they both took deep breaths.

"I'll be right back. Don't go anywhere, Clark. I mean it." Lois left him on the sofa. "I'm

coming Jason."

Clark got up from the sofa and began to pace, running his hands through his hair. *I shouldn't stay. Are we ready for this? No, I've only been back a few weeks, and she just broke up with Richard days ago. We should wait. Tell that to your body, buddy!* He ran his hands through his hair again.

Lois saw him pacing and knew exactly what he was feeling. She was feeling the same way too. She came up behind him and wrapped her arms around him. "He's asleep. He won't wake up again. It's his usual bedtime routine. Sleep, water, then back to sleep for the night."

Clark turned around and pulled her against him. He sighed. "Lois, you don't know how much I want you. I've wanted you from the first moment I saw you all those years ago. When we kissed just then, it was like all the years apart, all the heartache and pain we went through, washed away." He took her face between his hands. "We have another chance, Lois. I don't want to mess this up, make things harder for you or for any of us. Do you know what I'm trying to say?"

She put her head back on his chest, listening to his heart pound. She knew how much he wanted her. Lois closed her eyes, knowing what he was saying made sense. Her mind and heart knew it was the right thing to do, but her body and soul needed him with a passion she hadn't felt for any man, before or after he came into her life. She looked up at him then. "I want you too, Clark." She touched his cheek. "And I understand and I agree with you."

"Oh, you do?" He couldn't help the disappointment in his voice.

Lois chuckled. "We can still kiss and hold each other. How does that sound?"

"Well, I don't know, Lois. Won't that just lead to other things?" Clark could feel his cheeks reddening.

"It won't. We're adults, and we can control ourselves, right?" She smiled at him.

"Of course we can. Umm, I'll be going now. Let me know when you want to have that talk with Richard, and I'll be here. Goodnight, Lois." He tried to extricate himself from her arms. She didn't seem to want to let him go. "Umm, Lois, it's getting late."

"Aren't you going to kiss me goodnight?" Lois pouted at him, loving to see him squirm. "You won't need these." She reached up and took his glasses off.

"Umm, Lois, umm, why did you take my glasses off?" Clark was really getting nervous now.

"Clark, I like kissing you, and these things are in the way. Now, come here." She pulled his tie, and kissed him hard at first, then more softly.

Clark gave in. This was all he was going to get, so he gave as good as he got.

That's more like it, Lois thought.

After Clark left, and after some serious necking, Lois went upstairs to bed. She felt like a school girl with her first real crush. She giggled to herself. *What is wrong with me?* She decided to just enjoy this time with him. He was right, this was their second chance, or was it their third? She'd lost count, but they would get it right this time. *We just cannot have sex for a little while, that's all. How hard can it be? People do it all the time. Abstinence is a good thing, right?* Lois groaned to herself. *Go to sleep, Lane.*

Clark was flying over Metropolis trying to come up with a way to discourage Lois from her antics. Her teasing him was not good and didn't help the situation, but he had to admit it was so much fun. He hadn't laughed and had this much fun in he didn't know how long. His heart was soaring up into the clouds, just as he was right now. *What am I going to do with her? Don't answer that.* Clark groaned. *I need to get to work, concentrate on saving lives. You do*

that, Kent. I wonder what she's doing right now? Don't think about it. He groaned again.

A few days later, Lois, Jason and Richard had just finished dinner, and were waiting for Superman to arrive. They were all in the living room passing the time. He was expected about a half hour ago, but they were all patiently waiting for him.

"So, where is he, Lois?" Richard noted that Lois didn't appear too concerned that Superman was late for their family talk, but he was getting worried.

"He's only a little late. Let's watch a little television. Maybe there was an emergency and he didn't have time to call. Would you like some more coffee?" Lois asked.

Just then, the doorbell rang. "I'll get it," Jason said as he almost ran to the door, but stopped himself. Lois couldn't help but smile at him.

"You're here." Jason grabbed his Father's hand and pulled him into the living room.

"Good evening, everyone," Clark said as he entered the living room. He had on a suit and tie and glasses of course. "Sorry, I'm late."

Lois and Richard both had their backs to the front door. They both stood up at the same time, and as they saw Clark, they both gasped. "Clark?" They both said almost at the same time.

CHAPTER 10: IN THE END

Richard and Lois were both speechless for a moment.

"Lois, what is he doing here?" Richard asked, not believing Clark was there. *I knew he was a rival, but why is he here apologizing for being late?* "I thought..." He didn't get a chance to finish his sentence.

Clark took off his glasses and put them in his pocket. He stood up a little straighter.

Lois was shocked, but then she felt relieved. No more lies. This really was the only way for this arrangement to work for all of them.

After several moments, Richard looked between Lois and Jason and they were staring at Clark like the sun rose and fell in him. *I would give anything for that look.* "Well, Clark, who else knows about you? I have to say your disguise is very clever." Richard asked, impressed in spite of his feelings.

"It's a very small number of people who know the truth, but I felt you should be in that circle, Richard. You were there for Lois and Jason when I couldn't. Thank you." He held out his hand in friendship. Richard shook it.

"Well, I'll always care about what happens to them, and I want them to be happy, and I can see you do make them happy. I can't ask for more than that."

"Jason, honey, could you go upstairs for a few minutes while the grownups talk for a little while?" Lois asked. She didn't want to force him to go.

"Lois, if you wouldn't mind, I would like Jason to stay," Clark said smiling at his son.

"So would I," Richard said.

"Thank you, Father." Jason said. Then he turned to Richard. "Thank you, Daddy." He smiled at both of them.

"Well, I guess I'm outnumbered. You can stay honey." They all sat down. Jason sat between his two dads on the sofa, feeling like the luckiest boy in the world, while Lois sat in a chair facing them. She shook her head at her unusual family. "Well, where should we begin?"

Lois asked hoping to get things started.

"Well, first," Richard began, as he turned to Jason. "Jason, I'm moving away." Jason hung his head. Richard put his finger under his chin, lifting his face up. "But I won't be far away, only about an hour by car, so you can call me anytime you want. I'm still working for the paper, so we'll probably see each other from time to time. I'll have assignments here, and if it's alright with your Mom, I could come visit you every other weekend or so. How does that sound?"

"I suppose it sounds ok," Jason said but didn't like any of it.

"Everything will work out, Jason. We'll see each other in the summer for several weeks, and I'll definitely try and be here for your birthdays, and special holidays, too. You'll see. Everything will be alright."

"You'll be here for my birthday?" Jason brightened a little at that.

"Sure, I wouldn't miss it," Richard said, ruffling his hair.

"Good, now that that's settled. Richard, have you thought about the house?" Lois asked.

"It's yours. I signed over the deed to you." He held up his hand, anticipating her refusal. "I was going to sell it anyway. Keep it and enjoy it. I'll find a hangar for the plane once I get settled in Gotham."

"Thank you, Richard."

"So, when are you two?" He held up his hand indicating the both of them. He let that question hang there for a moment or two.

Lois and Clark stared at each other. They both spoke or mumbled at the same time.

"Well, we haven't. I mean, we just."

Richard laughed. "I couldn't resist it. Well, I'll be going now. I have a few things to do before I leave. Come here, buddy." He lifted Jason up and gave him a warm hug. "Goodbye, Jason. I love you very much, and I'll see again in no time at all. You be a good boy, and take care of your Mom and your father, alright?" He smiled at all of them, even though his eyes were bright.

Jason hugged him tight. "Goodbye, Daddy. I'll miss you," Jason whimpered.

Richard sat him down, and brushed his hair out of his eyes. He turned to leave. Lois brought him to the front door. "Goodbye, Lois." A tear slid down his cheek. He wiped it away.

"Goodbye, Richard and thank you for everything." She gave him a hug. "We'll see you soon."

Richard smiled through his tears.

After Richard left, Clark could see Jason was barely holding it together. He went to his son, picked him up, stroked his back, and took him outside for some air. Jason started to cry. "Shssh, Jason, don't cry. You'll see him again soon," he said trying to reassure him.

"I miss him already," Jason said between sniffs.

Lois stood by the door listening, giving them this time together.

"I know. Here, let's sit down and we'll talk for a few minutes." They sat down on the chaise lounge out back. Jason sat on his father's lap resting his head on his shoulder. Clark wiped his son's eyes with a hankie.

"Jason, did your Mom ever tell you why I wasn't here when you were born?" Clark asked his son.

"No, she didn't. Where were you Father?" He glanced at Clark. "Can I call you Dad? I like that better."

"Sure, you can, Jason," Clark said feeling proud and touched by his question.

"Well, before I tell you my story, I wanted you to know that your Mom and I wanted you very much. You are our miracle child. We never thought the day would come that we would be parents, but here you are, and we love you with all of our hearts."

"I love you too, Dad, and I love you Mom," Jason said, as he smiled at his Mom who was watching them in the doorway. Clark turned and saw Lois and smiled.

"Now, on with my story. I think you're old enough to understand a few things. I'll try not to bore you too much."

"I want to know, Dad," Jason said.

"Alright, it started a long time ago in a small town called Smallville, Kansas." Clark told Jason about his childhood, about moving to Metropolis, about meeting his Mom, and loving her from afar. He told Jason about how they fell in love and wanted to be together, but the outside world had other plans, and things didn't work out the way they wanted. He told him about Krypton and how he wanted to find his people, his family, a home, but he finally realized that his family was here all along, and he wanted Jason to know how sorry he was for leaving his Mom and for leaving him. "Jason, is this too much? Do you understand?" Clark asked.

"I think so. You went to Krypton because you wanted to find a home and a family, but you have us now. You won't ever leave us again, will you Dad?"

Clark pulled his son into his arms, holding him tight. "No, Jason, I'll never leave you or your Mom ever again." Clark tried to hold back his tears. He looked up and Lois was wiping her eyes. Clark held up his arm and Lois sat down and they all pulled each other close for a family hug. No words were spoken for a few minutes. Then Clark pulled back, and they all wiped at their eyes and smiled at each other. "How would you guys like to take a trip, a quick trip to visit my Mom? She's dying to meet both of you."

"I have a grandma?" Jason asked thrilled.

"Yes, you do. My Mom is very excited about meeting you, and I wanted to show you Smallville, where I was raised and the farm and, well everything. I think you'll like it. Well, Lois?"

"Smallville, huh? You couldn't have made that name up. Sounds like fun. Cows, chickens, roosters, right?" Lois deadpanned.

"And let's not forget the family dog, Shelby," Clark said smiling, knowing what Jason's reaction would be.

"You have a dog, Dad? Mom, we have to go. When can we go, Dad? Can we go tomorrow?"

Please, can we Mom? Please?" Jason couldn't hold back his excitement.

"Oh, alright, Jason, and will you please stop begging. It's not pretty. I suppose we could go next weekend and maybe stay overnight?"

"Perfect," Clark said.

"Yayy," Jason said.

Jason held onto his Dad's neck as tight as he could. His Mom had her eyes closed. Jason refused to close his eyes, because he wanted to see everything. He still couldn't believe it. He was actually flying with his Dad. He was so excited. He thought they were going to fly on a plane, but he and his Mom were wrapped up tight in his Dad's cape, flying above the clouds to Smallville. They packed a small overnight bag with a shoulder strap, and his Dad was able to carry that and both of them without any trouble at all.

All too soon they landed on the farm in Smallville where his Dad was raised. A dog came bouncing out of the house to greet them. "Shelby, boy!" Jason yelled. He ran to the dog, and Shelby was all over him like she knew Jason was a friend.

"Shelby's a girl, Jason." Clark said, as he quick-changed into his jeans and plaid.

Lois snickered behind her hand. Then Shelby bounced over to Clark, and he gave her a hug and rubbed her ears.

Lois just watched and shook her head. Then Shelby bounced over to Lois, and she immediately sneezed. "Oh, no, I ... achoo! I can't believe this. Achoo! I'm allergic to Shelby? Achoo! Get her away from me." Shelby had her paws on Lois' coat and tried to pull herself up to get a lick.

"Down, girl. Achoo! Clark, do something."

Clark grabbed Shelby by her collar and pulled her away from Lois. "Come on, girl. City-folk." He shook his head and chuckled. He took Shelby over to the barn and tied her up.

Lois put her hands on her hips. "It's not my fault I'm allergic to your dog, Clark," she said shaking her head, as she looked in her bag for a tissue.

Martha came out of the house then. "Clark, you're here!" She called and walked over to Clark and gave her son a hug.

"Mom, I want you to meet Lois and ... our son, Jason."

"Lois, I'm so happy to finally meet you." Martha gave Lois a hug, even though Lois had her hand out for a handshake. "We're family, honey."

"It's nice to meet you Mrs. Kent," Lois said feeling welcomed.

"Oh, honey, please call me Martha."

"Grandma?" Jason asked pulling on Martha's skirt.

"Hi, Jason." Martha reached down and enveloped her grandson in a warm hug. "It's so nice to meet you." She looked into Jason's eyes, so like her son's. "Oh, Clark, he's so beautiful." Martha's eyes filled with tears.

"Come on, Mom, let's get everyone settled, then I want to take Lois and Jason on the grand tour of the farm."

"I'm sorry, where are my manners. Come on in, everyone. I'll show you to your rooms." Martha led them into the house and showed Lois and Jason to their rooms. "Clark can sleep on the couch tonight."

Lois smiled at Clark at that statement then quirked an eyebrow at him. Clark just shook his head and chuckled.

As Martha started dinner, Lois, Clark and Jason all went out for a walk around the farm. Shelby and Jason ran ahead, while Lois and Clark walked slowly behind.

Clark shyly took Lois' hand in his. Lois looked down at their joined hands and squeezed. They smiled at each other.

"This is so nice, Clark. You have a beautiful home," Lois said.

"Thanks, Lois, but I haven't lived here in a long time. My home is with you and Jason, wherever that may be." Clark stopped walking, took both her hands in his and smiled at her. He glanced ahead and he could see Jason playing with Shelby by a tree. Clark took a deep breath. "Do you love me, Lois?"

"What kind of a question is that? You know I love you," Lois said confused by his question.

"Well, you haven't actually said it."

"I haven't?" Lois shook her head. *He's right, I haven't said it, not directly anyway.* "Well, these past few weeks have been insane for all of us. Clark, you know me, I'm not a mushy sentimental person."

"I know, but just this once?" Clark smiled and touched her cheek.

"Alright, I'll say it." Lois looked into his eyes. "Clark Kent, I love you with all my heart and soul." She tried not to be moved but she couldn't hide it, not from Clark.

He pulled her close and said "I love you too." Then he kissed her softly, as Lois put her arms around his neck and pulled him closer.

"Ewwwwww," Jason said.

Lois and Clark just shook their heads at their son and laughed. One day he'll know!

A month later, they were back at the farm and Jason and Martha had turned in for the evening. Lois and Clark were out taking a walk. It was a beautiful night. They both noted how the stars were particularly bright this evening. They walked arm in arm both silent and grateful for these quiet moments together. They were rare and special to both of them.

"Clark, it's really beautiful out here. You know, Smallville is starting to grow on me," Lois said smiling at him.

"I wanted to show you this spot, Lois. This is where my parents found me all those years ago, took me home, and accepted me as a part of their family. This is also the spot where my spaceship landed after my second journey from Krypton. I think it's appropriate that I do this here." He got down on one knee.

Lois gasped as tears sprang into her eyes. "Clark?"

"Lois, from the moment I saw you, I knew deep inside that you were the only woman in the world for me. I think about you and Jason all the time, every minute of my life. I can't think of a time when you aren't on my mind. I want to be with you always, take care of you and Jason, and love you forever and ever. You're the love of my life, Lois Lane." He pulled the ring from his pocket, opened the box and showed it to her. "Will you marry me?"

CHAPTER 11: PROMISES

Lois was in shock. She stared at Clark's face, then the ring, then back at Clark again. Then she started to cry.

Clark stood up and took her into his arms, confused by her response. "I take it that's a yes."

"Yes, yes, yes! Yes, Clark, I'll marry you." She smiled at him in spite of her tears.

He put the ring on her finger, took her face between his hands and wiped her tears away. "I love you, Lois."

"Oh, Clark, I love you so much."

Then he kissed her and the stars shone even brighter if that were possible.

Three months later.

The past few months had been a whirlwind for all of them. Jason definitely had a period of adjustment. Clark thought it best he not move into the house until after the wedding. Lois had agreed, but he could see how disappointed she was. He explained that the next few months before the wedding would fly by and they would all be together as a family very soon.

"What are you thinking, Lois?" Clark thought he rather liked that expression on her face. He and his soon-to-be bride were flying to the Fortress for a much needed break three days before the wedding. Jason was spending the night with his Mom.

Lois cuddled closer to Clark and smiled at him. *For someone who isn't mushy and sentimental, I sure am saying 'I love you' a lot lately.* "Humm, wouldn't you like to know?" She said teasing him.

"Yes, I would. I always want to know what's on that brilliant mind of yours."

"Flattery will get you somewhere, but not now." She pulled at his cape, trying to stay warm.

Clark just shook his head at her and pulled her closer.

"Clark, why are we going back to the Fortress? I thought it was still destroyed. Has something happened?" Lois asked.

"Well, I wanted it to be a surprise, but you'll see for yourself in a few minutes. The Coast Guard called the Planet a few days ago trying to locate Superman, so I took the call. When they took Luthor off the island, they found his briefcases full of evidence, including the video, along with my crystals that he had stolen. They brought everything to me, knowing I could reach Superman."

"Oh, Clark, that's wonderful news. I'm so happy for you. You didn't watch the video, did you?" She hated to think of him watching that horrible video.

"No, and I didn't destroy it either. It's a reminder of how cruel and evil Luthor is and I'll never turn my back on him again. Let's not talk about him ever again, alright?"

"You don't have to ask me twice."

"Good, here we are." Instead of landing at the top of the structure, they entered through a special chamber that was set up with security precautions. "Kal-El of Krypton wishes to enter." Clark then waved his hand over a reading device that had the ability recognize his fingerprint and then they were allowed to enter.

Lois was impressed. Voice and fingerprint recognition meant no more vandals, that's for sure. She looked around completely in awe at what she was seeing. "Wow, I'm impressed. When did you have time to do all of this?"

"Well, Jor-el was very helpful. If I didn't know any better, I'd suspect he felt bad about Luthor fooling him the way that he did. It didn't take very long to set up the security, only a matter of a few hours. What do you think? Do you like it?"

"Clark, it's as beautiful as ever, even more so than I remember." She went to him then and gave him a warm hug.

Clark held her close, taking a deep breath trying to control his emotions. "You have no idea how much it means to me having you here to see it all again the way it should be."

"I have some idea." She looked into his eyes, stood on tiptoe and kissed him. After a few moments, they were both breathing heavily, but she managed to say "I love you, Clark."

"I love you, too, Lois." He gave her quick kiss. "Come on, I want you to see everything." He took her by the hand leading the way. After showing her a more elaborate control chamber, and several smaller bedrooms, even one set up for Jason, he saved the best for last.

Lois walked into 'their' room and couldn't help the tears that sprang into her eyes. "Oh, Clark, it's beautiful." The memories were overwhelming her. She took several deep breaths. There were red rose pebbles all over the bed, champagne, soft music playing, and everything looked so warm and inviting. She turned to him then. "I should be shaking my finger at you, but all I want to do is strip that suit off and have my way with you." She smiled through her

tears.

Clark came to her then and took her into his arms. "Well, what's stopping you?"

"Clark Kent, are you trying to seduce me?" She could see he was in the mood.

"Of course not," he chuckled.

Lois touched his chest. She sobered. "Clark, we decided to wait, remember?"

He sighed. "I know, but Lois..." He let go of her and went over to the bed, and pulled the sheets back with a flair. "Don't you want to lay it in just for little while? We don't have to ... you know?"

Lois couldn't believe him. "Clark, we only have three days left. We've made it this far. We can do this. We promised each other."

"Alright, Lois, I'll I'll take you home." He didn't know why he was acting this way. He mentally kicked himself. *I guess I just got carried away being here in this place and the memories had more of an affect on me than I thought they would.* They've waited months, and another three days wouldn't make a difference.

She went to him then and touched his arm. "Clark, please don't be upset. Everything is lovely here, but our honeymoon night will be a night we'll always remember because we waited. We want everything to be perfect and it will be." She hugged him. "I love you so much. Please don't be mad."

Clark hugged her tighter and kissed her hair. "Of course, I'm not mad." He touched her chin, raising her face to look at him. "It was my idea in the first place." He smiled at her and stroked her cheek. He took her face between his hands, leaned down and kissed her. She kissed him back. He pulled her tighter against him. He pulled back after a moment and laid his forehead against hers. "Umm, you drive me crazy, you know that, but we'll have that perfect wedding night. Just don't plan on getting any sleep." He wiggled his eyebrows at her and smiled.

She threw her arms around his neck, holding him close. "Promise?"

"Oh, yeah, bet on it!"

The wedding was not an elaborate affair. A small church in Smallville was the setting for Lois and Clark's wedding. Jason was the ring bearer, looking like a small replica of his Dad. Lucy was the matron of honor, while Jimmy was the best man. Lucy's twin daughters were the flower girls. They invited Richard to be there for Jason's sake, he hadn't arrived yet, it looked like he was running late. Richard would be taking care of Jason while they were away on their honeymoon.

Clark stood at the front of the church waiting for Lois to come down the aisle. So many emotions were running through him right then. Disbelief, joy, happiness, yes, true happiness. *Lois and I have come so far. She really is marrying me today.* His face has been in a perpetual smile for months now. He turned and smiled at his son. Jason smiled back, giving his Dad the thumbs up, and Clark did the same.

Clark looked up and saw Richard hurrying inside the back of the church. He nodded to Clark as he took a seat. He also saw Lana enter the church, but instead of taking a seat on the groom's side, she took a seat next to Richard. *Are they together? I knew she had moved to Gotham a few weeks ago, but I'm wondering if they are a couple.* He shook his head and smiled. *Lois was right; they did look fantastic together. I can't think of two people more deserving of happiness, other than Lois and myself.*

Then the wedding march music started. He stood up a little straighter, and then Lois

appeared with her father. Clark smiled when he saw her. She was a vision in a cream colored strapless gown. Her hair was piled up on her head with wisps of hair floating on her throat and on the sides of her face. She appeared to Clark as if she were floating towards him just like an angel.

But after glancing at General Lane, Clark straightened his tie and stood even straighter if that were possible. General Lane was a man of much integrity, and meeting him was a true test of Clark's courage. Lois thought it best he be brought into the 'secret circle' and he couldn't have agreed more. General Lane would be a tremendous ally when dealing with the government and he wanted his advice and input in that regard.

Then he only had eyes for Lois. He stared at his bride feeling like the luckiest man in the world. Lois stared at her groom. He was so handsome. His smile warmed her heart, and put her at ease. She smiled back. *Clark and I have come so far.* Her heart was pounding so hard, as she gripped her Dad's arm trying to get control of her emotions. She took several deep breaths. General Lane sensed her nervousness and smiled at her. Lois smiled and mouthed 'thank you, Daddy.'

As Lois and her Dad approached the Alter, the Minister spoke. "Who brings this woman to marry this man?"

"I do," General Lane said. He then shook Clark's hand and kissed Lois on the cheek. Lois and Clark then turned and faced the Minister.

"We are gathered here today to witness the union of Lois Joanne Lane and Clark Jerome Kent. If anyone can show just cause why they should not be joined together in holy matrimony, let them speak now or forever hold their peace." He paused for effect. "Lois and Clark have chosen to speak their own vows. Lois..."

She turned to face Clark. She took hold of his hands. "Clark, I found a poem that describes perfectly how I feel about our future together. Clark ..."

*I promise to give you the best of myself
and to ask of you no more than you can give.*

*I promise to respect you as your own person
and to realize that your interests, desires and needs
are no less important than my own.*

*I promise to share with you my time and my attention
and to bring joy, strength and imagination to our relationship.*

*I promise to keep myself open to you, to let you see through
the window of my world into my innermost fears
and feelings, secrets and dreams.*

*I promise to grow along with you, to be willing to face changes
in order to keep our relationship alive and exciting.*

*I promise to love you in good times and in bad, with all I have to give
and all I feel inside, in the only way I know how ... completely and forever.¹*

*I, Lois, take you Clark, to be my husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for
better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish,
from this day forward until death do us part.*

"Clark ...?" The Minister asked.

"I too have chosen a poem. Lois ..."

*When I met you, I had no idea how much my life
was about to change ...but then, how could I have known?
A love like ours happens once in a lifetime.
You were a miracle to me, the one who was everything
I had ever dreamed of, the one I thought existed only in my imagination.
And when you came into my life, I realized that what I
had always thought was happiness couldn't compare to the joy
loving you brought me.
You are a part of everything I think and do and feel,
and with you by my side, I believe that anything is possible.
(this day) gives me a chance to thank you for the miracle of you...
you are, and always will be, the love of my life.²*

*I, Clark, take you Lois, to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for
better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish;
from this day forward until death do us part.*

They both smiled at each other then, both trying to hold back their tears.

"Now, we will have the exchanging of the rings." The Minister looked at Jason. Jason came forward with the rings, and then went to sit next to his Grandma and Grandpa Ben. The Minister blessed the rings.

"With this ring, I thee wed," Clark said, as he put the ring on Lois' finger.

"With this ring, I thee wed," Lois said, as she put the ring on Clark's finger.

"Let us pray." After speaking the prayer, the Minister said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. Insofar as Lois and Clark have spoken their vows each to the other, and have exchanged rings, by the power vested in me by this church and this state, I now pronounce them husband and wife. Clark, you may kiss your bride."

Before Clark took Lois in his arms, he whispered "I love you." And Lois whispered to her husband "I love you." He took her into his arms and kissed her. She put her arms around his neck and kissed him back loving the feel of her husband, as they both didn't seem to want to stop.

Then all the guests whooped and erupted in applause. Lois and Clark smiled at each other, and holding hands, turned and walked down the aisle as Mr. and Mrs. Clark Kent.

Notes:

¹ Poem "I Promise" by Dorothy Colgan.

² Poem "My Love" by Linda Lee Elrod.

CHAPTER 12: A DREAM COME TRUE

On a secluded island in the South Pacific:

Lois and Clark's plane landed mid-afternoon at the airport on a Tahiti island that Lois had only heard stories about. Her mouth dropped open when they stepped off the plane. Clark watched his wife's expression and knew how she felt. After making a stop there himself in the past week, just to check it out, he knew it would be perfect for their honeymoon. They had an entire week to relax and enjoy the first week of their married life. His mutual 'co-workers' were only too happy to take care of things while he was away.

Clark was beginning to think this time would never come, but of course it had. *Lois knows how much I want her, and I know how much she wants me. No more waiting, no more kisses at the door, and no more flying away working all night until I was too exhausted to even think about how much I wanted to be with her. We're married now.* He looked at the ring on his finger.

Lois turned from looking at the scenery and couldn't help but smile at her husband's expression. "Yes, Clark, it's true. We really are married." She smiled and put her arm around his back, as they headed inside the airport to get their luggage.

Clark laughed. "Yes we are. Come on, the hotel isn't far, only a few miles." They got a cab, and then they were off to the resort and a tropical paradise for honeymooners. Lois tried to keep her mouth from dropping open again, but she couldn't help it. Their private bungalow was over water with a sundeck. The water was all shades of blue and green and each contained glass tables to feed the fish below. There were glass tables embedded in the floor to bathe the bungalow in a soft glowing light as well as giving them the ability to discover the wonderful underwater world of the lagoon.

"Clark, this is too much," Lois said. "How can we afford this?"

Clark couldn't help but look sheepish. "Well, I umm..."

"Clark, what did you do?"

"Well, Lois, he insisted I take it," Clark said trying to explain.

"Who?"

"There was a man who I saved from a suicide jump. It happened the first week I returned. He immediately had second thoughts as soon as I put him on the ground. He just kept thanking me over and over. I just told him to talk to someone and think about what he was giving up. A week later, he approached me at one of those keys to the city ceremonies, and gave me two tickets here and a week at this place. I never even knew his name. He said to call the travel agent and confirm the reservation."

"Really? So, we have no way of thanking him for all of this? Clark, we have to find him and thank him somehow."

"I've tried, Lois, but I can't seem to find him. I haven't given up though; I will find him."

"Good, because this place is like a dream come true, unforgettable and amazing."

Clark wasn't looking at the scenery. "I know," Clark said in that lower register voice that caused Lois' heart to flutter, not to mention how totally sexy he sounded.

Lois glanced at her husband. *Why am I so nervous? It's not our first time, but it has been almost six years since we were together.* She took a shuddering breath.

Clark came over to her then and put his hand out to her. She took it. "Let's go out on the deck for a minute."

Lois immediately relaxed. "Alright," she said and smiled at him.

They were both in awe of the spectacular view. The sun's brilliance was setting over the horizon. The colors were breathtaking. "Oh, Clark, it's so beautiful." She sighed. "I'm so happy."

Clark pulled her tight against his chest from behind holding her close and whispered in her ear. "I love you so much, Lois. When I first saw you on the plane, I didn't think we would ever be together like this again." He turned her to face him. He touched her cheek. "Tell me what you were thinking when you saw me. I've always wondered about it."

She took a deep breath taking his hand in hers as she tried to get control of her racing heart. "Well, my brain was mush and my heart was beating so fast. I couldn't think of anything

to say or do." She squeezed his hand. "Then, you looked at me, smiled at me, and then you spoke to me. I realized then that you weren't a dream, but real and alive. I wanted to run to you and tell you how much I missed you and how much I needed you. It really was too much for me. I guess I was in shock. I couldn't handle it, so I fainted."

"I was so worried about you and I couldn't just let you lay there, so I came back and picked you up."

"I'm so glad you did." She hugged him close then.

"You are now, but you weren't too happy with me at the time."

She looked up into his face and smiled. "I know, but I'm very happy with you now. I love you, Clark." She stood up on her tiptoes, put her arms around his neck and kissed him on the cheek, his ear and then his mouth. "Very happy indeed," she said between kisses.

"Umm, so am I." He picked her up then, slanting his mouth against hers as he walked into their bedroom. Lois held him tightly around the neck. "Lois, it's been so long and I can't promise this first time will be ... you know, slow." Clark reddened.

"Clark, don't you remember your promise?"

"How could I forget? All night and no sleeping, wasn't it?"

"I'm not going to lose my bet am I?" Lois asked, quirking an eyebrow at him.

He set her down on the bed. He didn't say a word. He started to remove his clothes. Lois sat up on her knees and helped him unbutton his shirt. She kissed his chest and licked his nipples. "Umm, so warm," she said, as she kissed her way across his chest and up to his throat. He took her face between his hands and slanted his mouth on hers. His mouth was hot like tender fire, invading her with a gentle pressure. His fingertips traced over her face. "So beautiful," he murmured. He was breathing fast and suddenly his kisses became deeper and more forceful, bringing a feeling of desperation to their passion. *It's been so long*, Lois thought. She couldn't get close enough to him, as he helped her remove her clothes kissing her all the while. They fell back on the bed kissing and caressing each other. He took more of her, kissing her at every possible angle, and Lois couldn't help the pleading sounds coming from her throat. They rolled to face each other for a moment. She wanted him with a desperation that almost frightened her.

"Slowly," Clark murmured trying to catch his breath. "The night is just beginning; remember ... I'm going to love you, Lois, for a long, long time." As the prospect of sharing this night with her and all the nights for the rest of their lives came into his mind, it filled him with so much happiness that it almost felt like anguish.

"Umm, stop talking," Lois said, stopping him with a kiss. In the blazing minutes and hours that followed, no further words were possible.

Lois slowly awakened alone in the large bed, and the first thing she saw was a scattering of red rose petals sprinkled over the bed and on her. She breathed in the fragrance, as a smile played on her lips.

"Ah, I see you're awake," Clark said as he walked into the bedroom with a breakfast tray with glasses of orange juice, hot coffee, strawberries and croissants.

"Humm, coffee, smells wonderful." Lois sighed. "Clark, what's with the rose petals?" She asked, as she sat up, pulling the sheet up to her chest.

"Just a little token of our first time together," he said, as he set the stand-up tray on the bed.

"They're lovely, Clark. Thank you."

"You're very welcome." He sat down on the bed and gave her a strawberry. He touched her cheek, kissed her lazily running his tongue all over her lips with a sigh, and smiled. "Umm, delicious," he murmured. "Lois, last night was ..." Clark began unable to think clearly.

"What?" Lois asked, kissing him back and very curious to know how he would describe it.

"Perfect!"

She looked at her husband and smiled at the look on his face. "I agree. So, who lost the bet?"

"Well, I'd say we both won," he said still smiling at her.

She chuckled. "Remind me never to go to Vegas with you."

He laughed. "Deal," Clark said and kissed her again, as breakfast was all but forgotten.

The End.

Epilogue: Six years later (2012):

Birthday celebrations were always an elaborate affair for the Kent family. So, on this day, June 30, Clark and his little angel, Jessica Marie, who was conceived on their honeymoon, and who'd be turning 5 years old this year, will each celebrate their birthdays, seeing as they were only a few days apart. Clark's age was a well-kept secret, but Lois had some idea what it was. Clark wasn't telling. It's only a number he would say.

"Mom, Dad!" Jason hollered, as he came into the house. Jason was now twelve years old. He was already coming into his father's height, already reaching well over five-feet-six inches. He'll easily reach six feet probably before he enters high school. His hair was darker than when he was younger, but his eyes were still that incredible blue, the same as his Dad.

"Jason, we're out back!" Clark hollered back to his son.

"Hi, Mom, Dad, grandma," Jason spoke to his parents and gave his grandmother a kiss on the cheek.

"Hiya, squirt," Jason said, as he picked up his little sister and immediately tickled her.

Jessie giggled. "Jason, stop," Jessie said between giggles, even though she loved it when he tickled her, and she loved her big brother. "Run, run, Jason." That was Jessie's cue that she wanted to go outside and run with her brother, preferably with Jason doing all the running. She could hold on really tight too.

"Maybe later, squirt. I want to talk to Mom and Dad for a minute."

"Where were you, Jason?" Lois asked her son.

"Just out for a visit with some friends I haven't seen since last summer." Jason couldn't meet his mother's eyes. Lois knew her son too well.

"Jason, do you want to tell us what's on your mind?" Lois asked.

"Mom, Dad, we've had this conversation before," Jason started.

"Mom, would you mind taking Jessie out to the kitchen for a minute?" Clark asked his Mom. Jessica didn't need to hear any of this conversation.

"Sure, son. Come on, honey, would you like a cool glass of lemonade with your grandma?" Martha asked her granddaughter.

"Ok, grandma," Jessie responded.

Jason walked around the back deck trying to get his thoughts together. He had to get his

parents to understand why he had to do more to help people. He couldn't stand on the sidelines any longer. Everyday in Metropolis, the pain and the cries for help which never seemed to stop were getting to be too much for him.

Clark put his hand on his son's shoulder, completely understanding what he was going through, although for himself, he had been older, but not that much older than his son when he had felt the call. He couldn't fault his son for wanting to help ... no, he felt very proud of his son.

"Jason, I know what you're going to say and I understand. I do. Your mother and I have been over and over this. You're too young, Jason. Your powers haven't fully developed and we don't want you to get hurt. Please, Jason. We only want what's best for you." Clark tried to make his son understand.

Jason looked his father in the eye, knowing he understood how he felt, but it didn't make it any easier. He glanced at his mother and she was just as concerned, even more so. Jason sighed. He'll have to wait, but how many more years? He would try and be patient for his parent's sake. They had enough to worry about, without him doing something he would probably regret.

"Alright, Mom, Dad, I'll do as you say. I promise I won't do anything that could put me in danger."

Clark pulled his son into a hug. "You have plenty of time to help people, Jason. It won't be long now. We love you very much, son, and only want you to be happy but you're still so young. Try to enjoy this time while you're still young, and try not to worry too much, alright?"

"I'll try, Dad. I love you too." He looked at his Mom. She had tears in her eyes. "I love you too, Mom."

Lois went to her son and hugged him tight. "We love you, honey."

"Alright, guys, whose birthday is it around here anyway?" Clark asked, trying to lighten the mood.

Jason and Lois looked at each other. "We have no idea," Lois said laughing.

Martha and Jessie came out back just then with a huge birthday cake with candles.

"Happy Birthday, Clark and Jessica!" Martha started singing, as Jason and Lois joined in. "Blow out the candles Clark and Jessica," Martha said.

Clark picked up his little girl and they both blew out the candles.

"Clark, wait!" Lois tried to stop him.

"Oops!"

THE END.

A/N: A few folks have requested an update to fill in a few blanks. Lex went insane after telling everyone he within hearing range that Superman has a child. No one believed him, especially in light of his many crimes which were documented on film. Kitty smartly and sanely refused to verify Lex's story. The henchmen that Jason knocked out also refused to corroborate Luthor's story fearing they would also be put in a psych ward. And finally, yes, Richard and Lana did get together, but that's another story. I hope everyone enjoyed this. Thanks again for reading.